# Concepts and Issues in Evaluation

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# A brief note on selected issues in Evaluation

Evaluation simply means assessing value of something. It is undertaken mainly for the following purposes.

| Purpose | Broader Explanation |
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| Achievement | Seeing what has been achieved. |
| Measuring Progress | Checking progress in accordance with the objectives of the program. |
| Improving Monitoring | Seeing the activities are better planned and managed. |
| Identifying strengths and weaknesses | To unlearn what has been learnt wrongly and look for improvement in future. |
| Effectiveness | What differences have the programs made? |
| Cost Benefit | Were the costs reasonable |
| Sharing Experience | To prevent others making similar mistakes and to encourage others to use similar methods. |
| Better Planning | To make planning to fall more in line with the needs of the people, especially at community level. |

**Characteristics of Accountability and Lesson Learning as Objectives of Evaluation Activity.**

| Issues | Accountability as the Objective | Lesson-Learning as the Objective |
|---|---|---|
| Basic Aim | Funding out about the past | Improving Future Performance |
| Emphasis | Degree of Success and Failure | Reasons for success and failure |
| End Users | Support Office, NO and ZO. | ADP, local Community Institutions and various program clients. |
| Selection | Based on random | Specifically selected |

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| | samples | for potential lessons |
| Evaluation Status | Evaluation is an end product | Evaluation is viewed as part of the project cycle. |
| Evaluation nature | Need to be impartial and independent. | Usually include members of AID agency staff. |
| Importance of Findings | Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the findings. | Findings are valued and used for planning and apprising of new projects. |
| Importance of feedback | Relatively unimportant | Vitally important. |

**Factors influencing the choice between In-house and outside evaluations.**

| In house/ Internal Evaluation | Out side/External Evaluations |
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| Have a better grasp of the aid/development context and of how the agency works. | As they are less aware of the sensitivities of the aid relationships or administrative problems, they may come with fresh ideas and be more ready to employ radical thinking. |
| Are well placed to foster instant feedback in an effective ways. | Are not likely to be directly concerned with feedback, except in academic circles. |
| The experiences gained remain in side the aid/implementing agency. | The experiences gained are used in other agencies and communities. |
| May lack specific technical skills or experience | Are usually selected because they are experts in their field. |
| Relatively inexpensive | Tend to be very expensive if reputed consultant agencies are used. |
| Knows the program too well | Can take a fresh look at the program |
| Finds it hardest to be objective | Not personally involved so it is easier to be objective. |
| It is part of the power and authority structure | It is not a part of the normal power structure. |
| May be motivated by hopes of | Gains nothing from the program but |

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| personal gains. | may gain prestige from the evaluation. |
| May not be specially trained in evaluation methods. | Trained in evaluation methods. May have experience in other evaluation. Regarded as an expert by the program. |
| Is familiar with the target people and their culture. So can interpret personal behavior and attitudes. | Dose not understand the people and their culture. |

**Evaluation looks at both quantity and quality**

Every evaluation deals to some extent with things that can be counted or measured. For example it may be the number of people involved in the program, the number products produced and services rendered, the amount of material resources available or required, the financial cost of running a program or the extent of an area cultivated.

It is often not too difficult to determine the quantitative aspect of an evaluation. For example a 2-month vaccination program may aim at reaching a certain number of children with a certain vaccine by a certain time. When the program is completed, it is possible to say exactly how many children the program in fact reached.

However programs also consists of factors that are hard to be counted or measured. These factors include people's behavior, abilities, qualities, attitudes, values, motivations and how people relate to one another and to the program. Evaluating such factors are important because they help to explain why a program in particular place proceeds in a particular way, and why it has particular strengths and weaknesses, problems and solutions, expected and unexpected out comes. They also influence program success or failure.

**Evaluation criteria and emphasis from donor and recipients perspective**

| Donor View Point | Recipients View Point |
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| Often focuses on one-off projects. | Generally more interested in the effectiveness of sectoral policies or programs. |
| Is anxious to avoid mistakes or failures of any kind. | Accepts that making mistakes can be positive if it helps people tom learn how to do better. |
| Wants to maximize economic rate of return by using expatriate management and setting up enclave project administration. | Is equally interested in skills transfer acquiring management expertise and strengthening of institutions. |
| Tends to inter play significance of political factors and emphasize cost-effectiveness, timeliness and technical efficiency. | Is acutely aware of political and social factors and is better equipped to cope with them. |
| Is especially interested in sustainability and impact on target groups. | Is more concerned with good project design and successful project implementation. |
| Tends to ignore or down play such aspects as aid tying, brain drain and the problems of cross-cultural transfer of skills. | Is very concerned about these aspects of the aid relationship and aware of the possible of adverse effects. |
| See evaluation as a means of informing the public and as tool of democracy. | Sees evaluation more as an internal policy management tool: criticism of policies not encouraged. |

**Strengths and weaknesses of the Logical Framework**

| Issue | Objectives and potential strengths | Common Problems | Potential Dangers |
|---|---|---|---|
| About Vertical Logic | A synoptic integrated view- relatively thorough yet concise – of project activities and their links to | In clarifying and gaining consensus on objectives, intellectual and political problems<br><br>Interpreting and | Over Simplification of objectives.<br><br>Hides disagreements |

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| | environment.<br><br>Distinguishes level in temporal and value hierarchies.<br><br>Encourages examination of inter connections and assumptions | applying the terms for different levels.<br><br>To State objectives as linear chain<br><br>Over aggregation especially at high levels.<br><br>So many implied assumptions present.<br><br>Time Consuming. | Rigidification of objectives (lock frame)<br><br>Ignoring or down grading of unintended effects<br><br>Down grading types of values not well reflected as end points in a chain.<br><br>Rituals claims to have faced uncertainties.<br><br>Hopeful box filling not based on problem analysis. (Lack frame) |
| About Horizontal Logic | To give measurable, operationalized. Clear reference points for use in appraisal, management and evaluation.<br><br>To deepen examination of meanings of objectives. | To obtain practicable, valid, quantified indicators, especially for higher levels and for social types of projects.<br><br>To separate the influences of complementary factors. | Down grading of less quantifiable objectives<br><br>Invalid use of gross columns as indicators.<br><br>Mishandling of co-determined efforts.<br>Disproportionate work might be |

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| | | | required. Regidification of targets and conflation with indicators. Distorted incentives. |
| About format and application | Visually accessible and relatively easy to understand.<br><br>Shared focus for different parties.<br><br>Matrix can and should be systematically linked to a situation analysis<br><br>Can be applied in a participatory way | Prepared too late<br><br>Pressure to use pre-set format at risk of distortion of the case.<br><br>Assumption analysis is marginalized.<br><br>High demands for training, judgment and motivation. | Excessive simplification of cases with partial summary fetishised as whole truth.<br><br>Can deaden thought and stifle adaptation<br><br>Can become a method for enforcement of one view rather than for debate of several, mainly used for one way accountability only.<br><br>Can become fetish rather than help. |

**Why Indicators are important**

An indicator is a marker. It can be compared to a road sign that shows whether you are on the right road, how far you have traveled and how far you still have to go to reach destination. Indicators show progress and help to measure change.

Many indicators consist of measurements and are expressed in numbers.

- A **percentage** such as 50% of the farmers of a village use chemical fertilizers.
- A **rate** such as the infant mortality rate that is the number of children who die before reaching one year in a particular calendar year in relation to 1000 live births in the same year.
- A **ratio** such as the number tube wells in a community in relation to the number of households or number of teachers in relation to the number of children in the school.

Some of the most common indicators are summarized as follows.

- **Indicators of Availability**. These show whether something exists and whether it is available. For example an indicator of availability in a social development program might be whether there is one trained local worker available for every 10 houses.
- **Indicators of relevance**: These show how relevant or appropriate something is. For example an indicator of relevance in a rural women development program might be whether new stoves burn lees fuel than the old ones.
- **Indicators of accessibility**: These show whether what exists is actually with in reach of those who need it. For example, a health post available in one village may be out of reach of other villages in the area because of mountains, flooded rivers, lack of transport or people's poverty.
- **Indicators of Utilization**: These show to what extent something that has been made available is being used for that purpose. For example an indicator of utilization might be how many non- literate villagers are attending literacy classes regularly.
- **Indicators of coverage:** These show what proportion of those who need something are receiving it. For example an indicator of coverage might be of the number of people known or estimated to have

tuberculosis in a particular area the percentage that is actually receiving the treatment.

- **Indicators of quality:** These show the quality or standard of something. For example an indicator of quality might be whether it is free from harmful, disease- causing substances or organism.
- **Indicators of effort:** These show how much and what is being invested to achieve the objective, such as how long it takes how many men to plant what number of palm trees in a week.
- **Indicators of efficiency:** These show whether resources and activities are being put to the best possible use to achieve the objectives, such as the number, frequency and quality of supervisory visits after introducing bicycles to replace heavy vehicles.
- **Indicators of impact:** These show if what you are doing is really making any difference. For example an indicator of impact might be after a campaign against measles, whether the incidences of measles has been reduced.

**Base line studies**

- Provide bench marks (the situation then and suggest sustainable indicators for the situation now).
- Provide valuable information for project planning and help to specify and concretize objectives e.g for logical framework purposes. (Involving local participants)
- Should take place as close to start of the project as possible because high expectation may be aroused and long subsequent gap need to be avoided.
- Should be carried as a matter of course, unless there are very cogent reasons why they are not required.

**The steps in carrying out a base line study**

- Decide if one is necessary.

- Draw up terms of reference
    1. Background information
    2. Objectives of the study
    3. Scope and focus of the study
    4. Who will conduct the study
    5. Methodology – generally a combination of methods will be appropriate including interviews, public meetings, surveys, workshops, ranking techniques and participatory rural appraisal.
    6. Time Plan
    7. Decide how to conduct the study
    8. Review the final report- check it covers terms of reference.
    9. Disseminate and utilize the base line information.

    Coming to the core of the task , the information collected of course depend on the nature of the project, but it will normally include the following :

        - Socio- economic information ie demographic information about the community, its social and economic organization and infrastructures and information about households.
        - Sector specific information i.e information related to specific sectors such as natural resources, health, education, environment etc.
        - Issues of local concerns i.e that are issues that local people feel strongly about such information can only be obtained by participatory research methods and it also cover suggested solutions from the grass roots.

**How to write user-friendly evaluation reports.**

- Be short and to the point.
- Have a brief executive summary of not more than a few pages in the front, the main report not extending to more than about 40-50 pages, although there can be lengthy annexes containing much of the supporting materials. (Survey results)
- Be presented attractively – small print should be avoided and there should be plenty of paragraph headings breaking of solid pages of text

and visual Varity like photographs or illustrations (including a sketch map of the location of the project) can be useful.

- Have clear and comprehensive list of contents to facilitate quick access to relevant sections (bearing in mind that often the report will not be read from cover to cover but " dipped in to " for relevant information), some times an index is useful.
- Have a chapter on lessons learnt leading to recommendations for action.
- Contain annexes covering the terms of reference, people met, filed visits made, acronyms, bibliographies and a brief biographical details of the evaluators.
- Describe the methodologies and data used
- Be some times tailored to meet the needs of specific users ( some evaluation reports seem to be written with little thought to who the users might be or what their interests are, for instance there is often excessive emphasis on efficiency issues, many of which are project specific and have little relevance elsewhere, whereas there may well have been useful lessons relating to effectiveness , impact and sustainability that would have been of interest to a much wider audience) and
- Should always ensure that certain key issues such as gender, environment, sustainability, and institutional development, are not over looked or ignored.

An example of writing evaluation report or presenting the findings of the evaluation is mentioned below.

**Introduction**

While writing introduction work through the following check list , giving your reader brief information on each of these topics.

- Why the evaluation was done
- When it was done
- Who conducted and participated.
- Who paid
- What information was collected?
- What methods were used to choose the sample?

- What practical problems were met during the field work
- How reliable the results are.

Make sure to list the subjects on which you asked questions. Many people choose to include the evaluation questionnaire as an appendix to their report.

The description of methods can be brief. Knowing when to stop is a virtue in any report. But give the reader enough details to decide how widely the results can be used. For example, it is not enough just to give sample size. You must also say how you chose that sample.

Usually you will name the villages, housing areas and locations where the evaluation was undertaken. But always be careful to respect promises of confidentiality given to the respondents.

Briefly explain the major fieldwork difficulties/ problems. Indicate how many people refuse to cooperate or could not be contacted. If circumstances forced to you modify the sample or any part of the Terms of reference, describe any modification. Try to give a general picture of the reliability of the results.

**Presentation and analysis of data**

The presentation and analysis is the heart of a report. Plan it thoroughly before you begin writing. Start by making an out line structure based on the evaluation questions. Use these to work out headings and sub headings. Now list the point points for every sub section, which can each become a paragraph.

Think of other information you may want to put. Is there a useful case study material? Can you illustrate some points effectively with quotations from answers recorded in the field? You may want to compare results with earlier research studies. Choose exactly what you to include before you start writing. Give attention to the following while presenting your findings.

- See that your report has these sections: main heading, sub heading and proper presentation style.

- The tables included in the report need to have: a title, a table number, a reference to the source of information, A reference to the sample size and a full description of what each figure refers to.
- Use diagrams and pictures. They are powerful tools for presentation. See that diagrams have the following details: a title, a reference to the source of the information and a reference to the sample size.
- Listing sources and references is also very important. If you use someone else's work in the report, you must refer to it. This is it give them credit and to enable the reader to do further reading if necessary. The usual convention of giving reference is to give the title of the book or article, publisher and the date of publication.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

Give plenty of time for thinking over and developing good conclusions and recommendations. Discuss your ideas as widely as possible before you finalize them. Make sure they are clear, practical and realistic in the light of available resources. Keep two points in mind. First most readers will judge the value of the evaluation by the quality of the conclusions and recommendations. Second, people can expect and sometimes demand, too precise and reliable conclusions, particularly from evaluations. The report writer has the responsibility to avoid unsupported claims. A conclusion is more than a summary of findings. It is point of view based on the findings.

Conclusions and recommendations may include the following :

- To what extent the program objectives have been achieved?
- Which aspects of the programs ( such as planning, management, monitoring and training, field activities etc.) are strong and which need to be strengthened.
- Have human and program resources been used efficiently? How has the program changed with time?
- What are its financial costs and benefits?
- What predictions can be made for the short and long term future of the program?
- What effect or impact has the program having?
- On the basis of your conclusions what courses of actions are proposed?

- How are these to be implemented by whom and when? List your recommendations.

**Evaluation Methods: Observation**

Observation is an important and useful evaluation method in participatory evaluation. The following list of useful tips and problems may help you to improve your observation methods.

| Useful Tips | Problems |
|---|---|
| Participants need to decide jointly what to decide. | It is difficult to prevent the presence of the observer from affecting the behavior of those being observed. |
| They need to decide where observation will take place, when and by whom. | The actual presence of the observer usually cause changes in the normal behavior. |
| They also need to decide on coding/guidelines/questions. | If the observer knows the participants very well this may make it hard for him /her to be objective or unbiased in his/her observation. |
| If no coding is used they should decide how the information collected to be analyzed. | The observations made may be influenced by the role, training and even the personality of the observer. |
| Observers need brief training and support at first, in actual practice. | Involving many participants results in many opinions and many interpretations of the results all of which take extra time. |
| After observations have been made the information should be analyzed with the participants | Observations that are not recorded immediately will be less reliable. |
| Decisions as to conclusions, feedback and future action should be made jointly. | Limiting observations to a specific period does not tell the observer what happens at other times. For example not all meetings may be like the one he/she has observed. |

**Picture and photographs**

There are many ways in which picture and photographs can be used in participatory evaluation. Here are some ways in which you may wish to use pictures and photographs.

| Pictures | Photographs |
|---|---|
| Pictures can be used to stimulate discussion and analysis. | A series of photographs can record changes before during and after a program. |
| Large pictures are useful for discussions and publicity; small pictures are better for flash cards, which tell a story. | A story or profile can be recorded by photographs but this may take a long time to prepare. |
| Turning evaluation results in to pictures help participants to understand and use the results better. | Photographs contribute to the collection of information. |
| Pictures can show something that has existed in the past or will exist in the future. | An evaluation report can be made more interesting and effective if photographs are used. |
| Different people will see different things in the same pictures.<br>Drawn or pained pictures are cheaper than photographs and people need less training to produce them. | The camera sometimes capture more than the eye and pen. |

**Questionnaires**

The questions can be asked in one of 2 main ways described below.

**Open ended or free response questions:** The respondent answer these questions in his /her own words and whatever length he/she chooses. This way of asking questions can be particularly good for determining people's feeling and attitudes.

**Fixed-choice or fixed–response questions**: The respondent is asked to choose one or more answers from those provided. This way of asking questions can be particularly good for gathering facts and is often used where a lot is already known about the respondent or the area. This enables a sufficiently wide variety of possible answers to be provided on the questionnaire.

Usually we get the answers to the questions asked by two methods: **one self reported method, and the other interview method.** The table below can help to decide which method to use when.

| The Self Reported Method | The Interview Method |
|---|---|
| Cheaper to use. You do not need to pay for interviewers to see every respondent. | May be more expensive. Takes up more interview time |
| People can distribute questionnaires by minimum training. | Interviewers have to be trained that takes time and money. |
| Questionnaires can be distributes to large number of people. | It may take longer for the interviewers to be interviewed that to fill the questionnaires. |
| Respondents can answer in their own time and at their own pace/place. | The time and the place is decided jointly but the speed of the interview is usually determined by the interviewer. |
| Many answers can be recorded quickly but the information obtained is limited to specific questions so you may not find out why people answer that way or what else you think. | The interviewer can explain questions that are not clear, probe for more information or check answers that are not clear. The interviewers meet the respondents and see the circumstances in which the answers are given and how respondents feel about their answers. |
| It is hard to know whether the answers are reliable. Perhaps the respondent is just guessing, he/she has ticked the wrong answers or may be he or she does not understand the question. It is usually difficult and | The interviewers personality/appearance/attitude/etc. may influence unintentionally the way that answers are given. |

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| expensive to check answers. | |

**General Guidelines for asking questions**

- Do not begin with difficult /sensitive questions .Put these near the end so that if the respondents decide not to answer these you do not loose his willingness to answer the earlier questions.
- Do not make respondents feel that they ought to know the answers. Help them by saying " perhaps you have not had time to give much thought to this matter " May be we can find the answer later.
- Respondents may not have the answers. Even though they like to cooperate, respondents may not have the answer. Perhaps they just do not know, cannot remember, cannot express the answers well in words, have no strong opinion, or unfamiliar with answering the questions. Also they may be unreliable or untruthful.
- Decide carefully whether you will avoid emotional or sensitive questions. Using words like greedy, oppressed, immoral may seem to imply a judgment. Such words can cause bias in the answers. Respondents may be reluctant or nervous to answer such questions. However if you are looking for truthful answers you may need to use such words.
- Avoid making assumptions. Do not ask questions like " How many grades did you complete in primary schools" Perhaps the respondent had no chance of going to school.
- Do not use confusing questions. Avoid asking questions like " would you prefer your child not to be vaccinated". Keep it simple and positive" Do you wish your child to be vaccinated.
- Different ways of asking the same questions. These may be needed by the interviewer in order to be able to adopt the questions to different respondents.
- Use both direct and indirect questioning. For example, asking a parent about an elder child's health is not same as asking the child himself/herself. Older children can often provide important answers but it is necessary to get their parents or guardians permission first before questioning them.

**Basic Steps for Effective Questionnaires.**

- Decide exactly what you need to find out then accordingly frame the questions.
- Keep questions short and clear. Not more than twenty words. If the question deals with more than one idea, use several shorter questions instead of one long one. Underline or emphasize the main words or phrases some way.
- Keep the language clear and simple. Do not use slang or jargon, unless these are considered clearer than the other words. Make sure questions cannot have more than one meaning to the respondents.
- Avoid words that are not exact. Words like generally, often, usually, typical, rarely etc. Use exact words with one, clear and definite meaning.
- Make the questionnaire attractive. Plan how to set it out clearly with sub headings, spaces etc. Make it look easy for a respondent or interviewer to complete.
- Make sure the answer to one question relates smoothly to the next. For example, if necessary add, " if yes, ……did you " or if no----did you?.
- Allow enough space for recording answers. Perhaps the interviewer or respondent will need to write more on the back of a page or on a separate sheet of paper.

**Interviewing an essential skill**

An interview is a face to face meeting between 2 or more people where an interviewer ask questions to obtain information from 1 or more respondents. In addition an interviewer is also able to observe and form impressions about the respondents.

**Individual Interview**

With this type of interview there is one interviewer and one respondent. It is used to:

- Obtain information
- Find out about attitudes and interests
- Assess knowledge and skills.

- Help select people for training and promotion.
- Assess performance
- Give advice about problems and stress.
- Find out about reactions to programs.
- Provide a better basis for the preparation of questionnaires.

**Group Interview**

With this type of interview there is one interviewer and several respondents. Like the individual interview, this is used to find issues listed above. This interview also finds out the following.

- Find out how people think and act as a group
- Identify and find solutions to problems.

**Impact Assessment**

Impact assessment is the systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes- positive or negative, intended or not- in people's lives brought about by a given action or series of actions.

The units of assessments can be individual, household/CBO, community/village, local NGOs and institutions. The advantages and disadvantages of various units of assessments are summarized as follows.

| Units of Assessment | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| Individual | Easily defined and identified.<br>Allows social relation and gender issues to be explored.<br>Allows inter-household relation to be explored.<br>Can allow personal and | Most of the interventions are beyond individual<br>It may be difficult to speak to the most marginalized people.<br>Difficult of attribution through long impact |

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| | intimate issues to emerge. | chain.<br>Difficult to aggregate feelings. |
| Household | Permits appreciation of income, asset, consumption and labour pulling.<br>Permits appreciation of link between individual, household and community/group.<br>Permits understanding of links between household life cycle and well- being. | Exact membership is sometimes difficult to assess<br><br>Inter household relations are often ignored. |
| Group/CBO | Permits understanding of collective action and social capital.<br>Permits understanding of potential sustainability of impacts.<br>Permits understanding of potential transformation in the community. | Group dynamics are often difficult to understand<br><br>Difficult to compare using quantitative data<br><br>Exact membership some times difficult to assess. |
| Community/village | Permits understanding of differences with in the community.<br>Can act as sampling frame for household /individual assessment<br>Permits understanding of collective action and social capital.<br>Permits understanding of faction and clan relations | Exact boundaries are sometimes difficult to assess.<br>Community dynamics are difficult to understand.<br><br>Difficult to compare. |

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| | Permits understanding of potential transformation in the community and beyond. | |
| Local NGO | Permits understanding of potential sustainability of impact<br>Permits understanding of changes brought about by capacity building.<br>Allows assessment of performance (especially in terms of effectiveness and efficiency)<br>Allows exploration of links between change in the community, group and the individual level. | NGOs dynamic are difficult to understand<br><br>Difficult to compare various local NGOs |
| Institutions | Permits wider range and influence to be assessed<br>Permits assessment of how favorable future context is likely to help sustained change to continue. | Greater problems of attribution<br><br>Internal process and dynamics are difficult to explore and understand. |

The following are the criteria for the impact evaluations.

- There should be lessons of value for future projects.
- There should be sufficiently good documentations to make an effective impact study feasible, especially as regards the target population, the PCR rating should at least be satisfactory

- There should be no over whelming methodological or procedural problems for example inability to identify a relevant impact indicator.
- Ideally there should be some special features that might enhance the value of the project for impact evaluation – example might be: projects that exemplify best practice, project with inherent uncertainties that need investigating, project of special innovative interests and projects that are specially costly.

Impact Indicators for Income and living standards:

- Changes in household income.
- Changes in cash income from a particular crop or activity (usually easier to collect than total household income)
- Changes in level of expenditures. (e.g. as proxies for income)
- Changes in selected type of expenditures. (Education or health care)
- Use of cash and changes in expenditures by different members of the households.
- Levels of food consumption
- Quality of housing - number of rooms and type of constructions, as indicators of economic circumstances.
- Amount and quality of land held securely.
- Access to potable water supplies.
- Access to electricity.
- Access to sanitary facilities inside or out side the house.
- Household furnishings, possessions and consumer goods.
- Availability and quality of accessible public goods such as roads, schools and health centers.
- Number of children in schools.

**Problem of Attribution and Aggregation in Impact Assessment**

In the current climate, besides the vogue for development organizations to proclaim partnership and the need for synergy, raising money and gaining in reputation largely depend on demonstrating what a single organization has achieved, what difference it has made and what value it has added usually to the exclusion of other actors or agencies. This raises 2 central problems, how organization can synthesize or summarize what they are doing

(aggregation) and how they can find out to what extent any changes they observe were brought about by their actions (attribution) . Unfortunately today NGOs like other agencies tend to blame external factors and environment when things go wrong. Similarly, they tend to neglect to mention the role played by other organizations or concomitant events when things go right.
Attributing success of a program to a particular cause or action is difficult because of the following reasons.

- It is usually difficult to find a control group similar to the group of people benefiting from an intervention., who are subject to exactly the same influence, except for the specific agency input, and whose situation mirrors that of the beneficiary group over the life of a given project.
- Withholding support from a control group in order for it to remain "uncontaminated" is not only difficult (you may need to persuade other agencies not support them). It is in most cases unethical and may contravene their human rights.
- A particular intervention dose not occur in isolation from those of other organizations, from the local context, wider economic and political policies and more importantly from the actions and reactions of those who it aims to support. It will interact with these in different ways in different places. Unpicking what caused an impact in this situation in any scientific way is likely to be very difficult and usually very expensive.
- Often the most that can be done is to demonstrate through reasoned argument that a given input leads logically towards a given change., even if this can not be proved statistically. This in turn can be crosschecked against the view of other actors to see important areas of agreement or disagreement occur.

**Ten ways to spoil evaluation and make it invalid.**

- **Assuming that the changes are caused only by the existence of a program:** Changes some times happen just because time has passed for example people become older, learn more and change their opinions. Certain changes happen any way even with out the presence of a program.

- **Ignoring influences out side of a program:** Many things going on out side the programs influence People. These are changes in Government, policy, local plans, power groups, opportunities for work, availability of land, what they hear on the radio, what they see on a paper, the building of roads and so on.
- **Forgetting that the same evaluation method may give different results when used by different people.** For example two interviewers ask the same questions but one interviewer is patient, sensitive and friendly and the other is not. The answers they get to the same questions may be very different.
- **The bad choice of groups for comparison:** Such as groups of women from several villages who live at different distances from a water source and have different levels of income. All these facts influence the amount of water they obtain and how they use it. You cannot therefore compare these groups with out taking account of these facts.
- **Loss of interest by program staff and participants:** While the evaluation is in progress, if motivation and participation are seriously reduced, this will have some effects on the evaluation.
- **Repeating test, interviews, or questionnaires when participants**: can still remember the questions which were asked before or when they will also have other reasons ( not understood by the interviewers)for answering differently.
- **Forgetting that people can respond particularly well just because the evaluation is taking place**: People can be very enthusiastic about something new and want it to be a success. Then real problems or difficulties may be passed over quickly or hidden.
- **Claming that the results of a small scale evaluation also apply to a wider group of people or to wider area**: for example evaluating traditional birth attendants in one African country and then claiming that the results are also true for all traditional birth attendants in Africa. There may be some similarities but there are also some differences according to individual countries, customs, climate etc.
- Planning evaluation badly from the start. For instance evaluating a group of families who had attended nutrition education classes to find out how much they had learnt and were practicing and then claiming that evaluation results also told you about the nutrition knowledge and practices of other groups of families who had never attended classes.

The evaluation plans should have looked at both groups of families, and then compared the results.

- Using unreliable evaluation methods. For example using the same scale to weigh a hundred babies, but checking the scale regularly. If the scale was not working as well by the time the last babies were weighed the evaluation results were therefore not reliable for all one hundred babies, as the evaluation method had changed during the evaluation.,

The End.