

Bridging the Gap—A Guide to monitoring and evaluating development projects

Performance Measurement

Bridging the Gap

*A Guide to monitoring and
evaluating development projects*

Bernard Broughton & Jonathan Hampshire

learning
Donor
Project Framework
Participation
Data
Support
Partners
Management
Information
Indicators
Surveys





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CONTENTS

Prefacei
Introduction	1
Who is the Guide for?	1
Aims of the Guide	1
Why are monitoring and evaluation important?	1
Themes	2
How to use the Guide	2
Overview of contents	3
Acknowledgments	3
Glossary of key terms used to describe individuals and groups	4
Acronyms	5
1. The Australian context	7
1.1 Modes of NGO operation	7
1.2 Many different perspectives and information needs	8
1.3 Implications for monitoring and evaluation	17
2. Principles of Monitoring, Review and Evaluation	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Definitions	19
2.3 Plans and projects	21
2.4 Management information systems	25
3. Monitoring systems for implementers	29
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 The nature of information	29
3.3 Key stages in developing a project based monitoring system	34
3.4 Identifying key indicators	47
3.5 Data and information collection - sources and methods	55
3.6 Data analysis and reporting	80
4. Regular Review	89
4.1 Action and reflection	89
4.2 Drawing conclusions from monitoring data	90
4.3 Reviewing project design documents	90
4.4 Collaborative, problem solving approach to reviews	91
4.5 Assumptions and risks	91
4.6 Reviews and delegated authority	92
4.7 Mid-year reviews	92
4.8 Role for Australian NGOs	92
4.9 Personnel management	93
4.10 Reviewing partnerships	93

National Library of Australia cataloguing-in-publication entry

Broughton, Bernard

Bridging the gap : a guide to monitoring and evaluating development projects

Bibliography.

ISBN: 0 909831 79 3

1. Evaluation research (Social action programs). 2. Economic development projects - Evaluation. 3. Rural development projects - Evaluation. I. Hampshire, Jonathan. II. Australian Council for Overseas Aid. III. Title.

338.90072

Published in 1997 by the Australian Council For Overseas Aid

Private Bag 3,

Deakin, Canberra, ACT 2600.

Tel: (06) 285 1816, Fax (06) 285 1720,

Email: <acfoa@acfoa.asn.au>

Further copies of this Guide available from the Australian Council For Overseas Aid.

Funding from the Australian Agency for International Development to assist with the production of this publication is gratefully acknowledged.

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Design and Art Production: *Design ONE SOLUTIONS*, Canberra.

Printing: Pirie Printers, Canberra

5. Making the Most of Short Visits	95
5.1 Limitations And Compromises	95
5.2 Catch-Up Appraisal	95
5.3 Introduction to Short Visit Case Study	99
5.4 Pre-Departure Preparation	100
5.5 In the Capital	105
5.6 Project Site Visit	108
5.7 Final Days in Capital	113
5.8 Back Home	115
6. Planning and Managing Evaluations	117
6.1 Introduction	117
6.2 Reasons for Evaluation	117
6.3 Criticisms of Evaluation	118
6.4 Other Issues	120
6.5 Planning an Evaluation	120
6.6 Overseeing the Conduct of the Evaluation	130
6.7 Reporting	131
6.8 Institutional Learning	133
Annex 1 The Project Framework	135
Annex 2 Participatory Approaches	145
Annex 3 Learning and workshoping	163
Acknowledgments	170
Select Bibliography	171

PREFACE

“No, no there is nothing in the world that can be imagined in advance, not the slightest thing. Everything is made up of so many unique particulars that are impossible to foresee. In imagination, we pass over them in our haste and don’t notice that they’re missing. But realities are slow and indescribably detailed.”

Rainer Maria Rilke

“Why have you come here?” The elderly village man held me with his steady gaze. I began to explain to him about the feasibility study and its different aspects, but he politely cut me off. “Why have you come here?” As a question this was both a gift and a challenge. It was a gift because he was recognising me as a person, an individual. It was a challenge in that, before this old man was prepared to relate to me in any meaningful way, he wanted to make contact with me as a person, to know I was real, somebody who could be trusted with the truth as he saw it.

In our efforts to comply with the increasing pressures of bureaucracy and to be accountable to a wide range of stakeholders, there is always the danger that we may forget that development is first and foremost about people, and that we too are people! If we enter any situation and simply appear to be a sort of ‘information vacuum cleaner’, it is likely that the information we obtain will be of questionable value. However if we enter into a village or community with curiosity, humility and some useful tools, we will come away with insights into the realities of local people, as well as ourselves. In answering this old man’s question I remembered again that true development always flows in both directions.

As project managers, the personnel of Australian NGOs have to be many different things to different people. They are at the centre of a broad web of relationships (see illustration page 9). The numerous stakeholders to whom they relate, and to whom they are variously accountable, represent different cultures, perceptions and realities. It is the job of the project manager to act as an interpreter, a translator from one reality to the next, to bridge a number of different gaps.

There is the gap between data, information and knowledge. Data by itself is very often meaningless, it requires the application of specific analysis to turn it into information if we are to learn anything. The skills required to undertake this sort of analysis can be taught. But then information is often contradictory, confusing or simply nonsensical. It requires a broader process of analysis that considers the wider context of a project, bringing understanding to the information thus converting it to knowledge. The skills required to do this can be partially taught, but they also come from exposure and experience.

There is one final step, a step rarely achieved, but worth pursuing. That is the process of knowledge becoming wisdom. For this to take place it is necessary to ‘sit with’ the knowledge in a non-judgmental way, to tune into the background culture from which the knowledge is emerging, and to listen to what people are both telling and not telling. This process of contemplation, ‘deep listening’ and intuition can sometimes lead to a depth of insight which amounts to wisdom. Knowledge used with wisdom leads to rapid learning. Changes undertaken with this level of insight have a sound foundation.

Another gap to be bridged is that between stakeholders. This gap is multifaceted in nature, it can be geographic, cultural, perceptual and linguistic. The sheer fact of distance creates a gap. Anybody who has worked for any length of time in a field office will be aware of the gap that exists. It constantly threatens clear communication, between a head office and the field, even though the occupants may be from the same culture. As someone traveling back and forth between these two organisational entities it is the job of the project manager to shrink this gap as much as possible. Then there are the actual cultural differences. The obvious one will be between Australian culture and the culture of the recipient group. Cultural sensitivity and cross cultural communication skills are vital. But there is also the need for understanding the cultural differences between an Australian NGO and, for example, AusAID. This is an organisational cultural gap which must also be handled with empathy and sensitivity.

In terms of the actual work, there are always gaps between project plans or designs and the realities of day-to-day implementation. This is where the role of monitoring, review and evaluation are really very important. If these activities, and the systems to support them, are in place and regularly undertaken, the gap between plans and project realities will not become too great. This provides a constant checking mechanism which allows either plans or activities to be appropriately adjusted, thus reducing this gap.

Lastly, there is the gap between the rhetoric and the reality of NGOs. The rhetoric of most agencies states that their stance and their vision is based on the realities of the day-to-day life for ordinary people at the grassroots level. Unless these stances, policies and visions are regularly checked against that reality, the link between what an agency describes as reality and the reality itself will grow increasingly tenuous. It is the job of the project manager to provide information to the organisation about the realities of its field work.

If we are to bridge all of these gaps effectively there are a number of things that must be done. We must be clear about who the various stakeholders are, and clear about their information needs. Monitoring and evaluation should take a systems approach which emphasises minimum information. This is in order to ensure that the energy invested in establishing and maintaining such a system is warranted, in terms of the information and understanding gained from it. Lastly, in order to be able to do this Australian NGO staff need a set of practical monitoring and evaluation tools and the ability to pass these on to partners as part of their role in training and supporting local counterpart organisations.

The book you hold in your hands may not be able to furnish you with the curiosity or humility, but it most definitely will provide you with many of the useful tools. Bernard Broughton, Jonathan Hampshire, and Julie Smith who supplied the wonderful cartoons, are all *real* people writing from real experience. Between these lines you can hear the village chickens scratching and smell the smoke from the cooking fires. The techniques outlined here are a powerful mix of approaches, mostly participatory, adapted by the authors through their own experience, in numerous communities throughout many countries.

As this Guide makes clear, the project manager is someone who requires skills in a number of disciplines. The work undertaken often spans several vastly different perceptions of reality. The reality of village people struggling, usually with great good humor and forbearance, with the daily needs of survival. The realities and values of Australian NGOs and their struggle to create a world of greater justice, tolerance, opportunity and choice. And the reality of bureaucrats from funding bodies coping with political directives, complex systems and stringent accountability. In all of this the project manager is an envoy between different realities. This requires skills of diplomacy and communication, but perhaps above all else, the ability to empathise.

Documents such as this one are dynamic in nature and never complete. New understandings and insights are always emerging. It is hoped that those who use the Guide will adapt the techniques further themselves. I would like to think that in two or three years a new, improved edition might be produced which would include some of the insights, stories and tools that people have discovered or used in their own work. I therefore encourage readers and practitioners to send any such materials to the Australian Council For Overseas Aid for possible inclusion in a new edition.

It is fitting to remember that we are involved in an endeavour that is difficult but worthwhile. The person who strains after rapid or instant success will find his or her best intentioned efforts frustrated. At the heart of the development process, be it the development of a society or our own unfolding journey, is patience.

Mike Crooke

*ACFOA Director -
Development Advice & Training*

July 1997.

Chapter 1. CONTENTS

- 1. The Australian context**
- 1.1 Modes of NGO operation7
 - 1.1.1 NGOs in international networks7
 - 1.1.2 NGOs working with partner agencies7
 - 1.1.3 NGOs working directly with communities7
 - 1.1.4 Partnership8
- 1.2 Many different perspectives and information needs8
 - 1.2.1 Needs and concerns of implementing agencies10
 - 1.2.2 Needs and concerns of ANGOs and their project managers12
 - 1.2.3 Needs and concerns of beneficiaries14
 - 1.2.4 AusAID's needs and concerns15
- 1.3 Implications for monitoring and evaluation17
 - 1.3.1 Reliance on partner agencies17
 - 1.3.2 Strengthening local systems17

1. THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

This part of the Guide provides an overview of the context within which Australian NGOs and their project managers work. Modes of operation and project implementation arrangements are described, the main stakeholders and their concerns are discussed and the implications for monitoring, review and evaluation systems identified.

1.1 Modes of NGO operation

1.1.1 NGOs in international networks

The larger Australian NGOs, agencies and churches are members of international groupings and they operate to a greater or lesser degree within this international framework (e.g. World Vision International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the World Council of Churches). The Australian member of the network forwards funds to an international office or to an office in the country concerned, generally handing over considerable responsibility.

Programs and projects are usually designed by staff working in international or country offices in any case and circulated amongst member organisations for funding. ANGOs which fund these projects may have played only a minor role in the identification and design of the project and may subsequently play little part in its implementation. Staff may be provided to give the project an Australian identity, but the ANGO will not manage the project in a direct sense.

One of the consequences of this is that 'monitoring visits' by ANGO head office staff often don't fall within the ambit of the project's internal monitoring system and are frequently restricted to meeting the reporting requirements of funding agencies and supporting further funding submissions. It is also significant that there is generally no direct link between the ANGO and participants at the community level.

1.1.2 NGOs working with partner agencies

Some ANGOs work directly with partner agencies in developing countries (e.g. Community Aid Abroad with the Relief Society of Tigray). In some cases the partner agency will be large and sophisticated and may identify and design projects themselves, circulating them to supporting NGOs and governments for funding and implementing the projects independently. At the other end of the spectrum the partner agency may be a fledgling NGO reliant on external advice and assistance.

It is important to note that the partner NGO (whether large or small) may itself play only a support role in project implementation. Many health, education and agricultural projects, for example, are primarily implemented through local government departments, with the partner NGO providing support and advice in specific areas such as community education and staff training.

1.1.3 NGOs working directly with communities

It is unusual for ANGOs to intervene directly to implement a project on their own. Typically they direct funds to projects and provide technical support while their partner agencies carry out the work of implementation.

However a small number of ANGOs do establish direct relationships with communities and implement projects without involving any other intermediaries.



1.1.4 Partnership

The concept of partnership is clearly an important one in the context of the way ANGOs think and work. This influences, among other things, the way in which they view monitoring and evaluation. Some key points need to be borne in mind:-

- the ANGO may emphasise dialogue, mutual learning and trust and may believe that it is not its role to question the partner's advice in relation to the implementation of the project
- trust in the relationship may put the ANGO in a position where it begins to cover for the partner in reporting to the donor
- at the end of the day the partnership may be more important than the project, and process goals may be more important than project goals.

1.2 Many different perspectives and information needs

Projects involve many players with different roles, perspectives and management information needs.

Project stakeholders might include:

- a funding agency (most frequently AusAID)
- the Australian NGO
- other NGOs supporting the same or similar projects
- an intermediary partner agency (e.g. a national NGO)
- an implementing agency (e.g. a local health authority)
- members of the community concerned

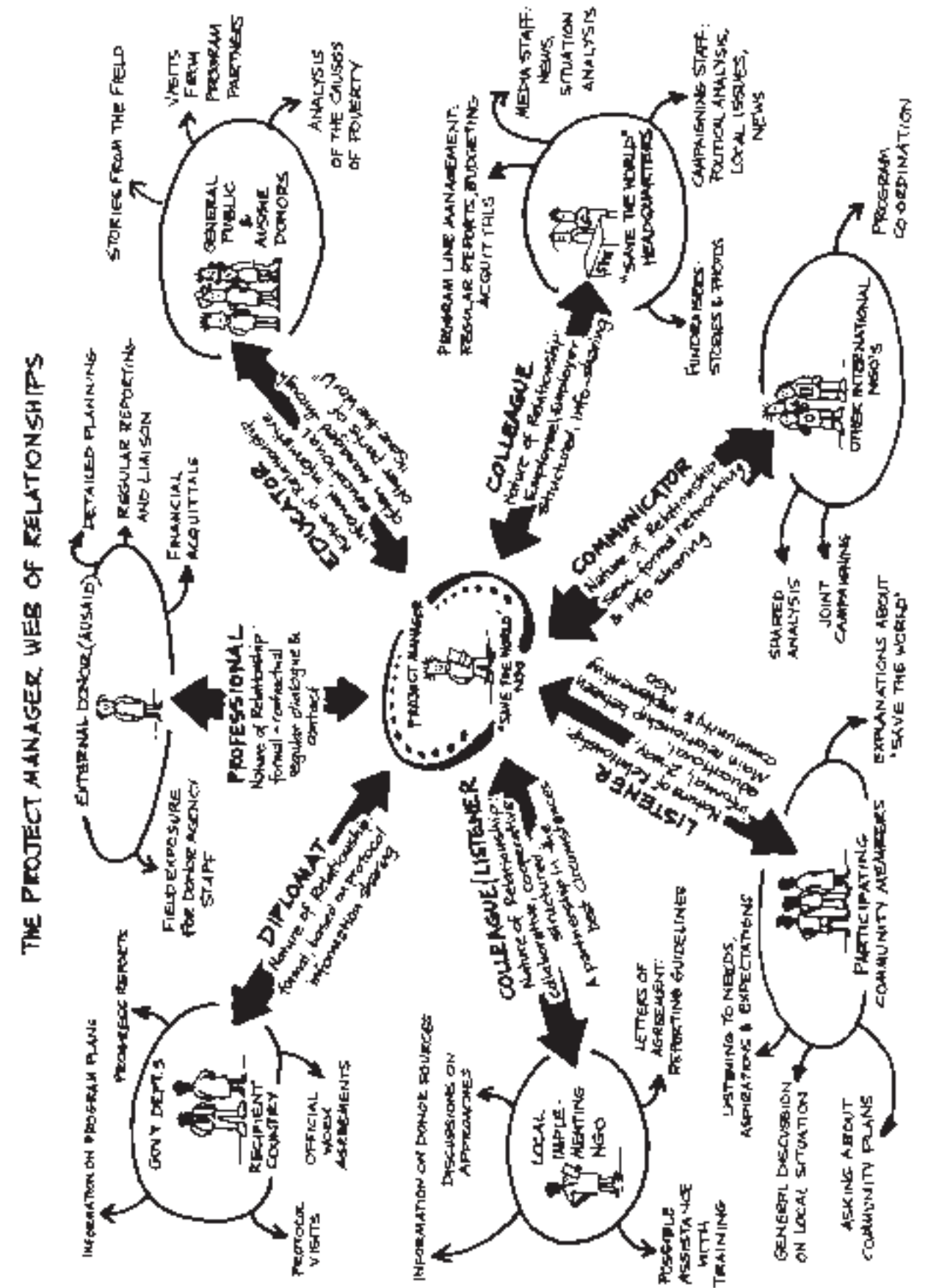
Within each of these groups there will also be administrative sub-groups (divisions, sections, offices, committees, teams etc) with different concerns and interests. Moreover, many different **people** will be involved - each with his/her own educational background, temperament, abilities, likes and dislikes, philosophy, experience and attitudes. There may also be different **peoples** involved - each with their own language, culture, religion, history and views of the world.

Understanding the people and peoples involved and developing a direct and constructive working relationship with them is certainly as important as understanding the systems - indeed the two are inseparably linked.

All the stakeholder groups listed above may consider themselves to be involved in the management (and therefore monitoring and evaluation) of the project, but they will be managers in very different senses. An important starting point in analysing management information needs is therefore to develop a precise understanding of roles and responsibilities.

NGO project managers may find it helpful to construct a mind map of the various players and their perspectives and consider his/her role in helping each realise their information needs. An example of what is meant is shown in Figure 1 opposite.

An overview of the main stakeholder's likely needs and concerns is provided under section 1.2.1, highlighting their respective planning, management and reporting roles and responsibilities. Fuller treatment is given to the information needs of implementing agencies in Chapter 3 on monitoring.



1.2.1 Needs and concerns of implementing agencies

The implementing agency will usually be a government agency or a local NGO.

Responsibilities	Needs and Concerns
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Planning

Implementing agencies should be directly involved in planning, but the planning process is often dominated (led) by other agencies 'up the line', including ANGOs. This has a powerful psychological influence on field level managers. If they have not been fully involved in planning the project they will not have ownership of the project idea, and may be less committed to its implementation.

Intermediary agencies, including government departments and NGOs, often leave implementing agencies in the dark about the project design. Project documentation is often technical, voluminous, written in English, and completed overseas or in the capital city. There is therefore an urgent need for more attention to be placed on the translation of such documents into more accessible and useful tools for implementers.

Project monitoring, review and evaluation requirements should be built into project planning and design, and should focus first on the needs of implementing agencies. If this is not done, the information required further up the management hierarchy will only be available through ad-hoc extractive monitoring and evaluation activities.

When planning and designing monitoring and evaluation activities and systems, careful attention needs to be paid to local organisational capacity and resource constraints. Existing systems are often extremely weak, there are significant existing reporting demands, and any new systems and activities must therefore offer clear and tangible benefits to local managers.

Implementing agencies can't be expected to effectively monitor if it is not built into the project design in the first place or if they are not clearly identified as the most critical link in delivering development assistance.

Implementation

Managers within the implementing agency need reliable and timely information about project finances, available human and physical resources and progress with physical implementation, process and impact. Information requirements are broad and complex, and information which is not project specific will often be as important as that directly related to the defined project scope (e.g. agency politics, local politics, the relationship with the finance ministry, degree of communal cooperation, etc).

Existing management information systems (based on both quantitative and qualitative data) are often weak (producing poor quality information of limited utility) and may be inappropriate in the context of local needs, skills and resource constraints. The knowledge, skills and resources needed to review and develop these systems is also often lacking.



Because project based M&E systems and procedures are often designed without input from field managers, and tend to revolve around the reporting needs of project sponsors, implementing partners may feel overburdened by the demands of the ANGO and/or stifled by the ANGO's concerns and agendas.

While the implementing agency has primary responsibility for managing implementation, the level of control that they actually have over the work, the project environment and the available resources may in reality be extremely limited. Responsibility, authority and capacity are very different things.

Authority needs to be decentralised to allow implementing agencies to manage. More attention needs to be paid to developing skills which will enhance local capacity to collect, analyse and **use** relevant information (not just to collect and then report).

Reporting and accountability

Reporting back to supporting ANGOs on progress and the use of funds may be viewed as an imposition by the implementing partner agency (particularly when there is no strong feeling of accountability to the ANGO).

The reporting burden can become nightmarish when implementing agencies find themselves having to report to several NGOs and donors in varying formats and at different times. Managing this can greatly detract from attending to the monitoring required for project implementation.

Whether the implementing agency is a local NGO or a government agency, it will also need to report to its own government. The type of information and the formats in which it is to be provided may be quite different to what is required by ANGOs and backdonors. This makes reporting even more complex and time-consuming.

ANGOs and backdonors should, at the very least, ensure that their reporting demands are reasonable, that they build to as large extent as possible on those parts of existing monitoring and reporting systems that work, and that time and effort is spent on **negotiating** an acceptable and workable arrangement with implementing partners.

1.2.2 Needs and concerns of ANGOs and their project managers

Australian based project managers may only visit a project once a year and even then for only a few days. Obtaining information to keep track of project progress and to support reporting responsibilities is therefore mostly done by correspondence - by mail or fax. Australian NGO project managers probably spend around 75% of their time monitoring projects, but this is almost all done from their desks. Visits account for only a small proportion of monitoring effort.

Monitoring from afar is problematic and many project managers become frustrated trying to obtain reports from partner agencies. Project managers need tools to approach this important aspect of their work, in the same way that tools are required for the conduct of field trips.

Responsibilities	Needs and concerns
Planning	<p>ANGOs have varying degrees of involvement in, and responsibility for, project planning. This may range from having no involvement in the preparation of a plan (for a project which they subsequently become involved in supporting), to taking a lead role in plan formulation and documentation.</p> <p>The involvement of the ANGO is often in the context of re-formulating and packaging a proposal conceived elsewhere for presentation to AusAID.</p> <p>Whatever the degree of involvement, the ANGO certainly needs to understand the process by which the plan was prepared (who, when, how, why) and what the plan proposes and entails. This is essential if the ANGO is to play its part in supporting the collection, analysis and use of relevant information during implementation.</p> <p>If project documentation is unclear or incomplete, clarifying the scope of project plans and the different stakeholder views of what the plan might actually be may be an important role of ANGO project managers.</p>
Implementation	<p>ANGOs do not normally play a direct role in field level implementation, except in the sense that they facilitate funding and may provide technical advice and support to partner agencies. They do not therefore usually have any direct responsibility for the ongoing collection of primary data.</p> <p>ANGOs nevertheless need to be kept informed from the field about progress with project activities and whether or not expected development benefits are being realised. The main purpose of providing this information should be to help ANGOs identify what (if anything) they can do to help address problems and better support implementation.</p> <p>Monitoring by ANGOs is in danger of becoming synonymous with reporting to backdonors. This is understandable given the immediacy of reporting responsibilities that Australian NGO project managers face, and their distance from the actual project, but they must pinch themselves from time to time to recall that the primary function of monitoring is to support the implementation of the project.</p>

Reporting and accountability

ANGOs legitimately expect to be able to monitor not only the performance of the project, but also the performance of the partner. ANGOs have a responsibility for identifying situations where the money they have provided is being wasted or seriously misused, and taking appropriate action. This should include the option of terminating a project or ceasing to work with a particular partner.

ANGOs directing funds to partner agencies have a responsibility to report back to the original donors and account for money spent. The reporting and accountability requirements are formalised in the case of 'official' aid, less so in the case of public donations.

AusAID squarely places the responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the ANGO to which the funds are provided. The contract is between AusAID and the ANGO and there has (to date) been no attempt to join other parties in the contract. This arrangement is based on something of a fiction - that the ANGO is implementing the project, involved in regular monitoring and able to report. ANGOs plug this gap with 'monitoring visits'.

In theory Australian NGOs could set up matching contracts with partner agencies establishing precise management and reporting responsibilities. This rarely occurs because:

- ANGOs are reluctant to get their partner agencies to sign formal contracts; and
- the ANGO may feel it has to in a sense justify its role as intermediary and thus willingly assumes responsibility for reporting.

There are other hurdles to partner agency reporting. The partner agency may:-

- lack the experience and the capacity to conceptualise and report in the manner required by AusAID;
- reject the data collection, monitoring and reporting paradigm of the ANGO/backdonor, or view it as a low priority;
- be reluctant or unwilling to commit information to paper; and
- not have any contact with AusAID and tend to regard satisfying AusAID's requirements as the ANGO's sole responsibility.

You end up with the Australian NGO project manager exclaiming: "I wish we could get our partner agency to do more monitoring!"

The internal information needs of the ANGO (e.g. the board, program committee, and director) must also be met. These demands may be significant and bear little if any relationship to the information needs of the project itself. Because of capacity and resource constraints, a choice must therefore be made between relative priorities. The project often loses out.

1.2.3 Needs and concerns of beneficiaries

Responsibilities	Needs & concerns
Planning	<p>Despite the widely recognised need for community members to be involved in the planning of development projects which affect them, the way in which existing funding and approval systems work tends to mitigate against this happening in a satisfactory way. Even if planning starts at a community level, much of the subsequent analysis, prioritisation and documentation then takes place in offices at higher levels, without ongoing reference to community needs and concerns.</p> <p>While there is a degree of inevitability in this while funding and approval procedures are controlled by external stakeholders, it is important to use whatever tools and devices are available to mobilise more meaningful and sustained community input into project plan preparation and ongoing revision once implementation gets underway.</p> <p>Issues of community participation in project planning and management are presented in Annex 2 of this Guide.</p>
Implementation	<p>There are relatively few development projects in which the community takes an active role in project management (unfortunately). Communities may be consulted, but they rarely have the power or authority to make their own decisions about project resource allocation.</p> <p>The corollary to this is that little consideration is usually given to the management information needs of participating community members. Many projects are thus implemented 'over the heads' of the community or group concerned.</p> <p>Better communication and consultation between implementing agencies and beneficiary communities and groups is vital in that it:-</p>

- provides feedback on the appropriateness and performance of the project (some problems will be most apparent to beneficiaries);
- enables beneficiaries to contribute to improving the performance and design of the project;
- enables beneficiaries to better judge the value of the project, to gauge their progress and assess their own role and contribution (this may lead to increased motivation, or if the assessment is negative, to criticism and activism); and
- transfers skills in information collection and analysis to beneficiaries.



DISAPPOINTED WITH THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, KEVIN HIT ON A BRILLIANT IDEA.

Reporting and accountability

At the very least, project monitoring and evaluation systems should incorporate a complaints and response mechanism to enable beneficiaries to break through the normal wall of silence and more actively contribute to decision making. This is important because the lack of capacity of beneficiaries to reject aid is a major reason for the generally poor performance of development assistance.

More attention needs to be paid to the views of community members in all project monitoring, review and evaluation activities. ANGOs have a pivotal role to play in supporting this work within the overseas aid program.

1.2.4 AusAID's needs and concerns

Responsibilities	Needs and concerns
Planning	<p>AusAID requires clear and well structured project documentation to help it make choices about which activities to support. AusAID officers look for good projects, even innovative ones, but they must ensure that control mechanisms are in place to meet bureaucratic reporting and accountability requirements.</p> <p>AusAID officers do not usually play a role in the planning of NGO projects, although they can influence the design through the appraisal process. While AusAID's appraisal procedures are largely based on the paperwork submitted, short field trips to the project area may be included to gain a first hand picture of the situation on the ground.</p> <p>Approved project plans provide the basis on which contractual arrangements are made, finances allocated and subsequent monitoring and review activities are carried out. Project plan documentation therefore takes on great importance.</p>

Implementation

AusAID contracts others to implement its projects (e.g. ANGOs and Australian consultancy companies) who in turn work with (and through) partner agencies. AusAID often assumes that the contracted Australian agency has more control over its local partners (and the wider development environment) than it really does.

AusAID (like most aid bureaucracies) is mainly concerned with demonstrating tangible project 'outputs' (gate measurements - see Clayton 1983), whereas ANGOs are generally more concerned with the process of implementation and the way in which results are attained. This difference in approach needs to be recognised and appropriately managed to reduce the scope for disagreement between AusAID and NGOs.

Reporting and accountability

AusAID expects to be informed that:

- the project is being implemented in compliance with relevant contractual and legal requirements and in a manner consistent with project documentation
- any contract variations are justified
- funds are accounted for; and that
- if problems are encountered in implementation, how the ANGO and the implementing agencies are dealing with them.

AusAID officers expect NGOs to be intellectually honest but they also recognise that the agency they work for does not want bad news (it might get back to the Minister or to the public). As a result ANGOs can run the risk of being punished for being too honest.

A more prosaic challenge facing NGOs is meeting bureaucratic reporting requirements without being stifled by them.



1.3 Implications for monitoring and evaluation

1.3.1 Reliance on partner agencies

While ANGOs target their assistance at needy members of local communities, implementation is usually undertaken by others and what ANGOs describe as their monitoring and evaluation activities are at one or two removes from implementation.

As a result, ANGOs rely heavily on their partners to prepare financial reports, account for funds spent, prepare physical progress reports and describe achievements. ANGOs supplement this with short field visits to familiarise, observe, support and collect information.

This remoteness can result in a limited dialogue with the partner agency (at least on project specific details) and very little direct dialogue with community members and representatives. The bulk of communication is through the mail or fax, and is often largely oriented towards meeting donor reporting requirements.

1.3.2 Strengthening local systems

The quality of the information on which ANGOs rely can be improved by supporting the development of appropriate management information systems within partner and implementing agencies. This also supports implementation capacity.

ANGO project managers therefore need to ask:-

1. what monitoring capacity does the partner need to implement the project?
2. what monitoring do we need to satisfy ourselves and the backdonor?
3. how can these best be matched?

The first tends to suffer at the expense of the second and yet helping to develop the monitoring and review capacity of partner agencies is an area in which Australian NGOs could play an important technical support and training role.

There is a great difference between engaging in a capacity building program and merely undertaking to periodically fill in the information gaps and 'cover' for the partner, which is counterproductive in the long term. At the design stage of any project the supporting ANGO should carefully assess the experience and capacity of the partner agency to implement the project and, if appropriate and feasible, incorporate support for building the partner's management capacity.

Chapter 2. CONTENTS

2. Principles of Monitoring, Review and Evaluation	
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Definitions	19
2.2.1 Monitoring	19
2.2.2 Regular review	20
2.2.3 Evaluation	20
2.3 Plans and projects	21
2.3.1 Why plan?	21
2.3.2 The project cycle	22
2.3.3 The project 'box'	22
2.3.4 Flexible plans - to guide and not constrain	25
2.4 Management information systems	25

2. PRINCIPLES OF MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to help the reader develop an understanding of some key monitoring, review and evaluation issues and principles.

The chapter includes sections on:-

- definitions
- plans and projects, and
- management information systems

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 then deal respectively with monitoring, review, short visits and evaluation in an operational context.

2.2 Definitions

There is no universal agreement as to what ground the terms monitoring, review and evaluation should cover and there is an element of personal preference in establishing the demarcation between them. The important thing is to gain agreement on basic principles and definitions with those agencies and individuals you work directly with.

The definitions given below distinguish between activities that are essential to support project implementation (monitoring and regular reviews) and activities that serve a broader and more reflective purpose (mid-term reviews and evaluations).

2.2.1 Monitoring

Monitoring involves the collection, analysis, reporting and use of information about the project's progress and initial impact. It is primarily a management responsibility and should continue throughout the life of a project. Monitoring systems and procedures should provide the mechanism by which relevant information is provided to the right people at the right time to help them make decisions.

Monitoring should highlight strengths and weaknesses in project implementation and enable the responsible personnel to deal with problems, improve performance, build on successes and adapt to changing circumstances.

Monitoring should focus on:-

- physical progress (input provision, work programs, service delivery) and process (management and local capacity building);
- the preliminary response by targeted community members to project activities (knowledge, attitudes and practices);
- reasons for any unexpected or adverse response by the target group; and
- financial matters (budget and expenditure).

Monitoring is also essential for purposes of accountability to the project's official funders and public supporters and to the people affected by the project.

It is important to remember, however, that much of what actually happens in any rural development context (with or without a project) is heavily influenced by factors not under the control of any one of the project stakeholders, nor amenable to monitoring in the sense described above. It is useful to distinguish between monitoring and 'scanning' (see Moris & Copeland, 1993). Those responsible for managing field level service delivery activities have to continuously scan the external environment to understand what is likely to happen as part of the big-picture. Will resources be made available on time? Is the community still angry about the car crash? Can we get the water engineer to come as planned given the re-organisation occurring in the health department? Will the drought break soon? Has that character in the planning unit done anything about the re-vote request? Will the Minister approve the logging permit?

These matters have to be tracked and assessed (monitored), but not in the way that one monitors the internal progress of a project

against what was planned. In this respect managers have to rely on their own experience, skills, contacts and powers of prediction and influence.

The different ways in which monitoring may be carried out by project field managers is extremely varied. Different circumstances, people and skills will require different approaches and tools. Further discussion on monitoring issues and options is provided in Chapter 3.

2.2.2 Regular review

Project reviews should be carried out regularly and should aim to involve all the key stakeholders concerned with managing, or supporting, project implementation. Reviews may be carried out at different levels within the management structure, at different times and with varying frequency. Different review activities need not involve all stakeholders at the same time (e.g. regular field level reviews may be conducted that only involve field based staff).

The main purpose of reviews is to share information and perspectives on project progress, identify management action that may be required to keep the project on track or to overcome constraints, and to agree on who should take the required action, when and how. Review findings and decisions should be fed back into planning to help keep operational plans updated and relevant. The information generated by monitoring and review should also provide the basis on which stakeholders account to one another, including to community participants.

Reviews thus provide the opportunity for project implementers to further analyse the information collected through monitoring, reflect on the implications, make informed decisions and take appropriate management action to support implementation. Reviews should be conducted in a participatory manner and encourage the development of a consensus

among implementing partners and communities about what is going well and what isn't and what needs to be done. They should not be viewed as simply 'talk shops' however. Their main purpose is decision making and they must be action oriented.

Reviews are normally carried out at pre-determined points in time (e.g. every six months, annually or to fit in with an agricultural or community activity cycle). They may however be conducted on an ad-hoc basis when problems suddenly arise that need to be addressed. The frequency of reviews should be determined through clearly specifying their purpose, deciding on who is expected to attend and contribute, reviewing existing monitoring and review systems within implementing agencies and taking into account the reporting and review requirements of donors. The scope and duration of a project will also influence the choice of appropriate review frequency.

Reviews which are conducted with external assistance and which mainly serve external purposes (such as donor led mid-term reviews) are considered to be part of evaluation and are dealt with in Chapter 6 of the Guide.

2.2.3 Evaluation

Evaluation can be distinguished from monitoring and review by:-

- its scope (broader - being concerned with whether or not the right objectives and the right strategy was chosen);
- its timing (less frequent - mid-term, completion or ex-post);
- those involved (may incorporate external or 'independent' personnel); and
- the users and use of the results (including planners and policy makers concerned with more strategic issues, rather than just managers responsible for implementing the tasks in hand).

The DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation (mainly bilateral donor agencies) has agreed on the following definition for evaluation:-

"An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability."

This is a complex statement but it covers the different elements involved in an evaluation.

Useful evaluations are unfortunately rare because they tend to be over ambitious, top-down and methodologically difficult to carry out effectively. Despite these problems evaluation remains important and its usefulness needs to be improved. Strengthening monitoring and review systems is one part of the solution, as evaluations depend significantly on the information regularly collected and reported through monitoring and review activities. If monitoring systems do not work, evaluation is made more difficult.

More effective evaluation can also be supported by involving implementing partners and targeted communities in evaluating projects for themselves. Participatory evaluation approaches with communities are well described in such texts as 'Partners in Evaluation' (Feuerstein, 1994).

Evaluations should offer opportunities for organisation's to be reflective about the quality of their work and the appropriateness of their strategies. They should attempt to draw lessons from the experience gained to guide future planning and action. Lessons drawn from project failures and shortcomings are as important as lessons drawn from successful outcomes.

Ideas and tools to support the development of more practical and useful approaches to designing and conducting project evaluations are presented in Chapter 6.

2.3 Plans and projects

2.3.1 Why plan?

While this Guide is not specifically about planning, the topic is so important in the context of monitoring, review and evaluation, that some principles need to be made clear.

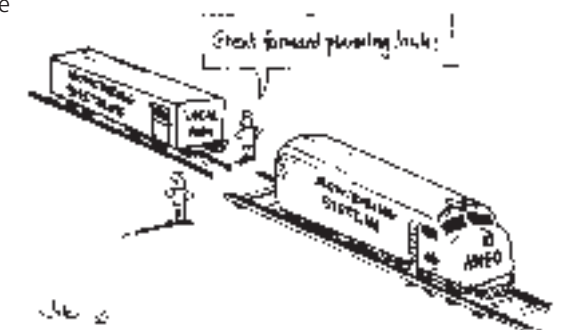
The purpose of having a set of project planning procedures is to help ensure that projects have been carefully thought through, and that they:-

- are within the scope of identified priorities
- address clearly identified problems and target groups
- are technically feasible
- have a realistic implementation schedule
- are accurately costed
- are manageable given resource and management capacity constraints
- are socially and economically desirable, and
- will provide sustainable benefits.

The planning process, if carried out in a participatory manner, also allows different stakeholders to exchange ideas, accommodate different needs and negotiate an acceptable plan of action.

Project planning helps the stakeholders to analyse options and make choices between different project proposals (through project appraisal). Design documentation also provides a record of what was initially planned which should help guide implementation and provide an agreed framework within which to start monitoring and reviewing progress.

Project plans are an essential management tool.



In the context of monitoring, review and evaluation, the key additional points to be made about plans are that:-

- the design must incorporate appropriate activities and adequate resources to allow the required monitoring, review and evaluation to be carried out (otherwise it almost certainly won't happen);
- operational plan documentation must be regularly reviewed and revised as circumstances demand - plans are there to guide but not constrain (keeping in context such things as engineering and architectural designs which must meet certain specifications and standards); and
- planning does not happen just at the beginning of a rural development project - it is an integral part of ongoing project management, monitoring and review.

2.3.2 The project cycle

The project cycle concept aims to emphasise two main points:-

- project development should pass through a series of consecutive steps to help ensure that projects are well planned, properly appraised, adequately resourced and effectively implemented; and that
- lessons learned during implementation should be fed back into the planning process to improve the design and implementation of future initiatives.

A typical project cycle is shown in Figure 2.

Keep in mind, however, that planning does not just happen at the beginning of the cycle. Plans must be regularly reviewed and revised to incorporate lessons learned during implementation to ensure that they remain relevant and up to date. This point is illustrated and emphasised in Figure 3.

2.3.3 The project 'box'

When we talk about 'projects', what do we mean? A brief definition is useful to help ensure that there is a common understanding of what a project is.

A project usually has the following characteristics. It has:-

- a specific objective, outputs and activities
- an estimated start and a finish date
- a specific geographic location (or area of coverage) and targeted beneficiaries
- clearly specified inputs and costs

Projects should be identified and designed within the context of ongoing 'programs', where these exist. Projects provide the detailed investment and management plans which should support the attainment of broader program objectives.

Fig 2. Project Cycle

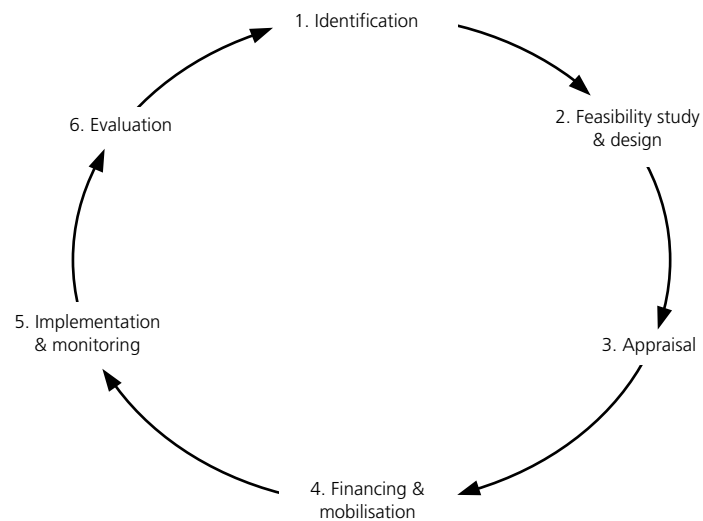
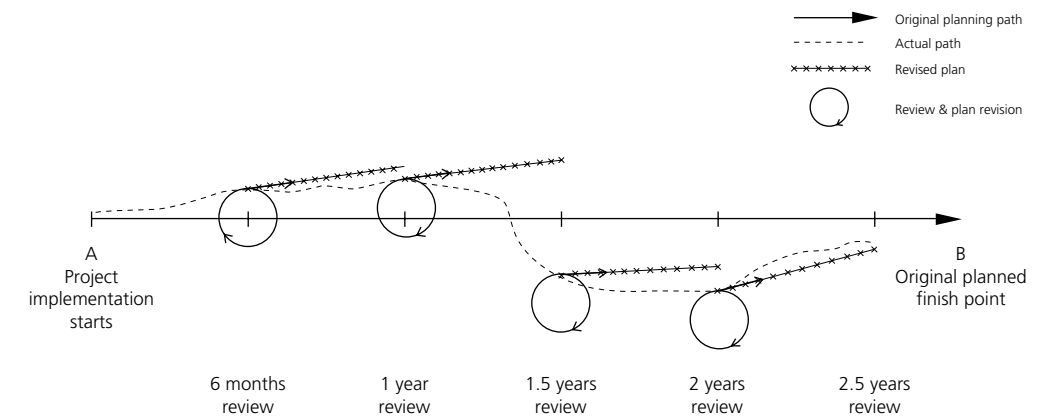


Fig 3. Planning During Implementation



Similarly, program specification should be undertaken within the context of 'policy' statements and priorities. This relationship between policies, programs and projects is illustrated in Figure 4, using an agricultural sector example.

While it is useful to understand the **difference** between what is technically a project, and what is an ongoing program, there are also **similarities**. Both programs and projects require the same types of inputs and the same management skills if they are to be effectively implemented. Project planning skills can therefore be equally useful in analysing and redesigning on-going programs.

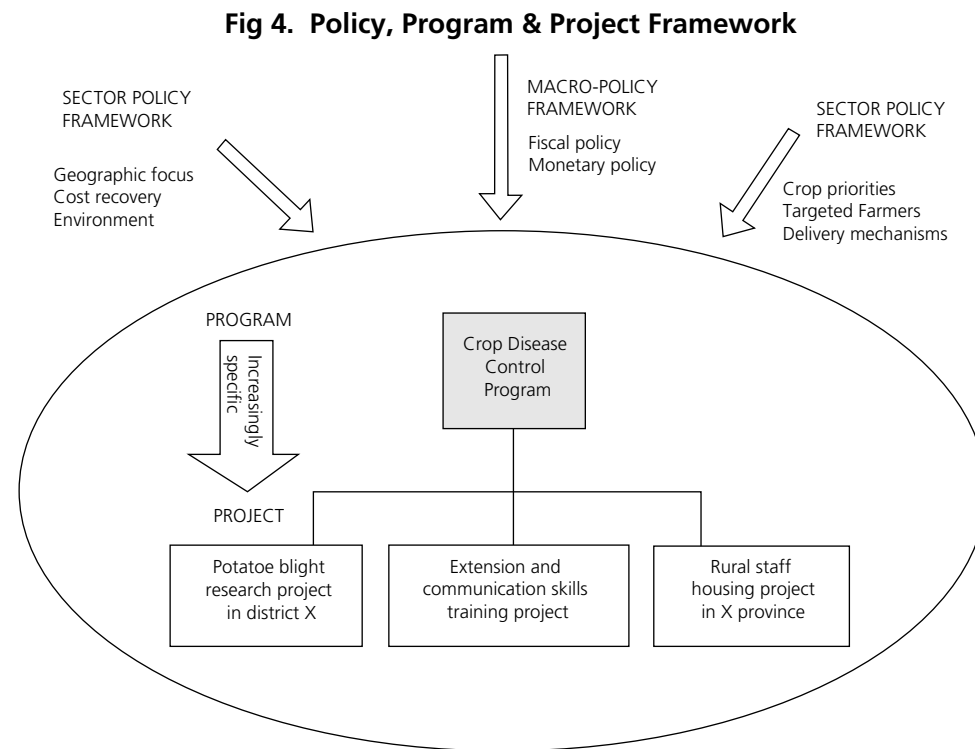
The main advantages of the project approach are that:-

- it provides a conceptual boundary within which detailed information on specific issues can be collected and analysed;
- it requires specification of objectives, outputs, activities and inputs which in turn allows management roles and responsibilities to be clearly defined, work plans to be detailed and cash flows to be drawn up;
- it encourages conscious and systematic examination of alternatives; and

- it facilitates control of, and accounting for, investment funds by both implementers and funders

The main limitations of the project approach are that:-

- if project design is poor due to unavailability of reliable data or flawed analysis (garbage in) then clearly the resulting investment is unlikely to yield the desired results (garbage out);
- it may disrupt the balance of government funding between ongoing program expenditures (funding recurrent activities and services) and projects, in that donors commonly require funding of project operating costs by recipient governments and these funds have an opportunity cost. This can impact negatively on the availability of operating funds for maintaining ongoing service delivery;
- it can encourage a too limited focus for analysing development/investment opportunities which does not adequately consider the wider policy program and institutional context within which they must be made. Projects must be kept in context;
- it favours the new idea presented in a neatly defined package; rather than support to or modification of ongoing activities.



Projects, by definition, have a defined scope and focus. As noted above, this is one of their advantages as an investment management tool. To be successful, however, they must be designed and implemented in such a way that external influences impacting on the project are recognised, accommodated and managed. These influences are particularly significant in any development context where a project is trying to influence, among other things, people's knowledge, attitudes and practices.

The project 'box' must therefore be a pervious and flexible one, able to absorb and accommodate external influences. Figure 5 illustrates this point.

2.3.4 Flexible plans - to guide and not constrain

The most common cause of breakdown in the effectiveness of planning systems is that after plans are prepared they are not updated and they become irrelevant. Given the time and resources spent on preparing plans, it is amazing how little they are used once the project is funded and underway. The planning exercise is largely seen as a one-off effort.

Rural development plans need to be prepared and managed in a different way. They need to be clearer in construction and documentation (more useable), they should be prepared as a guide (not a blueprint), implementers must be more involved in their preparation so they know how to use and update them, and appropriate authority must be given to field managers to review and revise plans and reallocate resources (while maintaining required accountability).

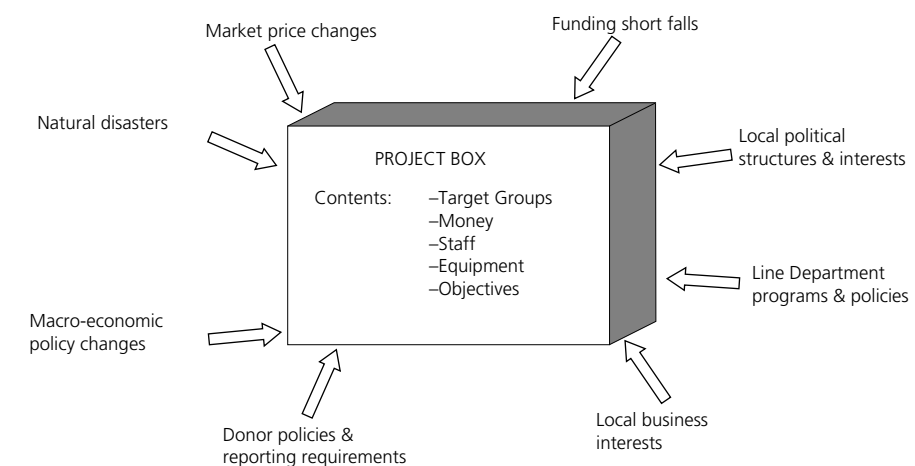
2.4 Management information systems

Monitoring and review activities need to be designed and undertaken within the context of existing project or program management systems and structures. When monitoring and review activities are not integrated with management systems, but rather carried out as ad-hoc or stand alone inputs (led by outsiders), their usefulness in terms of supporting implementation will be limited.

A management information system (MIS) is a set of organised procedures with three components:-

1. rules or criteria for deciding what information is required
2. a process and appropriate methods of data collection, analysis and reporting; and
3. a mechanism by which information is used to influence activities of the organisation.

Fig.5 The Project 'Box'



A useful definition of a MIS (which emphasises the **use** of information by managers) is:-

"A system which converts data from internal & external sources into information and communicates that information, in an appropriate form, to managers at all levels in all functions to enable them to take timely and effective decisions for planning, directing and controlling activities for which they are responsible."

Further ideas on the development of monitoring systems are contained in Chapter 3.

Minimum information systems

Collecting and processing information requires the commitment of time and resources. It is therefore important to collect and record only that information which is going to be usefully used. Too much information can be as bad as too little, if it is expensive and time-consuming to collect and is then not understood or used. The system must therefore be simple and practical. The opportunity cost of wasted information is high.

Useful concepts which emphasise this point are:-

- **Optimal Ignorance** (Chambers, 1992). This concept emphasises the simple fact that there are limits to the amount of information we can collect, absorb and effectively use. Not only are resources limited (e.g. time, staff, and equipment) but so is the capacity of our brain to handle the information. More information is not better information, and we often function best as managers when we remain ignorant of what we do not need to know.
- **Appropriate Imprecision** (Ilchman, 1972). In the same way that we can only usefully use a limited volume of information at any one time, so the level of detail must be appropriate to our decision making needs. The production of too much detail can be wasteful of limited resources (e.g. for collection and analysis) if it is not then used to influence our actions. One example of "inappropriate precision" would be reporting the percentage of people participating in a project (from a wider population group) as 79.89%. This would give a spurious implication that this level of precision could really be measured. Such figures would be better reported by at least rounding up or down to the nearest whole number.



Chapter 3. CONTENTS

3. Monitoring systems for implementers	
3.1 Introduction	29
3.2 The nature of information	29
3.2.1 Types of information	29
3.2.2 The process	30
3.2.3 Attributes of quality information	32
3.2.4 Quantitative and qualitative methods	33
3.3 Key stages in developing a project based monitoring system	34
3.3.1 Clarify project scope	34
3.3.2 Establish the nature of institutional relationships and management structures	35
3.3.3 Determine the information needs of implementers	40
3.3.4 Review existing information systems	44
3.3.5 Develop guidelines and formats to support information collection, analysis and reporting	45
3.3.6 Provide training to support systems development and implementation	47
3.4 Identifying key indicators	47
3.4.1 Indicators of physical progress	48
3.4.2 Development process indicators	51
3.4.3 Financial monitoring	53
3.5 Data and information collection - sources and methods	55
3.5.1 Issues	55
3.5.2 Administrative and management records	57
3.5.3 Interviews and question checklists	59
3.5.4 Observation	72
3.5.5 Structured surveys	73
3.6 Data analysis and reporting	80
3.6.1 Analysis	80
3.6.2 Presenting the analysis graphically	83
3.6.3 Project Progress Reports	85

3. MONITORING SYSTEMS FOR IMPLEMENTERS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Guide aims to help ANGO project managers:-

1. analyse existing monitoring systems and procedures **within** implementing partner agencies
2. identify where improvements might be made, and (as appropriate)
3. provide advice and technical assistance that will help strengthen local monitoring capacity and make monitoring a more useful activity.

In this context, the main role of the ANGO project manager is to provide technical assistance and training to their partners, not to 'do' monitoring. Assistance that might be provided could include:-

- analysing and reviewing current systems and identifying opportunities for systems development
- monitoring systems design and documentation
- helping to secure additional resources to support monitoring activities and systems development
- designing and delivering structured short-course training/ workshop activities
- motivating local partners with new ideas and practical solutions

This chapter does not specifically address the strengthening of monitoring systems and procedures with and within communities. Principles and tools are well described in a number of other texts (e.g. Feuerstein) and are selectively covered in Chapter 5 (short visits). An overview of PRA techniques is also presented in Annex 2.

While the focus of this chapter is on how to improve formally structured information systems, it should be kept in mind that such systems will contribute only a part of the information that managers need. Informal

'scanning' of the outside environment (as described in section 2.2.1) remains an important source of information. We inform ourselves and learn in many ways and from many sources - structured information systems (those which are systematically applied and within which there are agreed systems for information collection and management) are but one means.

Before outlining the steps and the tools involved in designing and managing project monitoring systems, some key points need to be made about the nature of information.

3.2 The nature of information

3.2.1 Types of information

We need to clearly define the different **types** of planning and management information that project managers need and what this information is used for. The following table considers four main categories of information that should be useful to project managers, namely:-

- Impact/development information
- Activity implementation information
- Finance/Budget information
- Human and physical resource information



Examples of the purpose of such information and the type of indicators that might be used are provided in the box below.

Project implementers require some access to information of all types. Their priority, however, is usually placed on indicators which provide information about (i) finances, (ii) asset/stock management, (iii) staffing, and (iv) activity implementation and beneficiary response. These information types are the core of what monitoring is about. Development impact indicators are more the concern of evaluation, and these are discussed in Chapter 6.

3.2.2 The process

The main stages by which information is generated are shown in Figure 7.

Let us consider the example of a piece of health information. We want to know 'what proportion of children under five years of age in the district have been fully vaccinated against the main killer diseases?' This will help us understand how well the health extension service is working, and whether or not there is a problem and a need for action. How is this achieved?

Category of information	Purpose of information	Examples of indicators
Impact/Development	To measure and evaluate changes in socio-economic status of target groups, asset generation, environmental biodiversity, governance etc over the medium/long term Mother and child illness and death rates;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - educational attainment/literacy; - production, incomes and rates of return - employment and wages - participation of disadvantaged groups - human rights violations - levels of environmental degradation
Service delivery and response	To monitor coverage and quality of services provided on an ongoing basis, and target group participation and response	Immunisation coverage; kms of road maintained; water supplies and sanitation projects established; no. of users; demonstration plots established; school enrolment; farmers trained; community organisations established; adoption of new practices
Financial /Budget	To allow plans to be developed within realistic financial constraints, to monitor the use of funds and ensure efficiency criteria are met	Cash flows (current & future estimates); planned vs. actual expenditure; unit costs of production; balance sheets; profit & loss; internal rates of return
Human and Physical Resource	To provide information on the available resource/asset base to help managers manage these resources effectively	Asset quantity, quality and value; staffing levels and performance; infrastructure network and condition (roads, health and education facilities, water supplies etc)..

Following the steps described in Figure 7 we might work out that:-

1. Data on the number of children under five receiving a full course of immunisation must be **collected** by the health staff responsible at the time they give the necessary injections or oral doses.
2. This data must be **recorded** on an appropriate form and in each child's MCH book. This requires that the forms and books are available and the staff know how to complete the records correctly. This data must also be stored safely for future reference.
3. The data must then be **analysed** so that it becomes useful information. The number of children immunised does not tell us anything in itself. In this case we must compare the number of children fully immunised with the estimated total number of children under five in the area. We can then determine whether or not we are only reaching half of the children (50%), three quarters (75%) or whatever.

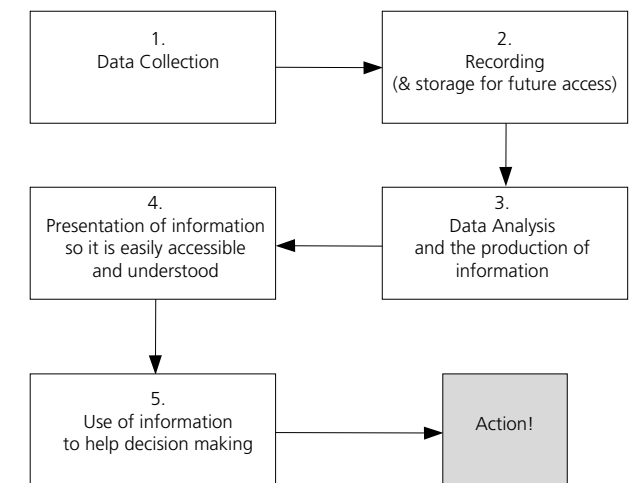
The relevance of data on immunisations given is therefore dependent on having available other information on population numbers and structure within the community and on planned level of coverage. **This gives the data meaning and turns it into information.**

4. The information must then be **presented** to decision makers in a way which allows it to be readily understood and in a timely manner. If immunisation figures are not presented clearly, with reference to targets and past performance for example, they may not highlight that a problem exists. Data must be appropriately aggregated, findings summarised and management recommendations made if it is to support informed decision making.

5. Which brings us to the fifth stage which requires that the information be **used** to help managers and other decision makers take appropriate action. If figures showed a low proportion of children being immunised in a particular area, the cause of the problem would need to be clearly determined and appropriate recommendations.
6. Depending on the nature of the problem, development agencies and local authorities may be able to act by providing extra MCH clinic funds, by conducting an awareness and education campaign for parents, or by allocating extra funds for the renovation of a health officer's house so that s/he can be comfortably accommodated in a problem area and provide a regular service.

If you wish to provide informed advice to implementing partners on improving monitoring systems and procedures, you must first study the process by which the required information is (or might be) generated.

Fig. 7 Making information available



3.2.3 Attributes of quality information

Information may be of varying quality. We can help ourselves make a judgement about this quality through reference to the following characteristics ¹:-

- **Conciseness.** Good information should be concise. Too much detail can be distracting and confusing (although it must be clear how conclusions were reached and how strongly the data supports them). Clear and concise information is essential for busy managers who do not have time to sift through voluminous reports. Selectivity is also important in choosing what to monitor. There is usually a large amount of information that **could** be collected - but we must consider what can be realistically managed within resource and capacity constraints (what Chambers calls 'optimal ignorance').
- **Completeness.** Information should be complete, within the agreed scope of what is required. If, for example, a project is concerned with the distribution of benefits between different groups in the community (e.g. men and women), then information on the total number of beneficiaries would not be complete unless it was also disaggregated by gender.
- **Accuracy/reliability.** Managers need accurate and reliable information. There are, however, many factors that affect these qualities - for example, how the base data is collected, analysed, interpreted and reported, who does it and whether or not key assumptions are recognised and made explicit in the process. These factors need to be understood when considering the level of accuracy and degrees of reliability of the information one can expect and accept from different sources. The concept of 'appropriate imprecision' (Ilchman, 1972) is useful in this regard. The accuracy and reliability of information can always be enhanced by applying the principle of

'triangulation'. This recommends the collection of the same (or similar) information by more than one method and from more than one source to reduce bias.

- **Timeliness.** Most information needs to be provided at the right time if it is to contribute to decision making. Financial information, for example, must be prepared and submitted within the framework of the budgeting, accounting and review calendar if it is to influence decisions on such matters as future allocations or required re-votes. The timeliness of information on agricultural activities is often critical as failure to act in time may mean a whole year is wasted. Timely but incomplete reports may be better than complete but late reports.
- **Good presentation.** Raw data has to be processed and presented to become useable information. Information that is well presented will make an impression on the reader and help him or her learn, form opinions and make informed decisions. Within any agency of any size, guidelines and formats for presenting information should be in place to provide guidance to those compiling reports and to help ensure that an integrated framework for reporting at different levels is established. Reports to managers should usually include recommendations for action. Information does not always speak for itself. Recommendations should be highlighted.
- **Relevance.** Information should be related to actual responsibility. The regional manager does not need the same kind of information or the same detail that his or her field staff require. Reporting up the line should thus be selective and requires analysis and aggregation. Progress indicators should be agreed by both the manager and his/her staff to help ensure their relevance.
- **Cost effectiveness.** Information takes time and resources to collect and effectively use. Much of the information resulting from traditional baseline surveys (favoured during

the late 70s and early 80s), for example, has proved extremely expensive to collect and has contributed little to decision making. Its cost effectiveness has often been low. Appropriate collection methods are important.

The main point to be emphasised is that more information is not better information. Improvements to the quality of information are likely to deliver more benefits to managers than increasing the quantity of information available.

3.2.4 Quantitative and qualitative methods

There has been much discussion in the development literature on monitoring and evaluation about the differences between, and relative merits of, quantitative and qualitative data and their methods of collection and analysis. A particularly good exposition of the issues is provided by Moris and Copeland (Qualitative enquiry for rural development, 1993). It is important to have an understanding of what distinguishes the two approaches and where they come together so that appropriate choices can be made when selecting tools for information collection and analysis.

A key point that this Guide wishes to make is that it is not a 'one or the other' issue. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have their time and place, depending on the circumstances.

A summary of the main differences between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms is presented in the table below:-

Some types of information are better suited to being collected using quantitative methods (e.g. statistics on school enrolment, immunisation coverage, water supplies established, funds expended) while others are better suited to qualitative enquiry (e.g. management capacity, development processes and community attitudes). It is important to emphasise however, that, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Qualitative enquiry may help with the interpretation of information generated using quantitative methods and vice-versa.

Qualitative methods

- Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference
- Naturalistic and controlled observation
- Subjective
- Close to the data - the 'insider' perspective
- Process orientated
- Valid - 'rich' data
- Assumes a dynamic reality

Quantitative methods

- Seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals
- controlled and empirical measurement
- Objective
- Removed from the data: the 'outsider' perspective
- Outcome orientated
- Reliable - 'hard' data
- Assumes a stable reality

¹adapted from materials used on the 'Managing Rural Development' short course - Wye College/ITAD, UK

It should also be understood that what starts as information collected using qualitative methods can be turned into quantitative data. A series of observations at different health centres as to the adequacy of food storage facilities and the level of staff morale can, for example, be presented in numeric format to show how many (and what proportion) met certain criteria (e.g. excellent, good, adequate, poor).

One of the main distinctions that can be made between quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection is the **stage** at which the information is put into numbers. This tends to happen early on with quantitative methods, later with qualitative information.

Quantification allows statistical and mathematical analysis of the data. This can be very useful when one wants to summarise and highlight comparative relationships between data sets and look at trends. The validity and quality of the information remain reliant, however, on the way in which the data is collected and the questions that are asked. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of enquiry should be systematic, planned and documented (Moris & Copeland). There is a big difference between informal or casual enquiry and structured qualitative enquiry.

While the collection of good qualitative information must be systematically planned and carried out, it does offer greater flexibility during implementation than quantitative approaches. This is because qualitative methods do not rely on a pre-determined and closed questionnaire format which assumes you've identified all the right questions in advance. In the context of most rural development environments (where many uncertainties exist) this gives qualitative forms of enquiry an advantage over quantitative methods.

3.3 Key stages in developing a project based monitoring system

There are six main stages that should be covered when developing a project based monitoring system. These are:-

1. Clarify project scope
2. Establish the nature of organisational relationships and management arrangements
3. Determine the information needs of implementers
4. Review existing information systems and procedures
5. Develop guidelines and formats
6. Provide training and resources to support systems development and implementation

Each of these stages should be conducted in a participatory manner, involving those responsible for implementing the system at each level. Workshop activities using modern adult education methods and professional facilitation skills are the main vehicle through which a participatory approach can be facilitated. (See Annex 3.)

3.3.1 Clarify project scope

The nature and scope of the project will significantly influence information requirements and the design of the monitoring system. For example, a large scale project focusing on infrastructure development and agricultural production will require different types and quantities of information (collected in different ways from different sources) compared to that needed for a small scale community based health project.

The Project Framework (also known as the Logical Framework Matrix) is a useful tool for analysing information needs based on project

objectives. The framework requires that indicators be identified and specified for each level of the project description (namely at output, purpose and goal levels), and that the appropriate source of information (how, who, when) be detailed for each indicator (the means of verification - MOVs). This structured approach also helps ensure that when objective statements are formulated, specific consideration is given to how the outcomes will be measured and reported to decision makers. If appropriate indicators and MOVs cannot be found, it might then suggest that the objective statements need to be clarified or modified.

The Project Framework is described in some detail in Annex 1. It is highly recommended as both an analytical and management tool, if it is properly understood and applied.

3.3.2 Establish the nature of institutional relationships and management structures

The development of project or program specific monitoring systems requires a detailed analysis of institutional relationships and management structures. We need to develop an understanding of roles and responsibilities both within and between agencies. Such arrangements may vary significantly depending on:-

- the agencies involved in implementation, their respective mandates and their internal management structures
- the institutional relationships between the agencies involved
- funding sources and accounting requirements
- the broader social and political environment within which the project is placed

Each of these issues is addressed below.

Implementing agencies involved and management structures

The main questions to ask are:-

- What are the main agencies involved?
- What are their respective roles/mandates in the context of project implementation?
- What decision making authority do they have?
- What is their management and implementation capacity?
- What are the internal management structures and hierarchies within each agency?
- Is there a discreet monitoring and evaluation unit or function?

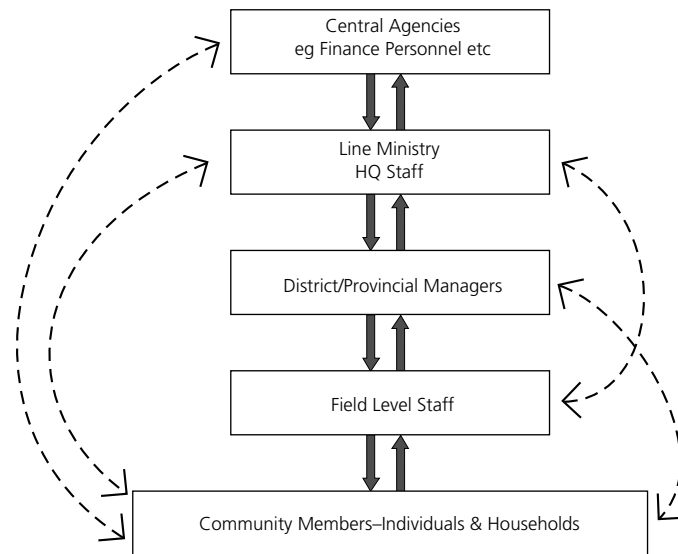
Government service agencies will often have three or four main decision making levels:-

1. field level (e.g. extension staff)
2. local level managers (e.g. provincial/district)
3. senior level (e.g. line ministries); and
4. central agency level (e.g. Finance & Planning Ministry, Aid Coordination, Office of the Cabinet, Personnel Management, etc)

Each level will have different roles and decision making authority and therefore different information needs. Information may be passed up or down this system, either through each and every level, or some intermediaries may be missed out.

When systems for communicating information upwards between levels do not work well (either because of 'blockages' or because of concerns that information becomes less reliable as it is modified at each level it passes through), senior managers may circumvent the system by conducting their own information collection exercises (resources permitting). Thus field level surveys may be organised by line ministries or central agencies which do not involve intermediary levels (or involve them only superficially), but which instead pass primary data directly from the field to the higher levels for analysis and use. The options are illustrated in Figure 8.

Fig. 8 Hierarchy of Information Flows



The key tools for analysing and presenting project management arrangements are:-

- Organisational charts, showing who reports to who. Lines of authority and lines of communication/advice should be differentiated
- Venn diagrams for showing the relationship between agencies
- Spider diagrams to analyse and illustrate institutional capacity
- Duty statements for managers, including responsibilities and the extent of their decision making and financial authority
- Terms of reference for any coordinating or management committees that are to be established.

Examples of an organisation chart, a Venn and a spider diagram are shown in figures 9,10 and 11 respectively.

In using all the above mentioned tools, the process is as important as the product. For example, organisation charts can usually only hope to present a simplified representation of key relationships within (or between) agencies. They cannot tell the whole story (which is usually significantly more complex than any one diagram can hope to explain). But used as part of a participatory group exercise, the development of an organisation chart provides a very useful structure and visual reference point for examining how things currently work (in theory and practice), where problems exist and how improvements might be made. The main use of such charts is therefore to help profile, clarify and analyse existing arrangements and then investigate and design potential improvements.

The role of Monitoring & Evaluation Units or specialist M&E staff need to be carefully considered. Setting up such units may have some advantages (specific responsibilities with resources tied to undertaking specific M&E tasks), however the history of such units has been mixed. The main problem lies in the relationship such units have with line managers. If this is not appropriately integrated there is the risk that such units either produce information which is of limited use to these managers, or they come to be seen as having an auditing function. This alienates monitoring from ongoing management and can seriously impair the usefulness of any information generated.

It remains essential, however, that monitoring responsibilities are clearly defined and that adequate resources are committed to making systems work. This may require appointing one or more people who have specific monitoring responsibilities (particularly for design and establishment work), remembering the cautionary points mentioned above about separating monitoring from management responsibilities.

The role of Technical Assistance (TA) in project management arrangements also needs to be carefully considered (ANGO funded project staff should be considered as TA). Technical Assistance inputs may be engaged locally or from overseas and be used for either short or long term inputs. It is important to clearly understand what, if any, management and monitoring role the TA will play, and how this will be integrated into the project's management structure.

TA may be used in a number of ways, namely:-

- to directly perform a specific technical task
- to analyse and prescribe what needs to be done
- to act as a counterpart/advisor to a national officer
- to work in direct collaboration with national staff to perform substantive tasks as a team.

If TA is to be used, its purpose and type must be clearly defined in relation to project management and monitoring arrangements. The usefulness and impact of TA is often compromised because of different (or unrealistic) expectations about its primary function.

Institutional arrangements

It is as important to understand the relationship between agencies as it is to understand how each agency is internally structured. In most rural development contexts a number of agencies are involved in providing related (complementary) services while no one agency has control over available resources or

Fig. 9 Organisation chart - example

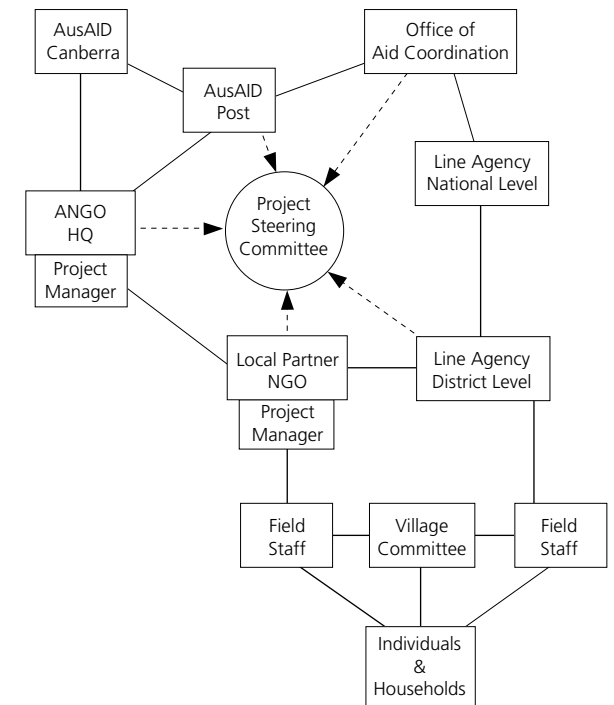


Fig. 10 Venn diagram of institutional relationships - example

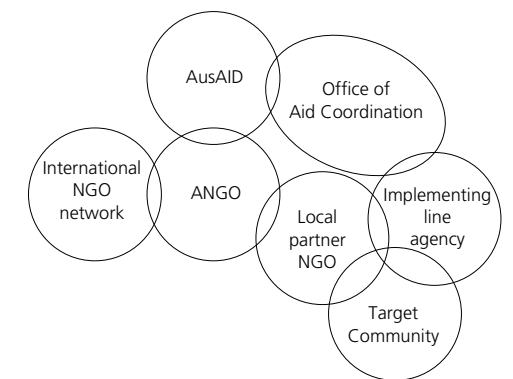
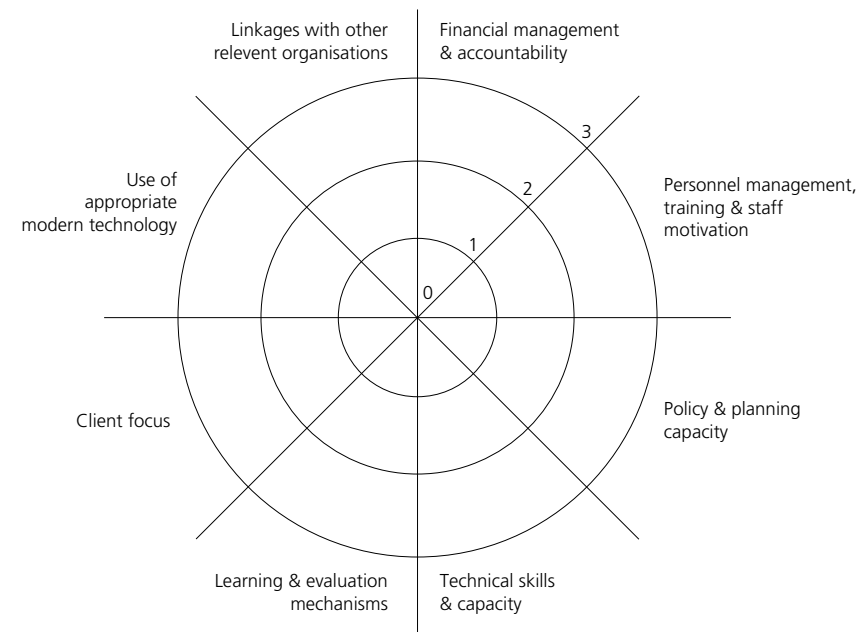


Fig. 11
Spider diagram of institutional capacity - example



Key
 0 = undesirable level: dramatic improvement needed
 1 = poor situation: significant room for improvement
 2 = good situation: some scope for improvement
 3 = highly effective

development outcomes. There is thus significant dependence on decisions and events outside the direct control of those formally designated as being responsible for project or program management.

If reporting systems within single agencies are problematic, these problems are usually many times greater when information is to be passed between people and groups who have no formal authority over each other.

ANGO project managers therefore need to develop an understanding of institutional relationships and make an assessment of whether

or not there is scope for improving information flow between agencies (within the context of project scope, capacity and resources). The answer may well be no. There is certainly no point in trying to strengthen ineffective 'official' systems which everyone within the agencies concerned has given up on a long time ago.

The challenge is to find simple, cost effective methods to make incremental improvements to the channels of communication which people do find useful.

Funding source and accounting arrangements

The source of funding for a project, and how this is controlled will have a determining influence on project management arrangements, levels of authority, accountability and reporting channels.

The ANGO project manager wishing to influence the implementation of any project must certainly gain an understanding of how planning, budgeting and financial management systems work within implementing partner agencies. Knowing what is required to access resources and how to account for them will help in understanding what is feasible and will directly support implementation if this knowledge is usefully applied to 'working the system' to the project's advantage.

If a project is solely financed through government funds, the project management structure will be determined and controlled by the government. They may decide to channel project funds through existing government systems, and appoint a public servant as the Project Manager, or they may contract another agency and pay them to undertake the work. In either case, there is one central source of funding and one overall agency (the government) deciding on how to manage the project and the money.

If a project is funded wholly or partly by a donor or other intermediary development agency (such as an ANGO), project management structures and reporting requirements are immediately made more complex. They now have to account for the requirements of two (or more) agencies with completely different lines of command, institutional structures and reporting requirements (e.g. different expenditure categories, account codes, physical indicators, reporting formats). An added level of complexity therefore arises every time a new donor or support agency becomes involved.

A common problem with project funding arrangements (particularly through established bureaucratic mechanisms and channels) is that responsibilities are given to field level managers without the financial authority to ensure that activities can be undertaken quickly and efficiently. The distinction between responsibility and authority is usually most marked when it comes to the delegation of financial authority.

To promote more effective participation at field level, suitably decentralised (and simple) financial management and control systems are required. (See also Annex 2.)

Political and social environment

The political and social environment within which the project or program is placed will influence the way in which information is viewed and managed. Centralised systems such as those found in totalitarian or authoritarian states will emphasise the use of information as a tool to manage and control from the centre, offering little opportunity or incentive for individuals at lower levels to use information for their own decision making purposes.

In situations where there is ongoing social conflict (e.g. civil disturbance or war), project managers will be faced with additional constraints and distractions. Establishing monitoring systems within such an environment is likely to be made significantly more difficult, and expectations must be realistic.

While there may be little that an ANGO can do to influence the big picture, the influence of the political and social environment on local management practices and systems must at least be appreciated in the context of formulating any proposed changes to the way that information is managed at the project or program level. It is also useful to keep in mind that while the overall 'system' may place restrictions on what can and cannot be done, as the Chinese saying goes "the power of the Emperor stops at the village gates". Local level action is still possible (and often more urgent) when the outside environment is not supportive of change - it just makes it more difficult.

The importance of people

While it is important to carefully consider the most appropriate and effective management arrangements for a project, and to clearly document these, the ultimate success of any management structure and monitoring system will remain partly dependent on the individuals involved and how they work together.

A basic requirement for initiating and supporting any significant changes in socio-economic development is to have a motivated group of people working successfully together as a team towards common objectives. Helping to build a team approach and a team spirit among co-workers is a very valuable contribution that the ANGO project manager can try to make.

3.3.3 Determine the information needs of implementers

Not everyone within an implementing agency will need the same information or the same detail. Information requirements need to be broken down according to the needs of each manager operating at different levels within the management hierarchy. Again the importance of selectivity needs to be stressed - only a limited amount of information can be realistically collected, analysed and used within any management system. The filing cabinets and folders in most offices are full of information that has never been analysed or used. We don't want to add to the forgotten paper pile.

The identification of managers' priority information needs is best achieved in a workshop setting involving those individuals who have responsibilities for informing each other. If time does not permit the organisation of a workshop, it should still be possible to work up lists of information needed by interviewing agency staff at different levels. Information needs should be grouped or categorised.

A field manager of an agricultural services project might categorise his/her needs as:

- information about financial resource availability and budgets
- information about the human and physical resources available
- information about the physical delivery of services provided by the project
- information about the use of these services by the people targeted, and the initial consequence of that use
- information concerning the reasons for any unexpected result or reaction that is revealed by monitoring people's use of the service.

(Adapted from Casely & Kumar, 1984)

It is important to determine whether or not existing monitoring activities go beyond being preoccupied with the physical delivery of services and actually seek feedback from targeted community groups. This is often the missing factor in structured monitoring systems that are pre-occupied with quantifiable indicators of service delivery and resource use. If the community or target group prove not to be interested, for example in a set of improved crop husbandry practices or family health messages, then reasons need to be sought and project activities reviewed and revised appropriately.

It is surprising how many projects wait for an ex post evaluation to learn these things! Some examples of the information needs of project managers are presented in the tables that follow. These have been adapted from those appearing in the Save the Children **Toolkits** Guide (see Bibliography).

Table A: Monitoring Implementation, Process and Impact

	Information needed	Purposes	Sources
Results of activities, project outputs	What has been done What has not been done but was planned What problems have been encountered How the problems have been addressed How the external situation has changed Any other relevant information	To plan future work To identify project successes To identify opportunities to build on strengths To identify problems and weaknesses and plan strategies to overcome them To identify any need to review priorities To identify training needs To identify need for further information or research	Staff reports on activities Supervision reports Meetings and workshops with staff, project partners and people affected by the work Regular reviews Newspapers, radio Informal discussion Observation Surveys
Progress against objectives	Progress towards achieving objectives Are objectives still relevant?	To identify need to modify strategy and/or objectives To provide feedback To identify need for review or evaluation To identify need for new information or improvements in monitoring systems	Information from key indicators Views of partners, people affected by the work and staff Observation
Management and participation	How are decisions made? Are the people who are supposed to be involved really involved? Do the partners, people affected by the work and staff feel a sense of ownership of the project?	To identify need for change in management style To identify need to change methods to encourage more participation To identify problems in relationship between partners, people affected by the work and staff and address them	Indicators which show the degree of participation Meetings, workshops, discussion Views of partners, people affected by the work and staff Observation
Background information on target population and context	Have there been any significant political, economic or environmental developments affecting the target population? Have there been any developments affecting the project? How is the population changing in terms of the characteristics the project is hoping to influence?	To continue gathering information to assist evaluate progress To respond to changing circumstances To keep in touch with relevant work of other agencies, government	Surveys and analysis of existing data Sources of information about politics, economics, etc. Participatory workshops at the field level Meetings with other agencies, government officials Observation

Table B: Management of Human and Physical Resources

	Information needed	Purposes	Sources
Staff/personnel	Performance	To give staff support and feedback	Staff/team meetings
	Achievement	For training and staff development	Staff reviews
	Absenteeism	To improve management practices	Supervision
	Problems	To modify/clarify job descriptions	Informal meetings
	Expectations		Observation
	How staff work as a team		
	Whether staffing structures work		
Capital items	Location and condition	To service, control and keep track of capital equipment (vehicles, radios, computers, etc)	Registers of vehicles and equipment, reports by person responsible, spares records, etc
	Person responsible		
	Spares, replacement stock, etc		
Supplies and inputs	Resources required	To plan purchasing and ordering	Design documents and the field's specifications
	Where to purchase or order from	To obtain supplies on time and for best value	Suppliers, past projects, other organisations, government, etc
	What they will cost	To maintain and manage stocks	Tendering systems
	When resources are needed and when they will be available	To plan and schedule supply and prioritise resource allocation	Stock-keeping record systems
		To help plan and prioritise resource allocation	Call forward and requisition record systems
		To monitor costs and budgets	Periodic reports of expenditure against resource and supply budgets

Table C: Control of Funds and Budgets

	Information needed	Purposes	Sources
Project budget and expenditure	Expenditure by project component	To control the use of funds	Invoices and vouchers
	Expenditure by budget head	To identify areas of excessive expenditure	Budget break-down
	Regularly recurring items of expenditure e.g. rent	To identify any savings	Analysis of budget and expenditure
	Rates of inflation	To determine if funds are being expended as planned and as budgeted	Newspapers, banks
	Exchange rates	To compare costs with project achievements to assess cost-effectiveness	
Cash flow analysis	When are funds needed? i.e. up to date budgets and forecasts of expenditure over life of project	To allow plans to be developed within realistic financial constraints	Budgets, forecasts of actual expenditure, cash record system, information concerning intention of donors
	Where will funds come from? e.g. donors, loans, community contributions	To en	
	What and when are cash outgoings (regular and irregular)?		
Staff salaries	Salaries	sure staff are paid according to pay scale reflecting nature of job and length of service	Staff records
	Tax, insurance, etc		Payslips
	Annual increments	To ensure other payments are made according to correct procedures	Salary records
	Final pay		
	Other payments	To ensure all staff know what benefits they are entitled to	

Information needs don't have to be categorised in this way or in such detail. The foregoing is most suited for larger projects backed by an office in the capital. Moreover the focus in these examples is at the senior management level. Information needs change as you come down to the level of field operations.

The selection of appropriate indicators and means of information collection are covered in more detail in sections 3.4 and 3.5 respectively.

3.3.4 Review existing information systems

Before attempting to build up any new systems or procedures it is necessary to review existing monitoring and review activities to identify their strengths and weaknesses. We must avoid unnecessary duplication or the creation of parallel systems.

Many implementing agencies will welcome assistance, provided it is approached in the right way. Don't barge in and start prescribing what the agency should be doing without determining what is already being done. All organisations collect, analyse and distribute information, even if they do not call it monitoring. So at the outset inquire: "What information is the agency collecting and how is it utilised?"

Some agencies possibly manage well enough without investing in systems to manage information. However it is likely that in the absence of a systematic approach there will be less critical attention to the value of the information collected or to the distribution of information within the agency. There is also less likelihood of there being a strategy for ensuring that the information collected and distributed actually influences project implementation. There is no point generating information if it has no utility and therefore no impact.

Questions to ask about existing information systems include:-

Information needs

- Have these been identified and prioritised?
- Are the information needs of implementers being adequately met?
- If not, where are the most significant gaps and what are the causes?

Control

- What level of control do project managers have over their access to the information they require?
- Who do they rely on to gain this access?
- Can they influence the situation?

Information sources and collection methods

- Does the information come from primary or secondary sources - i.e. do they collect it themselves?
- What is the quality of this information?
- Is the available information collected through qualitative or quantitative methods? Are these appropriate and is there a balance between the two?
- Are responsibilities for information collection clearly identified? Is it the responsibility of line managers or of a designated monitoring unit?
- Are the existing formats for information recording and reporting adequate and are users clear about how to use them?

Analysis and use

- Who undertakes analysis of the available data and information and at what level within the reporting hierarchy?
- Is information being analysed at field level to help implementers understand what they are doing before being passed up to higher levels?
- Is information being appropriately sorted and aggregated before it is transferred to other levels?

- Is the nature of the analysis appropriate and useful? (e.g. are comparisons made between what was planned and actual outcomes)
- Is there a functioning review system for bringing together project managers to make decisions based on the available information? How does this operate and who is involved?

Capacity and resources

- What are the existing physical and financial resources available for Monitoring & Evaluation?
- What is the level of staff skills and their understanding of what is required?
- Are these adequate?
- Is there scope for developing local capacity either through providing technical advice, additional financial resources or training?

An appropriate tool that can be used (in a workshop setting) for analysing the strengths and weaknesses of existing monitoring systems is SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). The strengths and weaknesses focus on issues internal to the agency under analysis whereas the opportunities and threats focus more on the external environment.

SWOT is undertaken in three stages:-

1. a profile is generated (initial ideas are best collected using a nominal group technique with VIPP cards) and ideas are discussed and clarified by the group
2. the situation is analysed by looking for ways in which the agencies' strengths can be built on to overcome identified weaknesses and opportunities can be taken to minimise threats
3. a strategy for making improvements is formulated (and then subsequently developed using a number of additional analytical planning tools)

An example of a SWOT matrix is shown in Figure 12 overleaf.

3.3.5 Develop guidelines and formats to support information collection, analysis and reporting

Forms and formats may not be the most exciting part of managing development activities, but they are one of the key components of any structured monitoring and reporting system.

Once agreement has been reached on where the opportunities lie for making improvements to existing monitoring systems (and the needed resources have been secured), the detailed work of developing (or improving) the required recording and reporting formats and user guidelines must be tackled. It may be that the forms being used are okay, but that people do not know how to complete them. Alternatively the existing forms may be poorly designed and require modification. The nature of the problem and the opportunities must first be clear.

Forms may be designed and used for recording and reporting data from a variety of sources (e.g. administrative records, a survey, a meeting or workshop) and by a variety of data collection methods (e.g. quantitative or qualitative). While forms are most commonly used for recording and reporting quantified information, they are also useful for providing structure to the way in which qualitative information is presented.

Recording and reporting formats are usually different. Recording of the base data usually happens once at the outset. As that data is analysed and summarised, the format in which it is re-recorded and reported should be modified. This should allow information to be presented differently at each level in line with the needs of different decision makers. Sets of integrated formats are therefore required to help manage the information as it passes through any hierarchical system.

An example of an integrated hierarchy of reporting formats is shown in Figure 13.

Well thought out formats not only guide users in how to complete them, but also make the information presented more useful.

If forms are to be used, work with the partner agency to ensure that:-

- field staff have been involved in the development of the forms and are encouraged to contribute to improving them
- clear instructions/reminders on using the forms has been provided (key points could be printed on the back or in the margins)
- the forms are designed to allow accurate record keeping and provide a sound basis for summary conclusions by third parties

- the forms provide space for field staff to comment and make their own judgements on the data and what it indicates
- the data is of interest and use to the field staff collecting it, not just to head office, and that field staff know what it is for and are involved in its analysis
- the forms are not complex, the information required is not too difficult to obtain and enough time is allocated to field staff to complete and analyse them.

Figure 12 SWOT matrix example

Strengths

- Field level staff in regular contact with community members
- Basic financial and physical progress reporting formats exist
- Annual planning procedures and formats exist within partner NGO and implementing line agency
- Many staff recognise the need to make improvements to the way information is managed

Weaknesses

- Too much information being collected and reported which is not used in decision making
- Regular reviews not taking place
- Field staff not adequately involved in design of monitoring formats or the analysis and use of the information generated
- Progress not compared against what was planned
- Institutional understanding of how M&E systems work is weak

Opportunities

- Appropriate training could be designed and delivered if funding is available
- New technology (phone, fax, computers) will allow more timely communication and quicker recording and processing of information
- Amount of information being collected could be reduced - instead put emphasis on quality (should reduce monitoring work load)

Threats

- Unrealistic information demands by 'outside' agencies
- Reorganisation of line agency structure and reporting channels may be disruptive
- Signs of increasing political unrest will distract from project management needs

3.3.6 Provide training to support systems development and implementation

Changing the way people work and manage information is difficult. It takes time and resources to influence. Not only must any changes be well designed, practical and supported by the users, but adequate participatory training activities must be conducted to inform, mobilise and motivate those who must run it.

Two excellent guides for the workshop trainer or facilitator are the 'VIPP manual' by UNICEF and 'Participatory Learning in Action - A Trainers Guide' by Pretty et al (IIED, 1995).

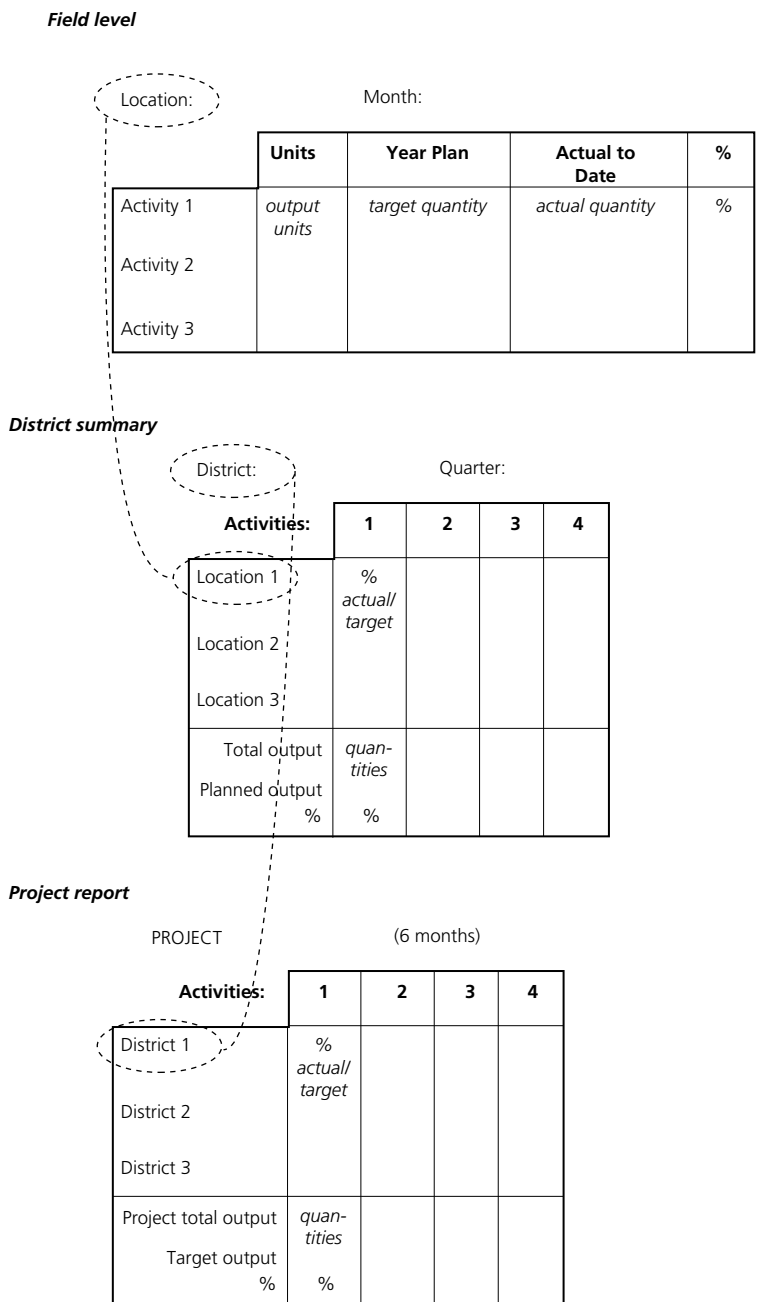
Annex 3 provides a summary guide to workshop planning and delivery.

3.4 Identifying key indicators

The term 'key indicators' sounds technical but the concept is elementary and we all use indicators all the time. We set them up in response to the question: "How do I know whether or not what has been planned is actually happening?" We look for indications or signs to help us. For example: "How do we know that more cattle are being vaccinated this year? What would tell us that a paravet training program was on track to achieving community self-sufficiency in the supply of vaccines and drugs? How would we measure progress towards our objective of strengthening community management capacity?"

The identification of appropriate indicators for monitoring project progress is dealt with overleaf under three sub-headings, namely (i) physical progress, (ii) development process, and (iii) financial monitoring.

Fig. 13 Example of a hierarchy of reporting forms



3.4.1 Indicators of physical progress

Indicators of physical progress focus on a manager's need for information about what is occurring at the field level in terms of service delivery and resource use. They help the manager answer the question: 'Are the available resources being applied in an effective way to provide the services and support that were planned for?'

There are no absolute principles about what makes a good indicator, however the **SMART** characteristics listed below (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) are useful.

- **Specific.** Key indicators need to be specific and should relate to the conditions the project seeks to change. Cement delivered to a site is not a good indicator of the number of houses constructed. Likewise seedlings distributed from a nursery is not a valid indicator of reforestation. The horizontal logic of the Project Framework (see Annex 1) helps to test this criteria.
- **Measurable.** Each indicator should be measurable and hence requires a precise definition. Quantifiable indicators are often preferred because they are easier to manage. They also allow further mathematical and statistical analysis of the data. Development process indicators may be difficult to quantify, however, and one must certainly be flexible in setting any quantified planning targets.
- **Attainable.** The indicator (or information) must be attainable at reasonable cost using an appropriate collection method. Accurate and reliable information on such things as household incomes and crop production from small-scale dryland farming are, for example, notoriously difficult and expensive to actually collect.

- **Relevant.** Indicators should be relevant to the management information needs of the people who will use the data. Field staff may need particular indicators that are of no relevance to senior managers, and vice-versa. Information must be sorted, screened, aggregated and summarised in different ways to meet different managers' needs.
- **Timely.** An indicator needs to be collected and reported at the right time to influence many management decisions. Information about agricultural based activities, for example, must often come within specific time periods if it is to be used to influence events in the whole cropping and processing cycle. There is also no point choosing indicators that can only tell you at the end of a project whether you succeeded or failed in meeting certain objectives. They may be lessons learned but the information comes too late for project personnel to act on it.

Examples of indicators and means of verification

The tables presented on the following pages provide some examples of possible indicators and means of verification that might be used in different sectors. These tables have been adapted from those developed as part of a Community Area Planning Guide for local governments in the West New Britain Province of Papua New Guinea.

Selecting indicators with your implementing partners

If monitoring is not being conducted against indicators, or if it is not clear what are being used as indicators, it is best to set up a meeting with managers and staff and start by working together to draw up a list of potentially useful indicators (including any that are, or appear to be, in use). A starting question could be: "How would we know we had achieved (the desired objective)? What will have happened? What could we actually point to and say, you see, we have succeeded!"

Ideally, all the indicators suggested should be put up on a board or on cards for everyone to see. The next step is to select the best by putting each one through the SMART test, improving some existing indicators in the process and rejecting others which don't come up to scratch. You should be able to come up with a good set of provisional indicators quite quickly.

The Project Framework (see Annex 1) is a useful tool for identifying indicators. In the structure of the PF, indicators should only be needed for the output, purpose and goal levels. It should not be necessary to identify indicators for

activities and inputs - these can be monitored through activity, input and cost schedules. Bear in mind that too many key indicators is usually a sign that insufficient thought has gone into analysing the purpose of each. Remember the importance of designing minimum information systems.

The different means (and costs) of collecting information must also be considered when choosing appropriate indicators. Some indicators may give the information you would ideally like to have, but when the means of getting it are carefully considered it might prove

Health		
Information Category	Possible indicators	How collected and by who?
Development impact information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % children < 80% weight for age - % children dying before age 5 - % mothers dying during labour - disease incidence by type 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - data collected by health workers at clinics & health centres and analysed and reported quarterly - sample survey every year
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % children <5 fully immunised - no. of MCH patrols per area as % of planned coverage - no. of family planning acceptors - no. of individuals treated at health centres and aid posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MCH and clinic records kept by health workers and analysed at least once every quarter - health centre and aid post admission records
Budget/financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - amount budgeted for MCH, medicines, maintenance, etc - amount spent as % of allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - budgets and dummy ledgers kept by district HEO, and expenditure analysed on quarterly basis
Human and physical resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no. of health staff in place and % vacancies - no., location, type and condition of health buildings and water supplies, staff housing - supplies and equipment inventories - HEO records and APO quarterly reports - quarterly patrol by HEO (or appointee) to physically inspect each facility in area and report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HEO records and APO quarterly reports - quarterly patrol by HEO (or appointee) to physically inspect each facility in area and report



impractical (e.g. too complex or expensive). Again the Project Framework provides a useful analytical and presentational structure for systematically identifying and documenting appropriate 'Means of Verification' for each indicator you choose.

Section 3.5 provides an overview of the main sources of information and collection methods that might be used by project managers at the field level.

Education		
Information Category	Possible indicators	How collected and by who?
Development impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literacy rates for children and adults by gender - No. of children completing to each grade - No. of schools being actively managed by local community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School records kept by H/masters and analysed by school inspectors annually - Village books kept by village recorders and analysed annually
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School enrolment and as % of school age children in catchment - Teacher pupil ratios and class sizes - Drop-out rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School records kept by H/masters & analysed by school inspectors annually
Budget/financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget for materials and school maintenance - Amount spent as % of allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School ledgers analysed by school inspectors on quarterly basis
Human and physical resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of teachers, levels & % vacancies - No., location, type and condition of education facilities and housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School inspector records analysed on a six monthly basis

3.4.2 Development process indicators

Development is not only about the delivery of better services and cannot be judged alone by indicators which measure material changes in such things as the income, health or educational level of targeted groups. Many development projects (particularly those supported by NGOs) place equal emphasis on bringing about changes in the way that community groups view themselves and are able to act in their own interests. These objectives are linked to concepts of 'empowerment' and 'conscientisation'. (Friere, 1972, Cultural Action for Freedom.)

These are generally long term outcomes and difficult to measure in the short term. However field level managers need some feedback on the progress of development processes and therefore some structured monitoring of process indicators is required.

Characteristics of group members **before** the process of social development might include:-

- Lack of critical analysis of their situation - inability to identify the causes of structural problems and work out solutions to them
- Economic, social and political dependence on, and exploitation by patrons

Agriculture		
Information Category	Possible indicators	How collected and by who?
Development impact information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volume and value of cash crops and products marketed - Extent of local processing - Availability and variety of food - Productivity and soil management regimes - Asset creation - land, animals, implements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ag. officer and marketing records analysed annually - Local market surveys monthly by market keepers, analysed annually - Case studies
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. of contact farmers (M/F), training and no. of farm visits made annually against plans - No. and type of planting materials and other inputs provided - Adoption rates and farmer response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ag. Officer quarterly reports - Annual structured survey of farmer adoption rates by extension supervisors - Village meetings attended and recorded by agricultural extension officers
Budget/financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budgeted amounts for ag. extension - Expenditure against actual allocations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ag. budgets and dummy ledgers. Income and expenditure records analysed on quarterly basis
Human and physical resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No. and type of staff and % vacancies - No., type, location and condition of base camps, houses & nurseries - Land capability and current use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agric. staffing records - Ag. Officer six-monthly infrastructure report based on site inspection - Resource Information System

- Lack of confidence in their own ability to change the situation
- Absence of organisations which effectively represent their group's interests
- Lack of group cooperation
- Ignorance, suspicion and isolation. People afraid to talk, discuss and become involved.

Characteristics of groups **after** a period of social development might include:-

- Internal cohesion
- Sense of solidarity
- Critical consciousness and awareness
- Active participation
- Reduced dependence and increased self-confidence
- Self management, self-sufficiency and group autonomy
- Management capability
- Democratisation of power and more collective responsibility
- Ability to communicate with government officials and other external agencies or groups.²

On the basis of these types of criteria and clear specification of project objectives, indicators then need to be identified to help measure whether or not these group characteristics are changing. Some examples are shown in the following box, again based on the suggestions made by field staff working in Indian villages and recorded by Oakley & Winder.

Indicators of group development could include:-

- if people campaign for their own interests
- if people speak out, even challenge the NGO assisting them
- if people participate in community level action
- if information is actively transmitted between group members
- if the group holds regular meetings which are adequately attended
- if it has a common fund
- if the group initiates organised communal activities
- if the group takes action outside the village to promote their own interests
- if there is solidarity within the group
- if people have a positive view about the opportunities for improving their situation in the future

These may be indicators, but how do we actually measure some of them? What phenomena would we expect to see or experience if what we wanted to see happen actually came about. Can this information be quantified? Answering such questions often requires detailed analysis and considerable ingenuity.

Process indicators are best collected using qualitative methods of enquiry. To obtain reliable information on such issues requires a high level of skill, experience and judgement among those observing, recording and reporting on group behaviour. It is not an easy task. Such enquiry must (as previously emphasised) be planned, systematic and clearly documented if it is to produce information that is not seen to be subjective, unreliable and potentially biased.

The best approach is to start by asking participating community members for advice, using village meetings or small group interviews as a forum for discussion. What would indicate to them that a planned development process was occurring successfully or not? How could this be measured and recorded in a useful and reliable way?

An example of one process based objective is shown in Figure 14.

ANGO project managers wishing to support the development of improved systems for monitoring process objectives need to be able to facilitate the identification of appropriate indicators and offer practical guidance on how such information can be recorded and reported. This will, as ever, only produce the desired results if the process involves the full and active participation of both implementing agency staff and participating community members.

3.4.3 Financial monitoring

Financial monitoring compares actual expenditures against expected costs. In general it should pose fewer problems than physical or process monitoring, as all agencies are required to account for their expenditures and will have some form of accounting system in place. Financial data is also more easily managed in terms of sorting and aggregation as it deals with an easily understood and quantifiable unit of measurement - namely money. In practice, however, a project's financial records may provide an incomplete or inaccurate record, and not be kept sufficiently up to date, or in a clear enough format, to provide managers with timely information.

The primary requirements for establishing an effective financial monitoring system are sound budgeting, financial control and accounting systems. Costs need to be grouped into

Fig 14

Objective	Possible indicators	Means of Verification
Increased awareness of, and community capacity to address, the local causes of environmental pollution	Levels of awareness among different groups within the community (men, women, children) about specific environmental health and pollution issues Establishment of community based environmental health & management committee. Membership, meetings and number & type of activities initiated	Sample survey at schools, of women's groups and of male household heads conducted at the beginning of the project and after two years. Conducted by environmental health officers using questionnaire to rank levels of awareness of specific issues Records of elected committee members, regularity of meetings and minutes of decisions made. Analysed and scored against established criteria every six months by management committee members Observation of how meetings are conducted and levels of participation. Undertaken by Env. health officers in line with planned schedule of meetings

² Adapted from an article by Peter Oakley and David Winder



categories which are useful from the point of view of maintaining control over the activity. This will usually involve breaking down costs for different items (e.g. capital, operating, personnel, training) and for different components (e.g. management, extension, construction, factory operations, marketing, etc).

Responsibility and cost centres

A common problem of management information systems is that they do not allow deviations from what was planned to be attributable to any responsibility or cost centre. This makes it difficult to identify the origin of the problem. For example, if travel funds and allowances are being overspent, without the knowledge of where this expense is being incurred, this may result in a blanket restriction on travel, even for those individuals and work units who are operating efficiently.

Specifying activity centres when preparing project budgets is essential if cost accounting is to be carried out. Cost accounting can be distinguished from financial accounting in that it meets internal management information needs. Financial accounting is generally designed to meet the specific needs of accountants and other financial managers. Both types of accounting depend on the same project accounts, but differ in the way which information is categorised and used. Cost accounting describes the relationship between costs incurred on inputs and the activities and outputs that eventuate, while financial accounting focuses on information about asset values, income, expenditure, creditors and debtors, profit and loss and cash flow.

In designing project budgets and financial management arrangements, cost centres should be identified which directly correspond to the units responsible for implementation. Managers need their own budgets, and need to know what they are.

Budgets

Since the **project budget** is a quantified plan, it provides a basis for comparing planned and actual performance. There are two obvious, but nonetheless important, assumptions:-

- (a) The budget is a real working plan. In many instances the budgeting environment is such that budgets are calculated over and above actual needs, because it is assumed that they will be cut at a later stage. Conversely, the final approved budget may be inadequate to meet the estimated physical implementation targets.
- (b) The budget is calculated on the basis of the critical limiting factors, i.e. it does not require resources that are not costed or available.

For financial monitoring to be effective, it may be necessary to sub-divide the budget in to shorter periods than annual or quarterly budget estimates. Managers often need to take corrective action on a weekly or monthly basis, rather than at the end of a year. The budget (or cash flow) should therefore be related to the cycle of review and control required by the project.

Cost Variance Analysis is used to identify the difference between budget and actual expenditure for each cost or revenue item. The method is used to identify large variances caused by either over or under spending. The assumption is that such variances indicate potential problem areas, whereas a small variance does not (management by exception). While this is a simple and practical tool, it does have its dangers. In particular, problems can be hidden and not easy to identify for two main reasons:-

- (i) Variances cancelling each other out. For example a small variance may result from the grouping together of two items in the cost analysis, one with a large negative variance, and the other with a positive variance of similar magnitude.
- (ii) Prices and quantities may change in different directions. The total cost variance does not differentiate whether the variance is due to a change in the unit price of the item or the quantity used.

Price and Quantity Variances can be separately determined by simple formulae based on budgeted and actual prices and quantities. These are:-

- Quantity variance = Budgeted Price x (Planned - Actual Quantity)
 - Price variance = Actual Quantity x (Budgeted - Actual Price)
- and as a check,
- Total variance = Quantity Variance + Price Variance

This information can help managers who are responsible for budgeting, procurement and expenditure analysis to get a better picture of how budgets are measuring up against plans, and thus guide future expenditure planning and commitment.

The success with which financial monitoring of the project can take place, nevertheless depends ultimately on two key factors:-

- (i) the quality of the initial budget estimates; and
- (ii) the completeness, accuracy and timeliness of the expenditure data that the financial management system can provide

Well structured and functional financial budgeting and expenditure management systems are fundamental for effective project management and monitoring to take place.

3.5 Data and information collection - sources and methods

3.5.1 Issues

Once it is clear what information managers require (the key indicators) it is then necessary to consider how this might be obtained.

The following questions must be asked and answered:-

- **how** to collect the information (e.g. surveys, administrative records, workshops, observation, PRA or RRA techniques, etc)
- **what source** is most appropriate (e.g. who should be interviewed, which agencies or groups should be workshopped, does the Bureau of Statistics already collect the required information?)
- **who** should do it (e.g. extension staff, supervisors, an independent team)
- **when** and how often the information should be collected, analysed and reported (e.g. monthly, annually, according to seasonal cropping cycles)
- **what formats** are required to record the data being collected.

When developing answers to these questions, one of the main issues to keep in mind is the resource/capacity constraints that will be faced by those responsible for collecting the information. There is no point in designing procedures which are too complex or costly as this will merely lead to frustration and disappointment in the outcomes. A balance must therefore be struck between what would be desirable in an ideal world and what is feasible in practice.

It is also vital to be clear about how the data will be analysed and used, **before** embarking on collection.

Project staff will almost certainly need to collect some primary information specific to their project's work, but should first look to using existing sources where these are available. For the 'big picture' the Bureau of Statistics, research studies, donor and business reports may be useful sources (these are often available but not accessible to those who might use them to support field level management and monitoring). At the local level - community, government and other service agency records may provide relevant planning and management information for project implementers. Check what's already there.

When local information systems are not working effectively, careful consideration should first be given to whether or not there are identifiable constraints which might be overcome through designing appropriate

improvements or providing training, before embarking on the establishment of a duplicate or parallel system.

It is also useful to make a distinction between data collection and data analysis. Different tools and skills may be required and the two activities do not necessarily happen together or involve the same people (although it would often be better if they did). Making the distinction can also help highlight the fact that while a lot of data may be collected, there is often a lack of appropriate analysis to help turn the data into useful management information. One of the biggest problems with many management information systems is that resources are wasted on collecting data which is never effectively used. A brief guide to data analysis is provided under section 3.6.

Problems in gathering data

It is important to recognise some of the main problems that may be faced when collecting data so that they can be addressed in the selection of appropriate collection methods and in the training of the staff involved.

- Common problems might include:-
- Language barriers
 - Lack of adequate time
 - Expense
 - Inadequately trained and experienced staff
 - Invasion of privacy
 - Suspicion
 - Bias (spatial, project, person, season, diplomatic, professional) See Chambers, 1983
 - Raised expectations within the community
 - Cultural mores/norms (e.g. which may preclude men interviewing women)
 - Being led to the wrong people

Careful consideration should be given to each of these potential problems before rushing off into the field to collect information. Have you adequately planned what you are about to get engaged in to be confident of getting useful information?

The following sub-sections provide an overview of some of the most likely sources of, and methods for, data collection in the context of an overseas rural development project. The ANGO project manager should be familiar with the options and the issues to guide both their own monitoring activities and to enable them to support the development of more effective and useful monitoring activities within partner implementing agencies and at community level.

3.5.2 Administrative and management records

Within most organisations there will be a requirement to keep some basic administrative records of what is being done on a day to day, or week by week basis. These records will often then be summarised and reported periodically in the form of a management or progress report.

Information that may be recorded as part of such administrative records can include:-

- Financial - income and expenditure details
- Staffing - numbers, location, level and performance
- Procurement, inventory and asset records
- Service delivery records (e.g. number of farmers receiving credit or other inputs, number of children vaccinated, no. of seedlings distributed, no. of children attending literacy schools, no. of nurse-aides trained, number of wells established, etc)

The big advantage of using administrative records and management reports as a source of data and information is that they tend to be institutionalised, routine activities and therefore do not necessarily require the design of new systems and procedures (although an important part of an ANGO manager's input may be to facilitate the identification and design of improvements to the way things work). Administrative record keeping is usually an integral part of someone's work responsibilities. This also means that there is little, if any, additional expense involved in getting the information (unlike special surveys or the conduct of extended field visits). Administrative records and routine management reports are therefore often the least complex and least costly information source available.



Source: Agroforestry Today, Vol 1, No 2.

One must of course consider the **quality** of information that is being generated from such administrative sources, and this may indeed be problematic (refer to the attributes of quality information provided under section 3.2.3). But if an administrative record keeping system has the potential to provide information of an acceptable quality, it is worth seeking to effect marginal improvements to what is already established before embarking on a separate alternative information collection exercise.

The principle of triangulation should again be kept in mind. Administrative records may be the base source for some of the project's information requirements, but it is always worth cross-checking its quality and reliability through field level interviews, inspection of the way in which records are actually kept or comparison between the records being kept in different areas.

Administrative records which are relevant to what a specific project or program might be doing may be kept either by implementing partners or by other agencies/groups working in the project area. Most local government line agencies will usually keep records, and it is important to determine what these are and whether or not they may be relevant to your project's management information needs. Find out what is already available before assuming it isn't.

Basic administrative record keeping procedures may also be established within communities. Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods emphasise the importance of getting local people involved in generating and using their own information. For example a local water users and management committee may keep records of the number of members, meetings held and attendance, the collection of water-user fees and expenses on systems operation and maintenance. It is much better in such circumstances for the main users of such

information (the community) to keep the primary records than for an outsider to come in intermittently and compile such records on their behalf. This is an important part of developing a sustainable local management capacity. Feuerstein is again an excellent brief reference on techniques and tools for supporting structured community based information collection and use.

Field officer journals or diaries

The diary or field journal can be a useful tool to help project officers record events and activities, comments, judgements and analysis. It is not only useful as a primary record, it also encourages reflection and analysis on the part of the field worker. Such diaries should, however, be structured around recording information on key activities and indicators that have been agreed as a priority. This is important to ensure that the information that is recorded is relevant and consistent over time, and not a rambling discourse on life, the world and everything.

The information provided by field staff in their reports should be the starting point during supervisory visits. It is important to follow up what field staff have written and explore constraints and problems. It is not unusual for field staff to find that visiting headquarter staff are not aware of what they have reported. This discourages field staff and affects the quality of reporting.

3.5.3 Interviews and question checklists

The interview lies at the heart of many monitoring activities, particularly those which focus on finding out what people are doing and thinking in the field. The nature of questions, how they are selected, structured, asked and answered will have a fundamental impact on the quality and usefulness of the information generated.

This section focuses on the use of interviews and question checklists as tools to be used during regular or periodic field visits, particularly for the planned collection of **qualitative** information. The planning and delivery of formal surveys, using structured sampling techniques and pre-formulated questionnaires to collect **quantitative** data which is representative of wider populations, is dealt with separately under section 3.5.5.

Interviews may be conducted as informal talks under a tree with a group of farmers about a broad range of agricultural activities, or they might be conducted through a structured sample survey questionnaire. There are of course a lot of options in-between - varying in their complexity, formality and resource requirements. The selection of the appropriate interview approach will be determined by the nature of the enquiry, the results expected, the resources available (skilled people, time and money) and who the respondents are expected to be (where, how many, how selected etc). Whatever option is chosen, conducting interviews successfully requires careful planning and appropriately skilled people. It is not easy to do well and people who are involved need to be selected carefully and provided with adequate training so that they know what they are doing.

The information presented below provides a summary of the main options and issues with regard to (i) conducting an appropriate type of interview, and (ii) the way in which respondents might be selected and organised.

(The information has been adapted from monitoring and evaluation guidelines developed for the World Food Program by ITAD Ltd, a UK based consultancy firm.)



Type of interview	Issues
Informal	<p>Informal interviews aim to elicit information via conversations between interviewers and respondents. They explore the views, experiences and values of the respondent by giving the interviewer and the respondent the freedom to pursue issues as they arise. In view of the interview's informal nature, few notes are usually taken during this type of interview and only main points, impressions, anecdotes or individual quotes are used in any subsequent reporting.</p> <p>This approach is most useful when one is trying to get a 'feel' for what the main concerns or opinions of community members are, without introducing any pre-conceptions of what they might be. The interview can be exploratory in nature and its success depends significantly on the skill of the interviewer in making the respondent feel relaxed and communicative while providing a direction and structure to the conversation.</p> <p>Users of this interviewing technique should be aware however of its limitations. Informal interviews can be very time consuming as conversations can drift from topic to topic and be difficult to control. Information covering a number of broad issues and sourced from a number of individuals can also be difficult to collate and draw conclusions from. When several interviewers are used, this problem becomes even more serious. The answers given in an informal interview are also highly likely to be influenced by the interviewer's personality, approach and presence. A gloomy or pessimistic interviewer may thus induce only negative answers!</p>
Topic focused	<p>Topic focused interviews make use of an interview guide to direct the interviewer through the main topics to be covered. There must therefore be some pre-planning of what information is required and what type of questions need to be asked. From this guide the interviewer develops his/her own specific questions to fit the individual respondent.</p> <p>This technique is most appropriately used when there is a clear idea of the areas or topics which require further investigation, but when it is inappropriate to actually try and frame the structure of individual questions. With a group or team of people using the same interview guide, and if they are provided with consistent and clear directions and appropriate training in its use, it is possible to use results from such interviews to make comparisons between respondents. Topic focused interviews may also be less time-consuming than more open-ended informal interviews as they provide clearer parameters within which the interview is conducted.</p> <p>The strength of this approach is its flexibility with structure. It allows issues to be raised by the respondent or the interviewer which might not have been identified when developing a structured questionnaire, while at the same time providing the structure to help ensure that a focus is kept on key issues of concern to project or program managers.</p> <p>Results from such interviews cannot be confidently quantified, however, and attempts to do so should be viewed with skepticism. Moreover, results can</p>

not be used to make confident inferences about the whole population - more structured approaches involving sample surveys are required to generate such statistically reliable and valid data.

Semi-structured

This approach uses a list of pre-formulated questions or prompts. It differs from traditional structured interviews by:-

- having more open-ended questions which allow for expansion on the points raised;
- having a flexible sequence of questions which allows for some interviewer discretion; and
- leaving room for additional questions to be asked

This type of interview has several advantages. Project managers receive information on points clearly specified by them in advance so it should more directly meet their requirements and support decision making. The greater structure and focus of the interview also allows individual responses to be compared and simple frequencies of responses to be established (e.g. what proportion of respondents answered in a certain way to a specific question). As the interviews are more structured, this also reduces the personal influence of the individual interviewer and the interpersonal skills of the interviewer therefore become less essential. Interviews of this type also tend to be less time consuming than either informal or topic focused interview approaches given their greater focus and structure.

A possible limitation of semi-structured interview methods is that the interviewer may feel constrained not to probe in to areas not covered on the list, even if some new issues become apparent during the interview. Careful and considered development of questions involving the input of both managers and interviewers can go some way to addressing this potential problem.

Respondent selection

There are two main choices when considering how you will conduct interviews - either with individuals or with groups of people. As ever, a mixture of both may be appropriate to investigate different issues and to cross-check information from different sources.

Respondent	Issues
Individuals	<p>Individual interviews are generally easier to manage than group interviews, particularly if a semi-structured interview method is being used. Group responses cannot be so easily checked off against specific questions.</p> <p>Certain types of information may also be better sourced from individuals, particularly that of a personal or private nature (e.g. certain health or income data).</p> <p>Interviews with individuals have some disadvantages and limitations however. They tend to be time consuming, may need a large number of respondents to gain a representative picture of the project area or community as a whole,</p>

Groups

and for some topics individuals may be reluctant to reveal in private what they might find easier to express as part of a group. If such factors represent potential constraints then group interviews may be a preferred option.

Group interviews can be used to gauge the views and attitudes of a mixed group of community members (representative of the whole community) or a specific set of people such as members of a women's group, a group of teachers, agricultural extension workers or members of a farmers cooperative. The potential advantages of group over individual interviews are that (i) they are quicker and cheaper in getting a range of views from different people, (ii) individual inhibitions may be reduced, and (iii) respondents may be more reluctant to give inaccurate answers for fear of contradiction.

The limitations of group interviews must also be recognised, however, to ensure that an informed choice of approach can be made. They are easily dominated by a few individuals, are susceptible to interviewer/facilitator bias, cannot cover many topics in much depth and cannot address some personal/sensitive issues.

Community interviews generally involve a large mixed group of community members. When carefully planned and successfully carried out they have great potential for providing insights into how members of the community view project activities and how they see the project as affecting their lives. The technique lends itself well to being carried out during regular field visits using a topic focused interview technique.

Key points to bear in mind when planning and conducting community interviews are:-

- the use of semi-structured or structured interview guides should be standard practice and interviewers should be adequately trained/experienced
- a team of interviewers is preferable to an individual conducting the interview alone. This allows time for observation and recording of the opinions/views expressed during discussions and will help with developing a balanced interpretation of interview outcomes
- interviews should be scheduled at times when the majority of community members can attend. Find out in advance what the best time might be through prior planning
- participation by a balanced representation of people attending is essential. Prominent individuals should not be allowed to dominate proceedings. There are various techniques for managing this, such as interviewing leaders beforehand and intervening to ask specific people what they think
- extreme caution should be taken in trying to quantify any data collected from community interviews. As a general rule, analysis should go no further than stating 'a large number' or 'several participants' had a particular view.

Focused group interviews involve a small group of people who have some common interest in, or involvement with, the project. They can be used, together with topic focused or semi-structured interview techniques, to generate more focused and structured information than is possible through conducting interviews with larger groups of more diverse respondents. The usefulness of information generated through this type of interview remains, nevertheless, dependent largely on the skill of the interviewer/moderator(s). As with community interviews there are a few key points to keep in mind when conducting focused group interviews:-

- the optimum number of participants is probably between 6 and 10. This allows for discussion within the group and allows all participants to have some say without making them feel obliged to continuously respond. Members of the group should be from similar economic or social strata to ease discussion and eliminate status barriers
- participants must be clear about the purpose of the interview, that it is informal and that they are all expected to contribute ideas
- interviews should be held in appropriate privacy and in an environment which is comfortable and familiar to the group members. Sitting under a tree by a river on a warm sunny day might be better than sitting in an office or a smoky house
- such interviews should generally not exceed two hours
- the interviewer should make it clear that he/she values participants' views and opinions and is there to learn, not control. People are then more willing to open up
- System cards provide a simple yet superb tool for facilitating the stimulation, recording, display, analysis and sorting of people's ideas. (See VIPP card techniques, UNICEF Bangladesh, Select Bibliography.) With a group of between 6 to 20 people (a focused group), and armed with a topic focused interview guide (an idea of what information you want to elicit), VIPP techniques are highly recommended to draw out information in a participatory way
- awareness of the existence of group pressure is important. The group setting may encourage discussion on some topics but not on others
- recording the outcomes of a focused group interview is best supported by having someone help keep a record of key points and issues as discussions progress.

With all interviews, it is vital that the recording of responses is carefully thought through first. Who will do this, in what format will responses be recorded, how will this information then be analysed and reported? Failure to think this through increases the likelihood that the information generated will be wasted, or at least not used as effectively as it might have been.

Guidelines for controlling the quality of interviews

The most important factors in controlling the quality of interviews are (i) the skills and experience of those people conducting the interviews, and (ii) the amount of planning undertaken and support that is given. That given, general issues are briefly covered below:-

- **Whom to meet.** Who you should interview will depend on the nature of the project and the specific objectives of the enquiry you are engaged in. Respondents may be selected from any of the stakeholders involved in project activities, and may also usefully include those not directly involved in the project if you want to find out an outsiders perspective, why people may not be participating, or if there is seen to be use in having a 'control group'. Respondents might include:-
 - * local government representatives
 - * project staff or site managers
 - * community/village leaders
 - * community members (women, farmers, youth, etc)
 - * non-participating members of the community

It may be appropriate to interview individuals, a mixed group or a selective group (e.g. women only). Think the options through - the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches - before you start.

- **Where and when to meet.** Careful consideration should be given to choosing an appropriate time and place for conducting interviews. This is best determined through prior contact with potential respondents to obtain their advice. Late afternoon or evenings are often a favoured time, given that people may be otherwise engaged during the day. Such prior planning is not always possible (for one-off ad hoc visits) but it remains important to recognise that people are not just waiting around to answer your questions!

The choice of meeting place can also be important. If you are confined to the official meeting hall, it may mitigate against some community members attending (e.g. women or poorer members of the community). Think about where you should conduct the interviews to get the cross-section of respondents you want, and be mindful of the potential need for some privacy.
- **Initial contact.** Introductions and first impressions are always important. These may be influenced by the way people are dressed, their manner and the method of arrival. (Arriving by helicopter, which blows off the roofs of your intended respondents houses is not, for example, a good way to introduce yourself!). The aim should be to put respondents at ease by showing respect, carefully explaining the purpose of your visit and making clear the respective roles of both parties before any focused interviewing starts.
- **Controlling conversations.** While one should generally be encouraging people to talk, there will always be a need to keep some control over the direction and length of individual contributions. This requires skill and diplomacy. A variety of body language may be used to cut short individual's contributions (e.g. breaking eye contact or ceasing to take notes) or it may be necessary to interrupt an individual who is talking too much by progressing on to another topic.

This is a legitimate and important role for anyone responsible for managing a group interview.

- **Neutral attitude.** In most situations interviewers should not convey their views, but should instead be questioners, listeners and observers. Interesting conversations may be had if the interviewer's opinions are made known, but this can only be successful if the respondent is knowledgeable and free to express his/her opinions on the same topic.
- **Formulating lists of questions.** For most forms of semi-structured qualitative enquiry it is not necessary to design a detailed survey form in the way that would be required for a structured survey which aimed to obtain quantitative data from a large sample of individual respondents. The key issues to consider are the **sequencing** and **wording** of the questions that you want to ask.
 - * **Sequencing.** Interviews should usually begin with some general conversation concerning topics which respondents will be familiar and comfortable with. The aim should be to eliminate any initial reservations about the interview among respondents. Simple questions should be asked first that require only short answers. As a rule of thumb, only after a respondent has recounted in a factual way some event or activity should the interviewer proceed to ask for his/her opinions, feelings and explanations. For example only after a woman has discussed the extent of her use of a local clinic should she be asked about her reasons for not attending more often. Interviewers should also ask questions concerning the present before moving on to those concerning the past or future.
 - * **Wording.** Questions must be clear and understandable to the respondents concerned. Clear and concise should be the rule. Questions should be kept as short as possible, should not contain

any ambiguous or value laden words (e.g. generally, usual, typical - oppressed, immoral, exploitative), and should avoid any potential for confusion. Pre-testing is essential.

Figure 15 overleaf provides a few simple examples of 'good' and 'bad' questions. This illustrates that it is often better to ask a series of short specific questions than try to get a response from one general, or complex question.

The question checklist for regular field visits

Question checklists are a relatively simple and practical tool which can help make regular field visits a more structured activity and support the production of a more consistent and relevant base of management information.

- The main potential benefits of project staff using question checklists are:-
- they help to ensure that key issues are covered during field monitoring visits
 - they help to ensure consistency and comparability of reporting
 - the discipline of checklists helps to institutionalise a system of project monitoring which assists incoming staff to familiarise themselves with the project and thus become effective more quickly
 - a formalised data collection and reporting system is an important ingredient for developing an institutional memory. Ad hoc systems tend to become very personalised and break down when the officers leave
 - the completed checklists can provide some raw data for subsequent analysis, if the questions are adequately structured

Fig 15

Bad questions

Do you grow enough food to satisfy your family's needs?

How often do you attend the maternal child health clinic with your children?

What problems do you face with getting water?

Have you understood and adopted the recommendations made by the agricultural extension worker in your area?

Good questions

What staple food crops do you grow?

Do you have enough food to feed your family today/this week?

How many months of the year do you have a shortage of food in the house?

Do you buy food to cover any shortfall in home production? etc

Do you have children under 5 years of age?

How often is the MCH clinic conducted for your village?

When was the last clinic?

Did you take your child(ren) who are under 5 to this clinic?

Will you take your children to the next clinic?

Where do you get your water for household consumption?

Who is responsible for collecting water?

Is there enough water all year?

Is the water clean?

What other problems do you face with your water supply?

Have you met the agricultural extension worker?

Did he/she explain about the new husbandry techniques for growing better rice?

Did you understand them?

Did you find them useful and relevant?

Have you tried them?

Will you continue to use them?

Each question checklist should be project (and topic) specific. The checklist should not restrict the user taking initiative in asking some other questions or asking questions in a different order, but should rather help ensure that all the important issues are covered.

The following principles should be kept in mind when preparing a project monitoring checklist:-

- the field workers responsible for conducting interviews/monitoring visits should draft the checklist
- the checklist should be reviewed by project managers/supervisors at higher levels to ensure accuracy, brevity and specificity in relation to the objectives of the project
- the checklists should be field tested by those who are going to use them, the results reviewed and appropriate modifications made
- checklists should be brief and specific. Different checklists should be prepared to cover different issues. This allows for more flexibility in the field and enables staff to decide on the issues to be covered during particular visits
- checklists should be used as a guide and should not restrict the interviewer from inquiring about other matters as they arise
- checklists may either be structured so that answers to closed questions (yes/no) can be answered on the checklist itself, or left as a set of more open-ended questions

Two examples of question checklists incorporating different degrees of structure, and developed for different purposes, are shown on the following pages. The first was quickly prepared (three hours of group work and discussion) for structuring a group of one-off field visits to health clinic sites supported under a WFP vulnerable groups feeding project in Malawi. The second is a more structured checklist from a WFP sponsored health project in Pakistan which was designed to be used regularly by supervisory staff responsible for field monitoring of project supported operations.

Field monitoring checklist for Project 2237/III in Pakistan

1. **Name of Centre:** _____ District: _____ Date: _____
 Location (Road/Area): _____

2. **Was LHV present during the visit?** Yes/No
 If no, state the reason: _____

3. **Is LHV currently assigned to centre?** Yes/No
 Is LHV guided/supervised by MO/WMO/TMO/TWMO/none? Yes/No
 Has any of the above attended WFP training and orientation seminar? Yes/No
 If yes, who? _____
 Has DHO/LHI visited the centre? Yes/No
 If yes, when? _____

4. **Equipment at Centre**
 Baby weighing scale (Salter) is available? Yes/No
 In working condition? Yes/No
 Bathroom scale is available? Yes/No
 In working condition? Yes/No
 Does LHV know how to calibrate the scales? Yes/No
 Any cooking facilities (utensils) available for demonstration in centre? Yes/No
 Any measuring containers for ration distribution? Yes/No

5. **Demonstration**
 Does LHV educate beneficiaries on health and nutrition issues? Yes/No
 If yes, in group discussions or individually? _____
 Does LHV lecture and demonstrate beneficiaries:
 -During distribution period, or Yes/No
 -Together with other MCH service Yes/No
 -Any on-spot feeding demonstration Yes/No
 -Total number of attendants of the class per session _____

Other services
 Does the centre deliver:
 -Oral rehydration salts (ORS)? Yes/No
 -Expanded program in immunisation (EPI) service? Yes/No

6. **Beneficiaries**
 Total No of attendants during the month to receive health services: _____
 During previous month: _____

a)

No of Mothers		Children	Total	Female	Children
P	N				

b) Please state the Monthly Food consumption:
 Pulses: _____ B.oil: _____ Sugar: _____ Tea: _____ WSB: _____

c) Average income of beneficiary family: Rs. _____

7. Registers Checklist

a) Beneficiaries register
 -Is the list of beneficiaries maintained properly? Yes/No
 -Is the data sheet of individual beneficiaries properly maintained? Yes/No
 -Average No of visits by the beneficiary within 1 month period: _____
 -Are growth charts filled regularly? Yes/No
 -Are growth charts filled correctly? Yes/No
 -Are age and weight plotted regularly? Yes/No
 -Is the child malnutrition identified regularly? Yes/No
 -Is the entitlement period identified regularly? Yes/No
 -Does the LHV take out beneficiaries who reached the green zone? Yes/No

b) Is the birth register properly maintained? Yes/No

c) Is the daily distribution register:
 -Up-to-date? Yes/No
 -Correct? Yes/No

d) Is the list of potential beneficiaries maintained? Yes/No

e) Are beneficiaries registered on rotation? Yes/No

f) Is the Monthly Report Form:
 -Up-to-date? Yes/No
 -Correct? Yes/No

8. Food Commodities (Kgs)

Is the stock register well maintained? Yes/No
 Any monthly interruption in food distribution? Yes/No

Commodity Last Consignment

Commodity	Delivery Date	Quantity Received	Balance left	To last until	Verified with Centre's stores
1. Pulses					Yes/No
2. B. oil					Yes/No
3. Sugar					Yes/No
4. Tea					Yes/No
5. WSB					Yes/No

Are the storage facilities: Adequate/Inadequate
 Is the store well kept? Stacking/Dunnage/Cleanliness

9. Other Observations

MOTHERS- Field monitoring checklist for project MLW 4780**Vulnerable Group Feeding**

- (i) Name of Clinic: _____ District: _____ Date: _____
- (ii) No. of mothers interviewed: _____
- (iii) Location of interview (if different from clinic site): _____

Explain purpose of your visit and thank those in attendance for their time

Where possible count and record the number of mothers who answer yes or no to questions.

1. Group profile

- 1.1 Do you all have children under five years of age?
- 1.2 Do you all attend the MCH clinic with your children?
- 1.3 How frequently do you attend the clinic?
- 1.4 Do any of you have more than one child attending the clinic?

2. Attitude towards clinic

- 2.1 Does your child(ren) benefit from attendance at the clinic?
- 2.2 If yes, how?
- 2.3 Do you benefit from attending the clinic?
- 2.3 If yes, how?

3. Rations

- 3.1 Do you receive food rations for your child (children)?
- 3.2 What quantity of rations do you receive?
- 3.3 How long do the rations usually last? (Less than 1 week - between 1-2 weeks)
- 3.4 Is the quality adequate?
- 3.5 If no, what is wrong?
- 3.6 Is the frequency of ration distribution okay?
- 3.7 If no, what would you prefer?
- 3.8 How many know what Likuni Phala is made from?
- 3.9 If yes, do you know what proportions of maize and soya are mixed? (80/20)
- 3.10 Do you grow soya?
- 3.11 If yes, could you make Likuni Phala yourselves?
- 3.12 Do you (mothers) receive rations?
- 3.13 If yes, is the quantity adequate
- 3.14 Is the quality adequate?

- 3.15 If no, what is wrong?
- 3.16 Is the frequency of ration distribution okay?
- 3.17 If no, what would you prefer?
- 3.18 How does the food you receive from the clinic help your family?
- 3.19 If there was no food available at the clinic would you continue to come?

4. Health education and cooking demonstrations

- 4.1 Have you received any health and nutrition education from the clinic staff?
- 4.2 If yes, is it a regular event at the clinic?
- 4.3 What did you learn?
- 4.4 Did you find this information useful?
- 4.5 Was it adequate?
- 4.6 If no, what would you like to know more about?
- 4.7 Have you changed anything you do as a result of the information/knowledge you received?
- 4.8 If yes, what?
- 4.9 If no, why?
- 4.10 Have you participated in a cooking demonstration?
- 4.11 If yes, was it useful?

5. Other

- 5.1 What do you think are the main causes of child malnutrition in your area (rank from most to least important)?

Thank all respondents for their time and patience

3.5.4 Observation

Much can be learned by watching what people actually do. Interviews can only capture part of the information needed to help us understand what is happening at field level.⁴

The principles of participant observation come from the work of anthropologists and social scientists. It requires that the observer/investigator participates in the social reality of those being observed so as to gain an insider's insights while maintaining a degree of objectivity. It is a technique which can provide a depth of understanding about what is happening in a community which cannot easily be obtained through other means.

Observation allows phenomena to be observed and investigated which poor, inarticulate and powerless people may be unable to rationalise or clearly explain themselves.

The term 'Participant Observation' is mainly associated with the work of academic researchers who may spend many months or years within a community, investigating and seeking to understand a broad range of socio-economic and cultural issues. It is generally accepted that such observation should be undertaken without taking in any preconceived conceptual frameworks. However, this approach is not a practical option in the context of monitoring rural development projects where time is short and managers need current information on specific topics to help make practical action oriented decisions.

For monitoring purposes, the type of observation that is likely to be most useful is that provided by (i) community members and project staff who live and work full-time in the project area, and (ii) 'outsiders' who have an opportunity to engage in structured observation during short visits to the field. In both cases it is vital that there is a clear conceptual framework and agreed guidelines which establish what needs to be observed and what information is expected to be collected and recorded. Such a framework provides a

focus to the investigation in circumstances where time and resources are often in short supply, helps ensure management information needs are directly addressed and allows a number of observers at different sites to produce comparable information.

The guidelines and framework for observation should be developed and agreed by those acting as observers in consultation with those who want to access the information for management purposes. The framework should clearly identify the objectives of the observation, the principle issues to be observed and recorded and clearly state the assumptions made.

Tools for recording the 'results' of participant observation can include interview guides, observation record forms and observation summary sheets. For example, a project objective may be to strengthen community management capacity to deal with specific development activities. Observation of how management meetings are organised and conducted may be the only practical way to determine whether or not this capacity is being developed. Criteria can be established to assess leadership behaviour and levels of participation, and be checked off by an observer as they occur during meetings e.g. was there an agenda, was it followed, was the direction of discussion adequately controlled, how many people participated in discussions, were decisions made and responsibilities for taking action allocated, did members negotiate with each other and make compromises in the common interest, etc?

The two main sources of bias that can compromise the quality of information collected through observation are (i) the influence of the observer on the behaviour of those being observed, and, conversely, (ii) the effects of the observed situation on the observer (making the observer less objective).

The main limitations of participant observation as a structured monitoring tool are:-

- it requires significant skill to do well so that managers are confident in the quality of information recorded and reported
- it can be very time-consuming if one is putting 'outsiders' in to the project area to observe. A number of months are usually required before an observer is in a position to start any systematic data collection; and
- if the population being observed is highly heterogeneous it cannot provide useful management information which represents the views or behaviour of the whole population

We can all make ourselves better informal observers by recognising our own biases/pre-conceptions, making time to observe rather than participate and by complementing the information collected through observations with information collected through other structured approaches. Triangulation is again an important principle to keep in mind.

3.5.5 Structured surveys

Why and what for?

Structured survey approaches are needed to collect quantifiable information from a sample of respondents on which to make inferences about a wider group of the population. This type of information can usefully complement that being collected through administrative records and less formal qualitative interviews and can help managers understand what is happening within the target community.

Structured survey designs differ from less formal individual or group interviews in that they:-

- are primarily used to collect **quantitative** data
- use a question format which allows answers to be categorised and coded (closed-ended)
- require that all questions are determined in advance
- usually involve a structured sampling procedure to select respondents

In the context of project monitoring, the type of structured survey that is most useful is one which:-

- focuses on finding out information about beneficiary responses to project activities (what the people think and how they are responding)
- asks a small number of clear and concise questions which have been carefully pre-tested
- is therefore relatively simple and quick to implement and administer
- provides some quantitative data for calculating simple percentages and ratios

We do not need to carry out the expensive, time-consuming and complex type of surveys usually associated with baseline studies or broad ranging evaluations. This would be both impractical and pointless in most project circumstances. The discussion below therefore focuses on the planning and conduct of simple and focused surveys aimed at finding out how people are responding to project activities. While physical and financial progress monitoring provide information on the **delivery** of inputs and services by the project, we also need to determine whether or not these services and facilities are being **accepted and used**. There is little advantage in knowing how well you are delivering a service if people are not using it as expected.



⁴ The structure of this section of the guide is adapted from chapter 4 of Casely & Kumar's 'Guide to the collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation data, 1988

The key to the beneficiary contact survey, if it is to be a useful and practical monitoring tool, is simplicity of design and the speed with which field work and analysis can be carried out.

Beneficiary contact monitoring

BCM has its origins in the market survey techniques of private enterprise. Short sharp surveys are conducted to find out what people are thinking and doing to help determine how the organisation can better meet client needs/demands.

There are three main techniques that can be used to keep track of beneficiaries attitudes and behaviour:-

1. maintain administrative records for each participant in the project. This is only feasible for those projects with clearly targeted beneficiaries who are receiving a specific and measurable input such as credit. Records can be analysed periodically to monitor the uptake of the service
2. establish a regular schedule of sample surveys
3. conduct informal interviews to get direct feedback from the field on success stories and problems. These can be conducted on farms or at project facilities. It is cheap, quick and provides an excellent way of capturing

the atmosphere of a project, which reading reports or records cannot.



Individuals involved in organising and delivering BCM surveys should be clear about the planned phasing of beneficiary contact and their participation in project activities, and expand operations in line with such plans. Projects rarely, if ever, are capable of reaching the whole of the targeted population in the first few years of the project. They more usually establish operations at certain centres and expand these as capacity and knowledge develops. BCM should focus on those areas of actual contact, and therefore need not immediately try to sample from the whole population.

Steps in planning a survey

Survey planning is a team effort and must involve all those who are expected to participate in getting the information, analysing and using it.

The main steps that must be covered are:-

1. identification of the data required from the survey, the purpose for which the information generated will be used, who will use it and when it is needed by
2. design of the survey method - how respondents will be selected, what interviewing method(s) will be used, who will do the interviewing and how information will be analysed
3. initiate selection and training of those who will carry out the survey
4. definition of who will be interviewed (included in sample selection) and who won't
5. selection of the concepts and definitions to be used in framing questions
6. construction of the questionnaire
7. selection of the sample to be interviewed
8. establishment of the data processing and analysis requirements
9. design of the reporting formats which will present summary information of direct relevance to project managements' requirements

With a basic grounding in social sciences, experience of interviewing, a sound understanding of the project, the people involved and management's information needs, and a healthy dose of common sense and initiative - anyone can design and implement a BCM survey if they have a team of willing people and the time and resources to do the job.

For those ANGO managers wishing to support the design and implementation of BCM surveys, but who have limited knowledge or experience of how to do it, it is recommended that they seek specialist advice (from colleagues, local professionals or consultants) and learn about the tools and issues from such texts as Casely and Kumar 1988 (for the 'harder' and more rigorous exposition on survey tools and techniques), or Feuerstein 1986 (for the 'softer' community based participatory approach). Nevertheless - there's no better way to learn about how to design and implement a survey than to do it.

A few key guidelines are given below:-

Selecting a sample

The purpose of selecting a sample is that it is usually impossible to interview everybody (too many people, not enough time, too expensive) . But if we can select a sample of people who are representative of the wider community, or at least of those members and groups in the community you want to know about, we can then get a good idea about what that wider group of people think.

Choosing the number of people to make up the sample can be problematic as the statistical issues are quite complex (sampling errors and confidence limits among them). But as a general guide you can use the following table to select respondents from each main group you want to interview.

Total number in group	Suggested number in sample	Percentage
100	15	15
200	20	10
500	50	10
1000	50	5

(Source - FAO, Field Program Management Manual)

Some of the most common sampling methods are summarised below:-

- **Simple random sampling.** Selecting individual respondents should ideally be done at random to get the most objective and statistically valid results from your survey. This is usually done through using a list of all members of the population you want to enquire within (the sample frame), and then selecting a number of people from this list at random (using random number tables). This gives an equal probability of any one in the sample frame being selected (which is why this is also known as probability sampling).
- **Systematic sampling.** is a slight variation on the simple random sample - instead of using a random number table, every 5th (or 10th or whatever) house is systematically chosen from the list and included in your sample until you have the sample number you need. This is a good alternative if you do not have random number tables or are unsure how to use them.
- **Stratified random sampling.** This involves identifying sub-groups or 'strata' of people from within the wider population whom you want to interview, and organising your selection of individuals for the sample around lists of members of these sub-groups. This is often the preferred approach for BCM surveys where you want to find out what specific groups of people are thinking and doing in relation to targeted project activities. You may, for example, develop a sample frame consisting only of farmers or

women within a defined geographic area who you expect to have had the opportunity to participate in the ongoing extension program. From the stratified sample frame a table of random numbers can again be used to select the individuals to be interviewed.

Random sampling in the way described above is not always possible or practical. Lists (such as from census records, electoral roles or phone books) are rarely available or may be incomplete or inaccurate, and it may be too difficult and time consuming for the project to try and generate a complete list itself. In such cases either quota or cluster sampling can be used.

- **Cluster sampling.** This involves first selecting clusters or groups of people you want to interview e.g. a number of villages or farmers groups within the project area (rather than individuals), and then once in the field, interviewing people in these locations as you find them. The groups may thus be chosen at random by using random selection techniques, but the individuals for interview are then selected by moving from one house to the next until the sample quota is reached. This method may be easier for field workers/enumerators to use and understand as compared to other random sampling techniques.
- **Quota sampling.** Respondents are not selected at random using this approach. This involves giving the enumerator a certain number of interviews to carry out for a defined target group in a defined location (e.g. mothers with children under 5 in village x), and then leaving the enumerator to go and find people who are willing to talk until they have reached their quota of respondents. This method relies more on the personal judgement of enumerators in the selection of respondents and is therefore more open to bias. It is nevertheless a useful and practical approach which is often appropriate in the context of BCM style surveys in rural areas.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire is delivered either through an interview (usually face to face or by phone in more developed countries and urban areas) or it can be completed independently by the respondent (the self-report method). For most development projects the face to face interview will be the most practical option.

The questions contained in the questionnaire may be either open or closed-ended. If one is seeking to collect quantitative data the use of closed questions is required.

An example of the type of questions that need to be asked in relation to the monitoring of extension services and the adoption of recommendations by farmers is provided below.

What to ask

In order to know if the project is reaching its targeted beneficiaries, and to understand how they are reacting and what effect this is having on production, the following basic questions need to be answered.

a) Who has access to project services and inputs?

If a project is targeted at low income farmers and women, for example, management must know if this group is indeed getting serviced, or whether wealthier farmers are in fact benefiting more. Monitoring the number and type of people using farmer services should be relatively straight forward, particularly when some kind of farmer service centre is established and keeps clear records.

It is also useful, however, for the project to know something about those who *could* have used project services but *chose* not to. Knowing why these people have not used available services may be a pointer to problems that will need further investigation. Collecting such information would require a survey.

b) How did they respond to these services and inputs?

The following questions need to be answered in sequence to gauge beneficiary/client response to the project:-

1. To what extent did persons with access **understand** the available services?
2. To what extent were the services seen as **meeting the needs** of those who understood them?
3. To what extent were the services **tried** by those who saw them as relevant?
4. Did those who tried the services **continue using** them?

These questions have been used for some time by commercial companies interested in understanding consumer response to their product. They may also be used just as well for understanding beneficiary response to an agricultural extension package.

1. Was the extension message clear?
2. Did farmers see the service as meeting their needs?
3. How many tried it?
4. Was demand maintained, even when the focus of extension advice shifted elsewhere?

c) How has this affected their activities?

The next level of monitoring that needs to be addressed is determining the outcome or effect of service use in terms of increased physical or economic output. This activity blends into what might be called ongoing evaluation. It is essentially part of project monitoring, however, as it relies on regular farmer contact and provides important management information.

Measuring increases in production and income through interviewing farmers is based on the assumption that they are aware of the changes they are making as a result of adopting project services/recommendations and can measure the change in output. The weight of evidence

collected by professionals working in this field suggests that this is a fair assumption. It is also important to include farmer perceptions in the monitoring system (whether or not they match with those of the project's staff) as they will affect their response.

Nevertheless, given the practical and methodological difficulties of measuring changes in production and yield (particularly in rain-fed farming systems) it may be more practical to use the adoption rate of extension services as a measure of extension effects. The guiding principle behind the monitoring function then becomes: 'If the number of farmers who make use of the service being offered is increasing in line with planned targets, then the agency is performing well; if not, then management needs to be made aware, understand the causes and take appropriate action'.

Farmer's assessment of project interventions can be monitored through a simple interview with a sample of respondents, or can be investigated in more depth through a diagnostic study which will focus more on problem identification and finding possible solutions.

Recording answers

Answers to a survey questionnaire are usually recorded on the same piece of paper that the questions are written on. The main ways in which closed-ended questions can be recorded are summarised below (adapted from Feuerstein, 1986):-

Checklists. These give the respondent a choice of answers to a question from a pre-prepared list. It is important that the list contains all possible answers, or at least allows for 'other' answers to be specified.

An example is shown below:-

Q: Which of the following tree species have you received from the village nursery and planted out on your land?

- Soursop
- Casuarina cunninghamiana
- Jakfruit
- Cutch
- Lychee
- Ear-pod Wattle
- Longan
- Beach She-Oak
- Other (please specify)

Two way questions. These questions require the respondent to choose from one of two possible answers (usually 'yes or no', or 'agree or disagree'). Sometimes it is useful to include a third option which allows the respondent to say they don't know or are uncertain. These types of questions are simple to ask and record.

An example is shown below:-

Q: Have you attended a farmer demonstration day organised by the agricultural extension service during the last 3 months?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Multiple choice questions. This approach is useful when there are a number of possible answers to a question and you want the respondent to consider them all, and then choose one which most closely reflects their view/opinion.

An example is shown below:-

Q: How much cash income did your household make over the past year?

- 0-\$50
- \$51-\$100
- \$101-\$200
- \$201-\$500
- more than \$500

Scales. Scales are most effectively used to ask questions about people's opinions and views on a subject. They can be presented in three main ways:-

- An ordered scale. This consists of a number of statements which express different potential opinions people might have about an issue. One of the statements is selected by the respondent.

Q: Do you think that the village water committee is:

- Working very well and has good community support
- Working well, but needs continued outside support from the project
- Not working well, but needs continued support and more time to develop
- Not working well and should be re-organised or abolished

- An agreement scale. A statement is given in the question and the respondent then asked to choose how strongly they agree or disagree with what has been said.

Statement: The project has provided real benefits to most of the families in the village.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Undecided
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

- **Opposites scale.** This approach uses the differences between the meaning of opposite words e.g good - bad, useful - useless, expensive - cheap, easy - hard, clear - confusing. A question is asked and the respondent has to record their response on a graded scale (usually 1 to 7) using the two opposite words

The extension information provided was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Clear</i>					<i>Confusing</i>	

A mixture of different question and answer formats can be used in one survey form (though be wary of confusing both interviewers and respondents if you mix them up too much!). Choosing the right mix depends on the nature of the questions, the background of the respondents and the experience of the designers in knowing what works best in different circumstances.

Recording and analysing open response questions

Recording and analysing open response questions is generally much more difficult to do, particularly if a significant number of respondents have been interviewed. Sorting and aggregating uncoded narrative responses, and framing conclusions about the answers to the questions is very open to the bias of the analyst, and requires a skilled and experienced operator to do well.

Nevertheless, most of us who have undertaken surveys of one sort or another (even just an end of training course evaluation) will know that a few telling narrative comments can be an important complement to the data, and often help in its interpretation.

Remember also the primary importance of the question and how it is asked in all survey and interviewing work. Pre-testing of questions before actually starting the survey is absolutely vital to getting meaningful results.

Selecting and training interviewers

The interviewer is the main potential source of 'non-sampling errors', and these need to be minimised through appropriate skills development.

The type of people that may be used as interviewers could include local teachers, health clinic staff, agricultural extension staff, secondary school or university students, community development workers or professional staff from a research institute. The choice will depend on the nature of the survey, the resources available and the willingness/ability of potential interviewers to participate.

Some basic considerations are summarised below (adapted from Feuerstein, 1986):-

- **Educational level.** Interviewers must be literate and should usually have a minimum of six years secondary schooling. The complexity of the survey will influence the choice of appropriately educated interviewers, but more education does certainly not mean that a person will be a better or more appropriate interviewer.
- **Age.** In order to get respondents to answer questions frankly and to take the interview seriously it may be desirable to have interviewers over a certain age. Schoolchildren would not generally be appropriate, for example, to ask questions about potentially sensitive topics such as family health, sanitation or family incomes.

- **Gender.** If the survey is seeking to collect information about women’s activities, it may be necessary to select female interviewers. It may not be acceptable in certain cultures for men to sit with individual women (or groups) and ask them questions, particularly if they are of a personal nature. Similar problems may arise with women interviewing men, if women are not taken seriously in this role within the targeted community. Nevertheless, appropriate training can go a long way to mitigating some of the potential problems with members of one sex interviewing those of another.
- **Socio-economic background.** In some circumstances it may be important to select interviewers of a certain socio-economic background or status, such as in a caste based system where it may be difficult/impossible for an untouchable to interview a Brahman. Alternatively it may be inappropriate to have upper/middle class (often urban educated) interviewers trying to conduct interviews (particularly qualitative ones) with rural people who have very different values, perspective and concerns.
- **Personality.** One of the most important characteristics of a successful interviewer is their character/personality and how well they deal with people. To get the best results from a survey interview the respondent must be relaxed and at ease with the person asking the questions. Interviewers should therefore have good inter-personal skills and a manner which puts people at their ease.
- **Health.** Some rural surveys will require the interviewer to travel into remote areas and maybe walk and camp out for a number of days at a time. Reasonable physical health will in these cases be a pre-requisite for interviewer selection.
- **Language.** The interviewer must be able to communicate effectively with the respondents. This obviously requires that they speak the same language. This may mean that the options for selecting

interviewers are quite restricted, and compromises may need to be made in the way that the survey and questionnaire is designed to allow for this fact. If secondary schoolchildren are the only option available (and they can be very good interviewers if adequately trained and supported), survey scope and the structure of questions will need to be adapted accordingly.

Whichever group is chosen to conduct interviews, adequate training must be allowed for. This may consist simply of a morning workshop or may require a longer period of time (including some field work practice). Interviewers must be clear about:-

- Why the survey is being carried, who is involved and what their role is
- Respondent selection procedures
- The questions they are asking
- Recording answers
- Interview techniques
- What to do if (typical) problems arise

3.6 Data analysis and reporting

3.6.1 Analysis

Once base data has been collected, it then needs to be analysed in order to turn it into information that can guide decision making. If useful results are to be obtained from data analysis it is important that those responsible for undertaking the work are clear about who is going to use the information and the nature of decisions that they need to make. The scope of analysis should therefore be primarily determined by the information needs of managers and a realistic assessment of capacity constraints (time, money, skills). These should always be determined **before** any data collection starts and should be the principle considerations that guide the whole process of

information generation. A large amount of information produced from monitoring and evaluation activities is never used because it is not clearly directed at meeting management needs, is too complex, not clearly presented or is provided too late to be of use.

When thinking about the way in which data should be analysed, different approaches are usually required for quantitative and qualitative data. By definition, quantitative data involves numbers that can be subjected to various forms of statistical analysis. Qualitative data on the other hand generally provides information on people’s views, opinions and observations and is presented in a narrative form (though remember that information gathered through qualitative questions can be quantified). A balance between the two is usually required - numbers require interpretation, and qualitative information can help such interpretation to take place. Conversely, the statistical analysis of quantitative data may help confirm, or raise questions about, the information collected from surveying people’s opinions. The principles of triangulation should apply to the way in which data is analysed just as it does in the choice of data collection methods.

It is important to emphasise also that the **accuracy** and **significance** of the data being analysed should be openly and frankly assessed. If the analyst has doubts about the quality of any of the available data, these concerns should be made clear so that the significance of any findings are placed in context.

The notes that follow provide an overview of some of the main methods that can be used to analyse and present **quantitative** data in a way that project managers are likely to find useful. In most cases there is no need for any complex statistical analysis.

Planned/actual

Monitoring is primarily about comparing what was originally planned with what actually happens. This analysis should therefore form the base of any monitoring and reporting system. For example, if we learn from field reports that some 500ha of fruit tree orchards have been planted out during the period under review, we need to know how this compares with the original plan if we are to understand whether or not this is a satisfactory achievement. If the plan had been to plant out 1,000ha, and all the resources originally budgeted have been spent, this indicates a problem either with the original plan or with implementation performance.

Some analysis of planned versus actual performance is therefore a must.

Percentages/ratios

Calculating percentages and ratios is the bread and butter of data analysis for monitoring purposes. Assuming that the planned targets are reasonably accurate, such ratios help us see how close we are to achieving what we have set out to do. If, for example, we are comparing planned with actual performance, we can report this as a % figure which is easily understood and allows problem areas (e.g. where % figures are low) to be further investigated (action by exception).

Trends over time and comparisons with previous periods

An analysis of the available data over different time periods can be extremely useful and revealing. This helps us to see whether or not things are getting ‘better’ or ‘worse’ over time, and allows seasonal variability to be identified (which may be vital information in the context of analysing indicators on such issues as agricultural production or disease incidence).

Comparison with previous periods can also help when there are no clear planned targets for the activity being monitored or reviewed. Reference to what happened at the same time in previous years can at least provide a guide to what expected outcomes might be.

When analysing trends over time, it is important to remember that one must compare like with like. The use of a consistent set of indicators (measuring the same thing in the same way at different points in time) is essential if meaningful information is to be obtained.

Geographic variance

Projects which are being implemented in a variety of locations need to be monitored in such a way that geographic variations in performance can be identified. Aggregate service delivery or impact data may show results that accord generally with expectations, but may not reveal location specific problems which need to be addressed. An analysis of the data from different villages, districts or provinces may therefore help to reveal issues requiring management attention which would otherwise not have come to light.

There is also a need for a 'reliability check'. The results of such analysis need to be presented back to the community and field staff, asking them "Does this ring true?"

Group variance

As with geographic variance, it may be important to monitor variance in outcomes between different social groups. For example, an important concern for many projects will be the level of contact with, and impact on, either men or women. This requires that data be disaggregated by gender and that this then be systematically analysed on a regular basis.

Poverty alleviation projects will also be concerned with identifying which groups within the community are benefiting from project interventions. A rural credit project, for example, which targets low income farmers should be collecting data which will allow the client profile to be analysed (e.g. net assets, M/F, caste, etc)

Work norms/standards - productivity

Many service delivery activities can be usefully monitored by establishing, and then collecting information on, work norms or standards. For example, an agency's response time to a request for assistance, the time taken to process payments, the number of contact farmers visited during a month, and waiting lists for minor surgery can all be analysed and compared with agreed work norms or standards to help managers measure performance and identify where improvements need to be made.

There may of course be difficulties with establishing work norms in volatile and poorly structured work environments. This does not obviate their usefulness, however, but rather calls for their application in a flexible and considered way, taking into account external factors that may impact on productivity but which are beyond the control of project staff (e.g. social unrest or some input supply problems).

Combining different pieces of information (indicators) to gain new insights

It is often important, and revealing, to combine a number of different pieces of information when analysing the progress or performance of a project. New insights can thus be gained.

Take for example the data provided in Figure 16 below⁵.

If one reads across this table, it is clear that the project is generally under performing against what was planned. Reasons for this would need to be determined through further investigation.

One can gain further insights, however, by comparing the data **vertically** as well as **horizontally**. A few additional calculations would generate some important additional management information, namely:-

- by comparing families with access to irrigation water with those actually using it, we can determine that only 52% of families with access are actually using it. This raises new questions about why utilisation rates are so low.
- by comparing families with access to potable water with those actually using it, we can determine that only 44% of families with

access are drinking it. Again this raises questions about utilisation rates and constraints.

- by comparing the planned area for irrigation with the number of families that should have access indicates a planned average irrigated area of 2ha per family. A comparison of the actual figures (6,000ha and 4,800 families respectively) shows that the average area which each family has access to is in fact only 1.25ha . This could have serious implications for such things as agricultural production targets, farm family incomes and farmer's ability to pay water user charges.

3.6.2 Presenting the analysis graphically

If information can be presented graphically it can often be more easily understood by the reader and is therefore likely to be of more use in supporting management decision making. A few simple (but effective) examples of graphs and charts are shown in Figure 17 overleaf.

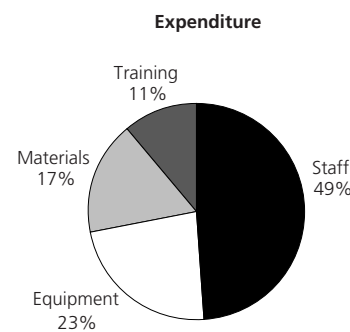
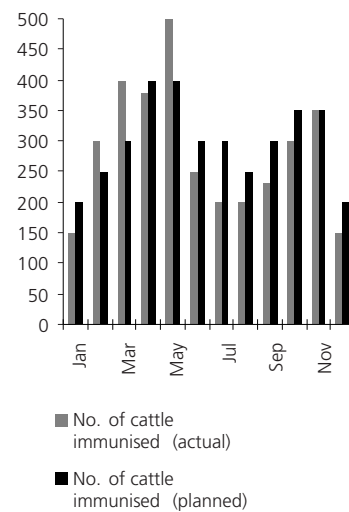
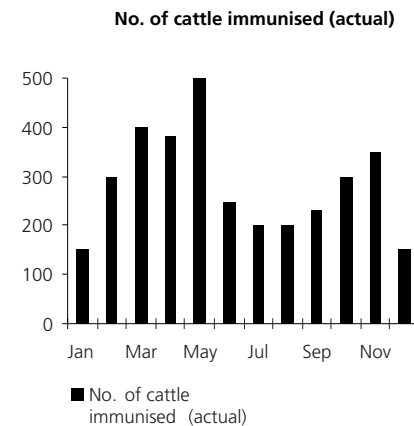
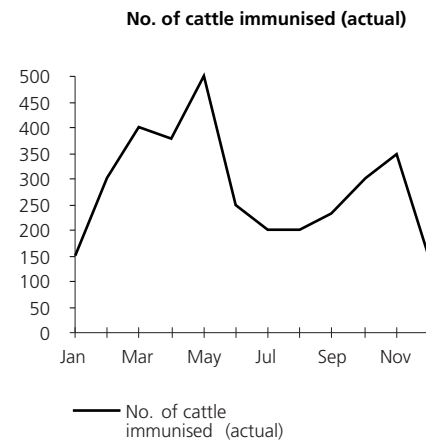


Figure 16

Project Indicator	Cumulative targets to date	Cumulative progress reported to date	Performance as % of cumulative target to date
Families with access to irrigation water	12,000	4,800	40%
Families with access to potable water	15,000	4,500	30%
Families using irrigation water	12,000	2,500	21%
Families using potable water	15,000	2,000	13%
Area under irrigation command (ha)	24,000	6,000	25%

⁵ Adapted from materials prepared for the World Food Program by ITAD Ltd in 1994

Fig. 17



3.6.3 Project Progress Reports

Project managers are usually required to prepare regular Project Progress Reports. These will form the basis of reports to governments and donors. Such reports may be produced quarterly, six monthly, annually or according to any other timetable that management agree on. The important thing is that the reports contain useful information and are available at the right time to help managers make decisions which support project implementation.

The structure and layout of PPRs is important if the information contained is to be easily digested by the reader. In this regard:-

- text should be kept brief and concise;
- maximum use made of summary tables;
- graphic and other visual displays should be used to clearly illustrate proportions, trends and distributions.

PPRs may be structured and presented in a number of different ways. The important thing is that within each implementing agency the structure of such reports be standardised, so that they are easier to complete and comparison can be made between reports over time. The basic layout should include information on:-

- The activity or work area being reported on
- Work scheduled for the period and work completed (activities)
- Physical performance indicators and targets (outputs)
- Budget and actual expenditure (inputs and costs)
- Problems/constraints experienced and management action required

In addition there may be details about revenue and manpower, and reference to activities associated/related to the project but not directly under project management's control.

The reports usually contain a mixture of narrative comment and quantitative data. They should be completed on a regular basis and make reference to achievement against what was planned, or alternatively (if targets have not been set) to what was achieved in the same period the year before.

Assessing the quality of PPRs

PPRs provide an important source of sequential information about activities and their outputs. Their usefulness will depend on the regularity with which they are completed and their quality. Common problems associated with PPRs are that they are too lengthy, with poor or incomplete coverage of key issues. They are often largely descriptive, rather than focused on performance and management action. The following checklist may be used as a guide to assess quality:-

- Objectives.** For each project component or area of work activity reported on, reference should be made (very briefly) in a PPR to the objectives and outputs of that component. This allows clear reference to be made to the purpose of what is being described, and thus helps to assess the importance of the activities. Reporting through using the Project Framework (Logframe) format is helpful in this regard.
- Indicators.** These should fit the criteria provided in your notes on indicator selection.
- Target Consistency.** For each indicator there should ideally be a target. It is preferable for targets to be based on a consistent planning horizon. Thus it is easier to interpret a report if all targets are annual, rather than some quarterly and others for the life of the project. Some targets refer to seasonal cycles, which restricts the choice of period.
- Period Consistency.** Compare reports for different quarters or years. Do they use the same indicators for the various components, and are targets measured in the same units? (e.g. response to crop extension messages changes from farmers contacted to hectares

treated, or fertiliser used is measured in tonnes for one quarter and in bags for the next quarter). If you wish to analyse performance over a long time period, consistent use of units of measurement are necessary.

- e) **Narrative Content.** The purpose of writing PPRs is to identify progress towards producing outputs and meeting objectives. It should be 'output' oriented. In practice, many PPRs tell us what has been done in the style of a diary. Though often interesting, this is less helpful, especially when preparing a summary for more senior management.
- f) **Management Analysis.** The last item on this checklist concerns the points identified for action. This should focus on actions that require the attention of more senior management, or other units, divisions or departments outside the control of the Project Manager.

The purpose of PPR analysis is to improve and support implementation. Specific attention should be paid to distinguishing between the following types of possible problems which may be impacting on the achievement of project objectives:-

- project design weaknesses
- accuracy of planning and budgeting
- resource constraints
- coordination problems
- management problems internal to the organisation
- adverse external environment

Understanding the nature of the problems being faced will help ensure that appropriate management is then taken.

Flash Reports

A useful format for providing a quick structured report on project progress and issues requiring action is shown in Figure 18 below. Such reports should be limited to one page only and are designed to highlight key issues while requiring the minimum amount of paperwork. The flash report is ideally suited as a monthly update for transmission through a fax machine.

Flash Report Project name: Date:
Progress
Constraints/Problems
Action Required

Chapter 4. CONTENTS

4. Regular Review	
4.1 Action and reflection	.89
4.2 Drawing conclusions from monitoring data	.90
4.3 Reviewing project design documents	.90
4.4 Collaborative, problem solving approach to reviews	.91
4.5 Assumptions and risks	.91
4.6 Reviews and delegated authority	.92
4.7 Mid-year reviews	.92
4.8 Role for Australian NGOs	.92
4.9 Personnel management	.93
4.10 Reviewing partnerships	.93

4. REGULAR REVIEW

4.1 Action and reflection

Monitoring tends to focus on the immediate concerns of implementation (action) and as a consequence monitoring should be complemented by a process of regular internal review (reflection). Implementing agencies need to periodically stand back from a project and be prepared to be critical of their performance. The process can be facilitated by outsiders (including supporting ANGOs) but implementing agencies need to develop the capacity to conduct these exercises themselves.

Some would argue that 'standing back' is the role of evaluation. Perhaps, but some projects are not evaluated until they are completed, if at all, so restricting reflection to evaluations effectively robs projects of this element. Implementers should not have to wait for a formal evaluation to critically examine the value of what they are doing. Regular internal reviews can fill the gap.

Reviews should not, however, involve too much navel gazing. In the same way that too much attention to reviewing policy can lead to 'policy paralysis', so poorly managed (or too frequent) reviews can lead to 'review rictus.'



REVIEW RICTUS

4.2 Drawing conclusions from monitoring data

Regular reviews present an opportunity to test the usefulness of monitoring systems. It is not uncommon for an implementing agency to go on collecting data without stopping to analyse it, as if information collection was an end in itself, a merely passive exercise. Sometimes nothing is done with the data because it is not really seen as relevant or worthwhile. If there is any doubt about the value of data collected managers should be prepared to critically review monitoring systems.

Thus a key questions in a review should be: *What conclusions can be drawn from the information regularly collected?* If no firm conclusions can be drawn it is likely that there is a fundamental problem with the monitoring system and/or the way it is being used. This has to be remedied. If on the other hand conclusions can be drawn from the data but project personnel don't accept these conclusions it has to be asked: *What is missing? What information leads us to a different view?* In these circumstances it is likely that the information regularly collected is inadequate and/or incomplete. This also has to be remedied.

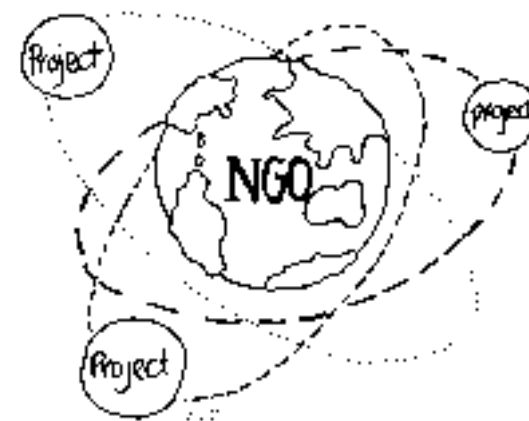
4.3 Reviewing project design documents

To be at all useful project designs should be treated as live documents and developed during the life of the project. But they rarely are. The documentation tends to be wordy and complex and presented as if it is the final word. The documents may have been drafted in the NGO's headquarters, where the master discs remain. As a consequence design documents are usually left on the shelf or in the bottom drawer and people either leave inadequacies in the design to fester or learn to work around them.

This is counterproductive - the efficacy of the design is critical and it should be made to work. Objectives, outputs and planning targets should

be regularly revisited for clarity and appropriateness. Planning targets in particular are likely to require some reworking. A project design and management model that inhibits change of this nature is self-defeating. An inflexible approach leads to failure because it assumes too much of our capacity to design effective projects and of our understanding of particular contexts.

The 'blueprint approach' treats projects like orbiting satellites which have to operate perfectly without adjustment once launched. We are not in this position and we have opportunities to experiment and change. So although every effort should be made to get the design right from the beginning we have to recognise that this will only be a best effort, in effect a working draft. Regular reviews offer opportunities to play a proactive role in design.



Development projects should not be expected to perform like satellites.

This is not to say that review workshops should be occasions for completely rethinking projects, for throwing everything up in the air. In the normal course of things this would be debilitating and would leave no time for practical, problem solving concerns. Nevertheless reviews should provide opportunities to re-inject creativity into a project. At the very least review workshop

participants have to ask: *"What do we know now that we did not know at the outset? How can we use this knowledge?"*

4.4 Collaborative, problem solving approach to reviews

Projects develop problems, it is in the nature of human activity that they do. Strangely people seem to be caught by surprise when projects run into problems and the reaction is often to ignore them or begin to 'disinvest' in the project. It is wise to expect problems to develop and to have skills ready for dealing with it. Some problems are too hard to address in the normal course of implementation. For example, project coordination issues may have developed, creating tension between project staff. Or the project may face considerable delays in the implementation of key activities, with repercussions for other components. Or there may be concerns in the community about the manner in which the project targets beneficiaries. Everyone may be aware of the problem but it may be difficult to decide who should deal with it. Regular reviews provide the space to deal with these kind of problems.

Supporting ANGOs should encourage implementing partners to view both monitoring and review as opportunities to be proactive in a problem solving sense. Monitoring systems should be used to track assumptions and risks and to highlight problems as they emerge. Regular reviews should be occasions when staff, counterparts and project beneficiaries and participants discuss problem areas and come up with strategies for dealing with them.

It may be appropriate during internal reviews to test the performance of management. For this to be effective the review agenda should not be 'stacked' with management's concerns. Indeed managers must be prepared to take a back seat to ensure that the concerns of field staff and project beneficiaries and participants come through.

4.5 Assumptions and risks

Some of the problems that arise in the course of implementation may have been foreseen in the form of the assumptions and risks stated in the project's original design documents. Unforeseen or unstated assumptions and risks may also have developed into problems. A review should incorporate a re-examination of assumptions and risks.

'Blowing the whistle'

A matter that should have been dealt with by a review process arose in a primary health care project in southern Sudan. Ten health centres were to be re-established over two years. It became apparent to field staff that this was overambitious. Travelling in the wet season proved more difficult than envisaged and the health trainers were unable to spend as much time at each centre as had been hoped. When the matter was raised informally with district authorities they sharply opposed any reduction in the number of centres. Project staff struggled on, spreading themselves too thin. As a result the supervision and training provided was inadequate and the quality of care suffered. Unfortunately it was left to an external review to finally 'blow the whistle' and cut the project back to four centres.



4.6 Reviews and delegated authority

It is important that regular reviews be invested with decision making authority or that a mechanism be established to bring review recommendations before management. There is little point identifying problems if the follow-through decisions have to be deferred indefinitely. Appropriate management meetings could be held immediately after regular reviews so that review recommendations can be considered and where appropriate endorsed.

4.7 Mid-year reviews

In a project running for two or more years there may be an annual planning exercise which includes a review of the preceding year. This form of regular review is important, particularly for senior and middle management. However, annual planning tends to be a high-pressure period for an agency, with an emphasis on finalising forward plans, not on addressing problems that have arisen in implementation. The review process suffers and tends to be superficial. Moreover, these meetings are likely to take place in the head office, making it unlikely that field level concerns will be addressed.

Therefore, in addition to annual review exercises (conducted as part of annual planning) it may be necessary to schedule mid-year reviews, at which time there would be a better opportunity for critical reflection and sharing between implementing partner and project beneficiaries and participants.

Mid-year reviews should be:

- held on site, utilising a participative workshop format
- focus initially on the data collected by regular monitoring and attempt to draw conclusions from it
- adopt a collaborative problem solving approach and have decision making authority

4.8 Role for Australian NGOs

ANGOs can strengthen the projects they support and provide a valuable service to partner agencies by helping them establish monitoring systems and review processes. Providing some stimulus to critical reflection and inquiry is a very useful role to play.

There is considerable potential for so called 'monitoring visits' to be re-oriented to play this role (discussed further in the next chapter). Such a support role would require the visiting Australian NGO project manager to have a combination of project planning and training skills. Many Australian NGOs will have to first invest in the skills of their project staff if they are to play a greater role in this area.

If opportunities arise for an ANGO project manager to facilitate an internal review, support could be provided by suggesting the range of matters that could be discussed and helping participants through them. Suggested review topics could include ¹:

- **Achievements:** Is the project achieving its objectives?
- **Processes:** Do all stakeholders feel they are able to contribute to the project?
- **Strengths and weaknesses:** How can the project be strengthened?
- **External influences:** What influences are there beyond the control of the project? Are they beneficial or harmful to the objectives of the project?
- **Understanding:** How can the various stakeholders understand one another better?
- **Sharing experience:** How can lessons be shared, so that failures are avoided and successes replicated?

4.9 Personnel management

ANGOs may also be able to support partner agencies by assisting them to develop personnel management policies and strategies and periodically review their effectiveness. Effective personnel management systems are a key part of the puzzle in building institutional and operational capacity. There are, however, many thorny issues to be tackled in this area of work, which are beyond the scope of this Guide.

4.10 Reviewing partnerships

Funding agencies, NGOs, implementing agencies and beneficiaries are separated by "space, culture and the nature of bureaucracy".² There are substantial obstacles in the path of partnership yet there is a tendency to take relationships for granted or to put up with serious shortcomings. Both are counterproductive. The level of understanding between partners in the development process is critical. The key words in this context are rapport, trust and effective communication.

Stakeholders have to come together from time to time and negotiate their way forward. The key is to agree or reaffirm the common goal, the process that has to be respected in getting there and the responsibilities of each party. It may also be appropriate to re-assess how progress should be measured and how learning can be incorporated into project implementation.

In reviewing the quality and effectiveness of partnerships an ANGO should not put its own performance off limits.

It may also be appropriate from time to time to re-examine the mandate of your ANGO. Is it based on philanthropy or on human rights i.e. how does your organisation relate to those in whose name it acts?

¹ Adapted from *Project Evaluation: A Guide for NGOs*, Robinson and Thin for the Overseas Development Administration, June 1993

² *Appraisal, Monitoring and Evaluation: The NGO Approach*, Laurie Zivetz for ACFOA, June 1988, p3

Chapter 5. CONTENTS

5. Making the Most of Short Visits	
5.1 Limitations And Compromises95	5.6 Project Site Visit108
5.1.1 'Monitoring visits'95	5.6.1 Final details of field work109
5.1.2 The unwelcome visitor95	5.6.2 District authorities (day 3)109
5.2 Catch-Up Appraisal95	5.6.3 Base yourself on site109
5.2.1 Are the goals, objectives and outputs clearly conceived and expressed?96	5.6.4 Introduction to community leaders (day 3, evening)109
5.2.2 Is the project design focused on inputs or outputs?97	5.6.5 Mini-workshop with field staff and farmers association109
5.2.3 Assumptions and risks97	5.6.6 Mapping (day 4, afternoon)111
5.2.4 Monitoring systems and performance indicators97	5.6.7 ransect (day 4, afternoon)111
5.2.5 Do the design documents facilitate implementation?98	5.6.8 Semi-structured interviews (days 5 and 6, mornings)111
5.2.6 Accessibility of project documents98	5.6.9 Facilitated discussion about monitoring (day 5, afternoon)112
5.2.7 Capacity of your partner agency98	5.6.10 Key contacts (day 5 and/or 6)112
5.2.8 Personnel management99	5.6.11 Do-it-yourself exercise (day 5 or 6)112
5.3 Introduction to Short Visit Case Study99	5.6.12 Farmers association meeting (day 6, late morning)112
5.4 Pre-Departure Preparation100	5.6.13 Design diagnostic study (day 6, afternoon)113
5.4.1 Clarify the purposes of the visit100	5.6.14 Analysis (day 7)113
5.4.2 Timing100	5.6.15 De-briefing district authorities113
5.4.3 What will our partner agency get out of the visit?101	5.7 Final Days in Capital113
5.4.4 Developing ToR101	5.7.1 De-briefings (day 8)114
5.4.5 Background research and information collection104	5.7.2 Structure and layout of the report (days 9 and 10)114
5.5 In the Capital105	5.7.3 Session on project design (day 9, afternoon)114
5.5.1 Introduction105	5.7.4 Session on monitoring systems (day 10, afternoon)115
5.5.2 Check itinerary and preparations (day 1) . . .105	5.8 Back Home115
5.5.3 Meetings (days 1 and 2)106	5.8.1 De-briefings115
5.5.4 Initial workshop with partner agency (day 2)107	5.8.2 The report115
5.5.5 Partner agency's monitoring systems and procedures (day 2)108	5.8.3 Follow up115

5. MAKING THE MOST OF SHORT VISITS

5.1 Limitations and Compromises

5.1.1 'Monitoring visits'

Most project officers try to visit a project every one or two years. These visits are often described as 'monitoring visits' but the precise purposes vary considerably. Some visits are conducted simply to familiarise an NGO staff or board member with a project or program. At the other end of the spectrum there are visits which are more integral to implementation e.g. participating in annual planning meetings. It is also possible to differentiate between visits that are primarily concerned with the Australian NGO's reporting responsibilities (verification visits) and visits that are more focused on assisting a partner agency develop their own monitoring systems (support visits).

Anyone who has undertaken a monitoring or review visit will know that significant limitations and compromises are usually involved. The visit is likely to be very short, perhaps only a week, yet the visiting project officer will be expected to attend a string of meetings, spend time with the partner agency to fill in gaps in information and follow up problems identified in correspondence, as well as visit the project site to get a first-hand impression of field level issues. The over-riding concern may be to provide an acquittal to the funding agency together with a justification for further funding. Very little time may be available for providing support to the partner agency or for interacting with beneficiary communities and groups.

5.1.2 The unwelcome visitor

From the partner agency's perspective hosting the visits of supporting NGOs can become a real grind and frankly they may be relieved to see you off at the airport! Some partner agencies end up having to cope with back-to-back visits by different NGOs and donors, creating a substantial drain on time, enthusiasm and resources.

From the perspective of field staff and the community concerned the whistle stop visits must seem pointless or extravagant. For his/her part, the visiting project manager may feel ridiculous in this role, but it is easy to get trapped in it.

Visits are expensive, particularly when the airfares are high, and more should be done to make them productive. ANGOS could do so by:

- re-assessing the purpose and use of short visits,
- developing guidelines for staff,
- providing in-house training in monitoring and review techniques, and
- collaborating more closely with partner agencies in setting the outputs for each visit.

Short visits, although constrained, present a good opportunity to understand more about the project you are supporting and the strengths and weaknesses of your international or local partner.

5.2 Catch-up Appraisal

Your first monitoring visit might be your first opportunity to appraise a project and the adequacy of its design. Moreover, there may be personnel within the partner agency who are not familiar with the formal design even though they are involved in the management of the project. In this case your visit is also an opportunity to go through the design documents with partner agency staff and give them a greater sense of understanding and control.

A monitoring visit may be your first opportunity to look closely at a project you are funding



The following checklist is suggested for undertaking design appraisals:¹

- Are the goals, objectives and outputs clearly conceived and expressed?
- Is the project focused on inputs or outputs?
- Are monitoring systems and procedures in place?
- Are assumptions and risks noted?
- Are the design documents useable as implementation tools and are they accessible to project beneficiaries and participants?

Your inquiries may lead to remedial work on the design. This might seem an odd task to take on after a project has started, but ensuring partner agencies are working with good, accessible designs is a useful role for a supporting NGO. Don't take the attitude that it is too late to fix it.

Most Australian NGOs now work within international groups and it may be considered out of place for a visitor from an Australia NGO to start dissecting a project designed by an international or local partner or inquiring into management practices. Perhaps, but without such an opportunity it is hard to see how a visiting NGO staff member could gain a critical understanding of the project or of the partner agency.

5.2.1 Are the goals, objectives and outputs clearly conceived and expressed?

Does the project make sense? Is it implementable? Can it be monitored? Does the implementing agency understand the project as it is formally designed, or in quite different terms?

Project documents setting out the goals, objectives, expected outputs, etc are indispensable. But unfortunately they are often defeated by their own complexity. Design documents have to be easy to follow if they are to be of any service in implementing the

project. The key to good design is expressing each element clearly and achieving a good logical flow. Implementation and monitoring is so much easier when the overall goal, component objectives and required outputs are well conceived and plainly expressed.

A **goal** is specified to make plain the overriding reason for the agency's involvement in a particular activity. It should reflect the mandate of the organisation. It should not be out of reach or irrelevant to the project concerned. There is a tendency to set heroic goals for projects. This is unhelpful in the end because it can set the project up for a fall, e.g. stating that the goal is to empower women when the project is really quite a modest market gardening initiative to increase women's income.

The statement of the project's goal should also provide coherence, particularly if the project is made up of several components. The goal should be specific enough to provide the basis for evaluation i.e. the goal should not be a broad, general statement such as 'to reduce poverty'.

Objectives are at the level below the goal (when set out as a logical hierarchy as in a Project Framework). Objectives are more particular statements of intent. They are often tied to individual project components. It is worth taking time to frame objectives to ensure that they are clear, realistic and really do serve as a guide for everybody concerned. The objectives should be stated in a way that lead those implementing the project to a better understanding of the purpose of each set of outputs and activities (i.e. the rationale for each project component).

Objectives should be articulated in such a way that they incorporate a measure e.g. to increase the use of disposable syringes by juvenile injecting drug users in a city district by at least 30%. It is very difficult to monitor a project that does not tackle the issue of measuring progress. If an objective proves too vague it should be reworked.

5.2.2 Is the project design focused on inputs or outputs?

Project documentation should be structured in an output format, as opposed to a record of inputs and activities. A focus on outputs lends itself more to the measurement of achievements and results (or the lack thereof). It provides a more meaningful foundation for monitoring, particularly if you are trying to gauge impact. Expressing process and social change as outputs is not easy but with imagination and care it is possible.

5.2.3 Assumptions and risks

Are project assumptions and risks explicit? Is any form of risk management in place? You have to assume that some things will go wrong - nobody can envisage everything and it is quite difficult to design workable projects. The best practice is to assess and record the potential risks to a project, both internal and external, and to state the key planning assumptions, at the outset. Imagine the worst and record it. If it has not been done, help the implementing agency go back and do it. Bear in mind that if the risks were not stated at the outset it may have been because the development problem to be addressed by the project was not well understood at that stage.

Even where project documentation includes a statement of assumptions and risks it is surprising how little attention is paid to monitoring them. Many projects proceed as designed with little regard to what were considered to be risks and many projects fail for reasons that were recorded as risks at the outset. Risks and underlying assumptions may change - another reason for monitoring them regularly.

One of the problems in changing a project is getting the agreement of AusAID or the relevant funding agency. A review of assumptions and risks can provide the rationalisation required to secure agreement to significant changes, couched as it would be in flawless project design terms. This approach to

catch-up appraisal and review offers legitimate opportunities to re-design a project funded with official development assistance.

5.2.4 Monitoring systems and performance indicators

Monitoring systems should be regularly reviewed for their efficiency and effectiveness. Are key assumptions and risks being tracked? Are problems being identified? If indicators have not been framed or poor indicators have been stated, it is important that you go back and help the implementing agency get this right. Indicators are a necessary foundation for monitoring, review and evaluation. A useful question when trying to come up with indicators is: *How would we know we had achieved our objective, undertaken the activity, etc? What will have happened?*



¹ See also Annex 1, The Project Framework

5.2.5 Do the design documents facilitate implementation?

Find out what use is actually done with project design documents. If they are not regarded as important to implementation, diagnose why. Chances are the documentation will have been designed to satisfy formal funding requirements, not with an eye to the needs of implementers. If this is the case the design should be re-worked, in collaboration with the implementing agency, to render it useful. This process should include:

- the substitution of plain language for jargon
- the elimination of repetition and unnecessary information
- a critical examination of the logic flow (starting at the bottom of the 1st column in the Project Framework, if this design format is used, and working upwards to the goal)
- a review of assumptions and risks (the 4th column in a Project Framework)
- an examination of monitoring systems and processes (2nd and 3rd columns in a Project Framework)

5.2.6 Accessibility of project documents

It is important to gauge whether or not project beneficiaries and participants know about the design of the project. The implementing agency should make an effort to 'translate' the Project Framework and its schedules into a simple, accessible format and distribute this to all concerned. System cards can be used to put up a matrix table (GANTT chart) on the wall of the local project office describing component objectives and outputs (vertical axis on the left) and the implementation schedule (horizontal axis across the top). The body of the table will be made up of activities written on individual cards. Such a table can provide a useful focus for participatory planning. It can lead to revising the Project Framework, something implementing agencies and donors should not be loathe to do.

5.2.7 Capacity of your partner agency

A key task on a short visit may be assessing the capacity of a partner agency through whom your NGO is implementing a project (or proposes to implement a project). Competencies related to specific sectors (health, public administration, etc.) are not addressed here. The comments that follow are of a general organisational nature.

The best place to start is with an organisational chart. Include all staffing arrangements and show links to external donors and implementing partners/counterparts. This should be followed with interviews at middle-management level to get some idea of the depth of skills in the organisation. Try to ascertain how monies are handled and what project monitoring systems are in place. Tracking the documentation of a project that is well into implementation may provide a window onto this.

Systems and documentation are not everything. *Is there differential treatment of expatriate and national staff? How well does the partner agency relate to the community concerned? Does the agency follow a participatory approach?* Unfortunately many local NGOs have a top down, service delivery approach to development and attempt to implement projects by issuing orders and instructions. *Is the agency interested in developing participatory skills?*

The problem may be one of resources and incentives. *Do staff have the authority, operational resources and incentive to work effectively?* Travelling, organising and conducting meetings, motivating community participants, etc. takes energy and money.

5.2.8 Personnel management

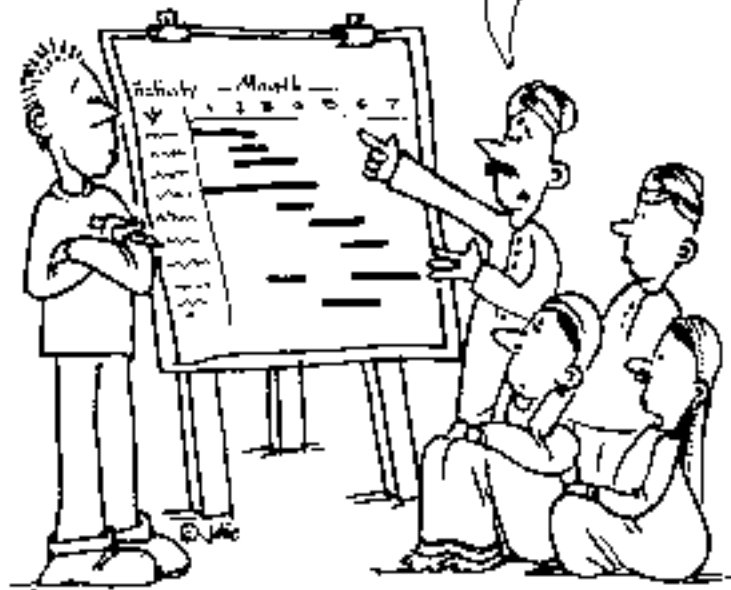
Poor staff relations can undermine a project. *Who is employed/given positions? Who has authority in the partner agency and how are decisions made? How are personnel issues dealt with? Is there any mechanism for negotiation or dispute resolution between staff and management?* These are sensitive areas and assistance would not normally be requested of an ANGO. But it may be counterproductive to ignore the problem. An ANGO wanting to intervene in a problem of this nature would have to establish a high level of trust and have appropriate skills to offer. The starting point may be offering to develop personnel management policies or to review the effectiveness of existing policies.



5.3 Introduction to Short Visit Case Study

A short visit case study has been devised to suggest ways of making the most of a short visit that includes a visit to the project or program site. For the purposes of this exercise it will be limited to ten days. This is by no means an ideal length of time for a monitoring or review visit but this is one of the key limitations project managers face. The case study project is a community forestry project. The partner agency is a national NGO. Your agency, a small Australian NGO, has no representation in-country so you will be working out of an el cheapo hotel and reliant on the partner agency for logistic support.

But Phil, perhaps it would be wise to dig the ponds BEFORE we buy the fish supplies...



It is recognised that the context, constraints and opportunities will vary considerably for each visit. The material presented here should not therefore be seen as definitive and readers must use their own skills, experience and judgement to assess what they aim to achieve and what combination of tools and approaches would be most useful.

The material for the case study is presented in five parts in chronological order:

1. Pre-departure preparation
2. In the capital
3. Project site visit
4. Final days in the capital
5. Back home

5.4 Pre-Departure Preparation

Tasks:

- Clarify purpose of visit
- Assess potential to provide some support to the partner agency
- Develop terms of reference in consultation with partner agency
- Background research and information collection

5.4.1 Clarify the purposes of the visit

Ask yourself:

- Do you really need to visit?
- What will the visit achieve?
- Are you the right person to go? Do you have the necessary technical expertise?

Ask your director or line manager: "What has to be achieved to satisfy our agency's requirements? What about AusAID's requirements?"

Ask your colleagues: "What are your impressions of the partner agency and the project? What do you see as the issues?" Also discuss with contacts in other NGOs who may be familiar with the project.

It is usually left to the person who will make the visit to work out its precise purpose and make the most of any opportunities to provide a support role to the partner agency. In clarifying purposes and opportunities, pursue your colleagues, the partner agency and other stakeholders for input. Communication and clarification of purpose is vital at this stage.

5.4.2 Timing

Unfortunately there is often little attempt by NGOs to integrate visits into the work plan of the partner agency. The best time to visit (seasons, national holidays, etc. aside) will usually be at the time of a planning or review exercise or at the time of a Project Coordinating Committee meeting or equivalent.

Does the partner agency have any plans for a review which you could fit in with? Is your partner agency expecting other visitors around the same time. If yes, consider a joint exercise, it will cut down on the partner agency's work. (For the purposes of this exercise we will assume that your visit did not coincide with any internal review or planning exercises but that you resolved to improve the timing of the next visit.)

If the timing is problematic to the partner agency, *reconsider the visit and its timing*. Your schedule will probably be governed by funding and/or reporting cycle considerations. You should not assume you can impose this constraint on your partner agency.

5.4.3 What will our partner agency get out of the visit?

Generally, the most satisfactory basis on which to visit is in a support role e.g. as trainer or facilitator. If this is not appropriate or possible, at least take the opportunity to build a support role into your visit e.g. putting on a one day workshop on a topic agreed with the partner agency.

The visit may be a good occasion to reflect on the level of support your organisation provides and what more could be offered. You may discover that the partner agency would simply appreciate more guidance in certain respects e.g. what is expected of them to satisfy your reporting requirements and those of AusAID.

From existing documentation make an initial assessment of the monitoring and review systems and procedures in place and make a prima facie assessment of the partner agency's need for technical assistance. Check if your visit will coincide with or be relevant to any review or planning processes of the partner agency.

Phone your counterpart in the partner agency. Discuss the purpose as you both understand it. Specify what you would like to get out of the visit and ask what the partner agency would like to get out of it. Inquire if there is anything the partner agency would welcome assistance with e.g. reviewing monitoring systems, formulating annual work plans, training in field survey techniques, etc. On the basis of this discussion assess the opportunities the visit may present e.g. for undertaking a collaborative review of monitoring systems with a view to establishing a program of ongoing technical assistance.

Try to gauge the partner agency's expectations and apprehensions. Are they looking forward to the visit? Is the visit a threat? Is it of no significance, just another visit?

Fax your counterpart as a follow-up to your initial discussion confirming the key points and further exploring opportunities to provide support. You could offer to put on a half day

workshop on an aspect of monitoring or review that the partner agency appears interested in.

In addition ask your counterpart if they can propose by return fax:

- the key issues which your visit should pursue (e.g. in terms of finding possible solutions to existing constraints/problems)
- ideas concerning the appropriate methods/approach that might be used to make the exercise participatory and useful
- their need for technical assistance in relation to monitoring and review procedures and systems
- a list of key contacts/participants and their expected role
- an itinerary incorporating the field visit.

5.4.4 Developing ToR

Terms of Reference (ToR) are necessary to help clearly define the scope of a visit and to ensure that all parties involved in managing or implementing the project are clear about:

1. the purposes of the visit
2. the key issues to be addressed
3. the proposed approach and methodology
4. when it will happen (including an itinerary)
5. who will be involved (the participants and their respective roles)
6. what resources will be required, who will pay (relevant to the logistics of a field visit)
7. expected outputs (including the requirements of the report).

Structure

The ToR should commence with a description of the project including a summary of the project's goal and objectives and a description of the monitoring and review procedures and systems the partner agency has in place. The ToR should then cover each of the matters listed above (1 to 7).

Note that the ToR should provide a focus for the team's work, rather than a general shopping list of everything that might appear 'interesting'. The ToR should guide but not constrain the team - issues may arise which were not foreseen.

When to draft ToR

In practice ToR are often rushed and might only be put together on the eve of departure, as a final formality. Don't let this happen. Work on the ToR should commence as soon as a visit is mooted and drafts should be shared with all stakeholders well in advance of the visit. The ToR format is ideal as a planning instrument and the basic structure may flow through to the final report.

Process

A key issue is the process by which the ToR are developed. Each of the key stakeholders in the project should be given adequate opportunity to contribute to and comment on the ToR. This helps to ensure that all the main concerns/issues are at least considered, and means that those who are to participate or contribute to the work in question are at least informed of what is being planned.

You should be aware that your visit may be seen as threatening if the purpose and scope of the activities to be undertaken are not clearly understood by the partner agency (including field staff). Collaboration in developing the ToR will ameliorate this and will promote ownership of the results. But it will take time. Planning is therefore important to ensure meaningful participation takes place from the outset.

Transferring skills

The partner agency's participation in planning and conducting a monitoring or review visit presents a significant opportunity to impart monitoring and review skills. So don't make the exercise appear too difficult. Be careful however when talking about skills and training that you do not offend the partner agency. They might not regard it as appropriate for you to suggest they need further training. Be careful not to underestimate the partner agency's existing skills base.

Framing purpose(s)

If the visit can be styled as a review, the purposes may be framed along the following lines (the emphasis in this example is on collaboration and on taking action to improve project performance):

Specifically, the review will:

- Undertake an assessment of what is going well and what is not going well on the project in relation to project plans, and to determine the reasons for success or failure
- Identify any necessary changes in project scope
- Identify management action that might be taken to improve the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of project activities and to further develop community management capacity

A review approach can provide an opportunity for all project stakeholders to reflect on the progress the project has made to date and to decide, as a group, what improvements or adjustments might be made to improve performance and impact. But some partner agencies may be put off by the idea of a 'project review' so be careful how you describe what you are trying to achieve.

Key issues to be addressed

You should try to communicate with all stakeholders in the project (not just your partner agency) to determine the issues of primary concern to each. Of course in a short visit a severe prioritisation of issues will be necessary and many issues will have to be left to one side. But try to incorporate a range of issues relevant to different parties i.e. not just from one perspective. The following is an example of a list of issues compiled for a review of a community forestry project:

The review will focus its attention on the following matters:-

- Reasons for adoption/non adoption of project services and husbandry recommendations by farmers.
- Effectiveness of extension methods and appropriateness of technical recommendations. What do farmers think?
- Gender and equity issues - who is participating?
- Land-distribution and land rights - what impact is this having on project sponsored activities?
- Food production - agro-forestry issues. Is the food production deficit a significant constraint to promoting forestry activities? If so, for what proportion of farmers?
- Cash generation - marketing. Are opportunities being developed as a result of policy changes?
- Management and location of nurseries. Is a more decentralised approach required?
- Input supplies. Are arrangements working satisfactorily?
- Management and coordination arrangements, responsibilities and capacity development.
- The collection, reporting and use of management information by project participants. What might be done to strengthen systems and make them more relevant?

Approach

If a participatory, learning approach is to be adopted, the ToR should make this explicit, highlighting the importance of the active participation of all key stakeholders. There should be statements reinforcing this. For example it could be stated that:

- the focus will be on knowledge and skills internal to the project
- the perspectives and views of all stakeholders will be considered to have equal value
- a consensual, team approach to problem identification and resolution will be adopted.

Methodology

The ToR should specify the methodology to be used. There are many different ways of collecting and analysing information and one should leave plenty of room for creativity - a diversity of approaches is a strength not a weakness. As a rule of thumb, avoid over-reliance on one method, however attractive or 'in fashion'. A combination of methods, both qualitative and quantitative, will provide cross-checks.

Workshops. You could propose in your draft ToR two half day workshops - one the day after you arrive to explain yourself, review the ToR and agree the approach/methodology and another the day before you finally leave for debriefing and follow-up. In addition you should repeat your verbal offer to conduct a half day workshop on an aspect of monitoring of interest to the partner agency. Given the short duration of your visit and your intent to spend the greater part of it in the field (see below) this workshop should be conducted at the project site. This may be a way of getting city bound staff into the field.

Records. You should signal that you wish to examine planning documents, monitoring and review reports and management and financial records. Your visits will normally rely heavily on information collected from the project's own monitoring and review system.

Participatory Rural Appraisal. If you intend to use PRA techniques in the field say so and specify the tools to be used e.g. semi-structured interviews, observation, mapping, transect walks, ranking and scoring, workshop activities. You should send some literature on these techniques if the partner agency is unfamiliar with them.

Itinerary

If you intend to conduct field work, not just visit the project site, you should make this plain in your communications with the partner agency and ensure your itinerary provides adequate time for it. If the partner agency has reservations about an extended site visit and in-depth field work you will have to seek to resolve the matter early on. It may come down to a negotiation about what you can and can't do.

5.4.5 Background research and information collection

After completing a draft of the ToR in consultation with the partner agency and AusAID, put together a folder of background material which will help you (and the team) undertake the work. The main reference documents should include:

- the original project design document (however this is constituted)
- project expenditure statements
- project progress reports
- any previous field trip reports
- any study documents/evaluation reports prepared by other agencies working on similar projects in the region

Assess project design

Study the project design document concentrating initially on the objectives and outputs (the first column of the Project Framework matrix if there is one) and the stated risks and assumptions (the fourth column). Make an assessment of the internal logic of the project (how well do the intended outputs relate to the stated objectives and how

well do the objectives relate to the realisation of the overall goal). Review the assumptions and risks in the light of what you know of the project's progress from reports. Also examine the key indicators specified. Do they appear sound? Have they been used in any monitoring reports to hand? (These matters are covered in more depth in Catch-Up Appraisal at the beginning of this chapter.)

If the original project design included a Project Framework, did the partner agency participate in drafting it? Is it too arcane for the partner agency to follow? Can it be reworked so it is of more use to them in implementing the project?

If the original project design did not include a Project Framework matrix, put a summary one together, it will help you appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the project as originally conceived and it will be of use to the partner agency. (Putting together Project Frameworks is discussed in Annex 1.)

Project summary sheets

Next put together a set of summary sheets including:

- basic details (start and expected completion dates, targeted beneficiaries, funding sources, implementing partners, expenditure against budget heads)
- key indicators, the targets set and the progress reported to date
- issues arising from previous monitoring reports (technical, management, community participation, etc)

Organisational and information flow charts

Depict in a chart format all those involved (including the various departments/units of each) and their relationships. This may have to be substantially revised in the field but no matter, it is an important exercise in unravelling who is who. Also draw a chart depicting monitoring and reporting systems i.e. who monitors, to whom the information is passed and who acts on it.

Program context

Put the project in context by tracing the project's goal back to overall program objectives. Project goals should be reflected at the objective level in a program. If you are examining a program examine how it is supposed to fit into a broader planning context.

Checklists

You will have to draft checklists for different aspects of the work before departing, ideally on a laptop so you can amend and print them after discussion with the partner agency. The main checklist is a list of key questions, perhaps in the form of a semi-structured interview format that you can adapt for different types of interviewee (partner agency, other NGOs, government officials, community members, etc).

5.5 In the Capital

Provisional schedule:

Day 1	Review itinerary and preparations with partner agency
Days 1 and 2	Meetings with non-partner agency contacts
Day 2, morning	Initial workshop with partner agency
Day 2, afternoon	Familiarisation with monitoring systems and procedures
Day 3, early	Depart for project site

5.5.1 Introduction

Hit the ground running - the first day is critical. Time and opportunities can evaporate while you sit on the edge of your bed waiting for things to happen. You can't afford this and you really have to push yourself from the minute you arrive (without ever appearing frazzled). For example, if you notice the UNDP office on the way in from the airport, stop and try to see the representative or arrange a time for a meeting.

Make activities with your partner agency the core and pack meetings with foreign organisations and agencies around this. Your partner agency won't be able to deal with you full-time, they will need some time for preparations and ongoing concerns, so complementary scheduling will suit them. Leave meetings that can be held anytime to one side as fillers for when something else fails to happen.

At all times you will have to keep an eye on your priorities, upper-most of which will be the half day workshop on the second day and making sure arrangements are in hand to get out of town. Much of the discussion with partner agency staff can in fact be conducted on the road (assuming key people are accompanying you). Issues can be explored further in the car, checklists for semi-structured interviews can be finalised around the table in a restaurant en route, etc.

5.5.2 Check itinerary and preparations (day 1)

Arrangements for the workshop. The initial workshop with the partner agency (see below) should be held on the morning of the second day, arrangements for which should have been made well before your arrival. Confirm that arrangements are in hand. Check the venue and the list of participants. Arrange for the distribution of any material which participants need to read beforehand. Meet the workshop translator and/or co-facilitator and go over the workshop format.

Meetings. See what meetings have been scheduled for you in the capital and what remain to be arranged. You will have to begin lining up any additional meetings within hours of arriving if you are to have any chance of fitting them in before leaving for the field.

The site visit. Even if you have agreed an itinerary before your arrival and with an early departure for the project site, the partner agency may not be aiming for the date you have in mind. Although it may be important to spend most of your time at the project site your partner agency may see it differently and recommend a fleeting visit. If you have nothing more to do than 'see' the project this is fair enough but if you want to employ participatory techniques to gain some insight into the value of the project you will need to spend several days on site. You may have to continue negotiating this, strengthening your case from the moment you arrive.

In a ten day visit spending more time in the field will mean two days in the capital, six days out of town (including travelling time) and a final two days back in the capital for follow up and de-briefing. This is where the practical limitations hit home!

Outline of itinerary for ten day visit

- 1 Full day in capital
- 2 Full day in capital
- 3 Travel, district meeting, arrive project
- 4 Full day on project site
- 5 Full day on project site
- 6 Full day on project site
- 7 Depart project midday, meeting in district
- 8 Part or full day in capital
- 9 Full day in capital
- 10 Full day in capital

Getting out of town. In practice the day and time of departure for the project site will tend to slip and this can become frustrating. It may be your fault e.g. you may not have realised that you were only given an entry visa on arrival and that you should have arranged for your passport to be taken to immigration. You may also have under-estimated the time it takes to arrange a site visit (e.g. waiting for a response from the district about the visit, organising a vehicle and putting camping equipment together, etc.) Moreover those accompanying you will have to clear their desks and make arrangements at home before departure.

5.5.3 Meetings (days 1 and 2)

Partner agency. Out of courtesy you should see your partner agency first on arrival even if it is only a short informal meeting immediately after dumping your bags at your hotel. In any case you will need to ensure that important arrangements are in hand as agreed by phone and fax (workshops, site visit, etc). As you will be having a workshop with the partner agency the following morning you should not need to meet further with them on the first day.

Foreign organisations and agencies.

Immediately after meeting the partner agency you will have to start on your key contacts in other NGOs, UN agencies, AusAID Post, embassies, etc. Take any opportunity to have a meeting, including evenings. In the time available it may seem crazy trying to fit in lots of meetings but other people's perspectives are vital. Treat it as a research story with an impossible deadline. Don't shy away from those who may have unwelcome opinions, you will learn more testing a wide range of views.

It is usually better to attend initial meetings with foreign organisations and agencies alone and ask your partner agency to accompany you on follow-up visits after the completion of the field work. Your partner agency might be uncomfortable with you touring around town talking to so many people e.g. they might think many of the foreign organisations and agencies

are arrogant and unhelpful. If this seems to be a problem ask who you should see to balance the views of those they distrust.

Preparation for meetings is important. You should have a list of topics/issues for each meeting. Many of these can be drawn from the ToR. On contentious issues you may have to probe to distinguish between rhetoric and the reality on the ground.

5.5.4 Initial workshop with partner agency (day 2)

A half day mini-workshop could be held on the morning of your second day in country. It should involve the main players at middle management level in the partner agency who, it is hoped, will contribute ideas to the review and subsequently take forward any action recommended.

The workshop will provide opportunities:

- for you to introduce yourself and provide background information
- for the partner agency to review the ToR including the methodology proposed
- for you to explore how the partner agency perceives the strengths and weaknesses of the project and its monitoring systems and procedures

Workshop techniques

You will need good facilitation skills to get people fully involved and at the same time keep a clear focus on the specific issues that need to be covered in the short time available. Instead of relying on verbal exchanges try using cards and blu tack, the 'VIPPP' approach (see Select Bibliography).

Ask partner agency staff to briefly describe the project's strengths and weaknesses. In requesting this you should emphasize that the information is not merely for the purposes of your report but that you hope that you can work together to develop strategies to build on the successful elements and deal with the areas of concern.

Aim for clear and straight forward communication. Question everything in a simple but direct manner. Listen carefully to what your partner agency says (and leaves unsaid). It is easy to talk too much and to mistake politeness for agreement. Provide every opportunity for partner agency staff to enhance their understanding of what the project is trying to achieve and the best way of doing it.

Agenda

1. As an introduction the partner agency should make a brief presentation of the project in terms of objectives and outputs. This may well vary from your reading of the design document - a matter which you will have to pursue later.
2. The core of the workshop should be settling the ToR with the emphasis on making sure you agree on the scope, focus and methodology of the exercise. Ask your colleagues to present on cards the issues they think should be addressed (don't refer to what the ToR say at this stage). If the issues presented don't match those specified in the ToR you will have to sort it out - it may mean re-negotiating some points.

If disagreement emerges on something you consider vital, consider leaving your colleagues alone for half an hour to discuss it, perhaps during a break. The problem may have been resolved by the time you resume.

3. Any monitoring or review visit should include at least a brief review of monitoring systems and procedures. To make a start on this task ask the participants to write down the strengths and weaknesses of what they have in place and present these on cards. This should raise issues for you to explore further during your



visit and to return to in the de-briefing workshop before you leave. It will provide the basis of recommendations for ongoing technical assistance and training in this area.

- You should distribute copies of any checklists you have prepared for the exercise e.g. a list of key questions in a semi-structured interview format. You could ask if someone could be given the task of meeting with you early in the afternoon to go over them before you print final copies.

5.5.5 Partner agency's monitoring systems and procedures (day 2)

In the afternoon you should meet briefly with those responsible for maintaining monitoring systems and procedures, including the accountant, to familiarise yourself with the systems and procedures in use. What are the outputs? What purposes do they serve? What other supporting NGOs or donors does the agency provide reports to?

Collect any information relevant to the project that was not made available in reports. Ask in particular to see the reports from field officers and ask how they are normally dealt with. There are two issues to follow through here: What is the quality of reporting from the project to the main office? Is the partner agency responsive to reports from field staff?

In terms of financial monitoring ask if there are any problem areas they would like to discuss. If you have any doubts about the veracity of financial records ask for copies to take to the field to cross-check. This may be a sensitive matter but it is better to pursue and settle the issue rather than ignore it - doubt of this kind will undermine the relationship.

For the purposes of this case study we will assume that you find that there is a control system for funds, that basic input/output data is recorded and that the responsible field officer files monthly reports. However this may not mean that there is adequate investigation at the community/target group level of efficiency,

effectiveness or impact. It is not uncommon for projects to be implemented more or less mechanically and for the field officer to be aware of serious shortcomings but not address these in his/her formal reports. Is the project being left to run its course? Are field officers encouraged to be proactive in identifying and proposing solutions to problems?

Try to make sure someone from the main office involved in the maintenance of monitoring systems and procedures accompanies you to the field so that you can assess performance at this level together.

5.6 Project Site Visit

Provisional schedule for site visit:

Day 3, morning	Depart early for district Go over details of field work en route
Day 3, afternoon	Meet district authorities
Day 3, evening	Arrive project site Introduction to community/target group leaders
Day 4, morning	Workshop with field staff/community
Day 4, afternoon	Field work
Days 5 and 6	Field work
Day 7	Workshop with field staff/community
Day 7, afternoon	Return to district town Meet district authorities
Day 8, early	Return to capital

5.6.1 Final details of field work

Don't worry if the final details for conducting the field work are not complete before you leave for the field. It is possible to do some of this en route if it is a reasonably long journey. For example, you could go over the sequencing of activities, the number of teams you could form for the purposes of conducting semi-structured interviews, etc. over lunch.

5.6.2 District authorities (day 3)

The third day will be taken up with getting out of the capital, travelling to the main town in the district concerned and meeting district authorities. If possible have a meeting with the district authorities immediately upon arrival so that you can head off to the project site that evening, rather than reconvening for a formal meeting the following morning (unless such a meeting is critical).

Ask the district authorities to release a staff member directly concerned with the project or relevant sector to participate in the field work (in this case a forestry officer). Amongst other things he/she will be able to assist in reporting back at the district level. Stress that you wish to have a de-briefing meeting on your return and set a time for this.

The district authorities probably keep a close eye on the project and they are likely to have definite views on its strengths and weaknesses. In your meeting with the district authorities concentrate on determining how they really regard the project. In addition go through the general checklist developed for field work at the community level so that you have the district authorities' input on the key issues you are pursuing.

5.6.3 Base yourself on site

If possible stay on site, even if it means putting up in a health clinic or a barn. It is worth pushing for this even if it is not wholly convenient for you or those accompanying you (bathing under a tree, no bars etc.) It might

seem unnecessarily uncomfortable at first but it will be more efficient than driving to the site from the town every morning and back in the afternoon and it will generate an esprit de corps in the team (provided you play your part by keeping your humour). Being on site you can invite people around in the evening for informal meetings, even for a party.

5.6.4 Introduction to community leaders (day 3, evening)

You should try to meet with community leaders on the first evening to outline the purpose of your visit and to give them a chance to form an opinion about you. They will in turn let others know who you are and what you are up to. Signal that you will be holding a workshop with field staff and members of the farmers association or equivalent the following morning and that they are welcome to attend.



5.6.5 Mini-workshop with field staff and farmers association (day 4 morning)

If there are staff on site it is important to clearly state how you propose to proceed and give them an early opportunity to give you their advice. For the purposes of this case study we will assume that the partner agency has employed a local man and a local woman as community forestry officers. Input should also be sought from members of the farmers association (or the 'target group' if no association has been formed). The meeting should be open and any other member of the community should feel welcome.

The introductory workshop should ideally be held on the first morning in the field. It should be limited to two to three hours duration. Avoid getting bogged down on particular issues if there are others to discuss - flag them, try to address them in the field work, and if necessary return to them on the final day

Agenda

Agenda items might include:

- discussion of the ToR
- progress of the project (in brief)
- existing monitoring systems and procedures
- schedule for the four days
- semi-structured interview technique and specific questions

At the beginning of the meeting you should emphasise your interest in a participatory approach and underline that the focus of the team's inquiries will be determining whether or not the project is meeting the needs of the community. A partner agency staff member from the main office should then present the first agenda item, the ToR, concentrating on the proposed methodology. Changes should be made in response to local knowledge and concerns.

Field staff should then be asked to outline their view of what progress the project is making and the projects strengths and weaknesses.

You should already have a provisional schedule for the four days but this will inevitably require amendment once you are on site. Even once you have finalised the schedule with input from field staff and the farmers association be prepared for some things to take time to come together, so have other tasks to substitute e.g. filling in with semi-structured interviews.

Field work schedule

Let's say the schedule you agree in the workshop for the 3½ days is as follows:

Day 4	Workshop Mapping exercise Transect Visit seedling production site
Day 5	Semi-structured interviews Do-it-yourself exercise Facilitate discussion about monitoring Interview key contacts
Day 6	More semi-structured interviews Attend meeting of farmers association Design diagnostic study
Day 7	Participatory review of preliminary findings

Note that the sequence is important. The mapping exercise and transect should always precede semi-structured interviews and/or surveys (see below).

Skills development

You might be planning to use techniques you have only read about e.g. PRA techniques. Your partner agency colleagues, both main office and field staff, may be in the same position. Don't worry, take it as an opportunity to learn together and to share the existing skills you each bring to the task. For the purposes of training it is important to give your colleagues every opportunity to do it for themselves - don't over-manage the conduct of the field work.

It is also important to consider how you might transfer skills to the community, in this case to the farmers association. 'Beneficiaries' and 'target groups' are taken to be the natural subjects of monitoring, but not the users of these techniques. This is perverse in development terms. Empowerment comes down to being on the action end, as opposed to the receiving end, and this includes monitoring, review and evaluation. Achieving this may require a big shift in thinking on the part of the partner agency (and perhaps your own organisation). Think of it simply as being prepared to exchange skills.

Reflection

Put your own organisation and your partner agency 'on the line' in the workshop and in other meetings with the community. How do your colleagues perform in the community? Is there a real partnership with the community? Take every opportunity to encourage your colleagues to adopt more consultative practices (in those cases where this is called for).

5.6.6 Mapping (day 4, afternoon)

A mapping or modelling exercise should be done on the first full day on site to give you and those accompanying you an introduction to the area (and in this case an overview of re-forestation efforts). A map also provides the basis on which to plan transects and a means of randomly selecting households for semi-structured interviews (the activities that follow).

5.6.7 Transect (day 4, afternoon)

At this point it might rain forcing you all to run for shelter. Assuming it doesn't, identify a local person who can accompany you and head off on your transect walk. (Transects are described further in Annex 2.) It is better to avoid having too many people in tow, particularly officials from outside the area as they are likely to put people on guard.

5.6.8 Semi-structured interviews (days 5 and 6, mornings)

There is probably no better way of obtaining qualitative information than via semi-structured interviews - they are ideal for exploring the key issues set for a visit. With semi-structured interviews the quality of the information is more important than the quantity.

If you are using translators make sure you work through all the questions with them first and then pre-test the interview - even if it is only with one person due to time constraints.

In a short visit you should try to make up three teams, one led by yourself or a partner agency colleague, one by one of the field staff, and one by a member of the farmers association. Each team could aim for four interviews on each of the two mornings (total 24 interviews). Selection of interview respondents requires careful thought. (Issues to consider are presented in Chapter 3 under section 3.5)

If field staff have not already been conducting semi-structured interviews as part of their monitoring you should suggest they do so and use the interviews you conduct as training exercises. Partner agency staff from the main office may undertake to follow up this matter and prepare some guidelines and samples for field staff.



5.6.9 Facilitated discussion about monitoring (day 5, afternoon)

The visit should provide an opportunity for partner agency staff from the main office to discuss monitoring systems with their field staff. You should ensure the most is made of this opportunity. Make sure both sides are heard e.g. that field staff have the chance to question their colleagues about their unresponsiveness to matters raised in their monthly reports, etc and that staff from the main office have a chance to make their case for better reporting and so on. Facilitate agreement on action points.

The existing practices of field staff should be reviewed. Ask if you can go over their work plans and check what forms/formats they are using to record information. Are they keeping field diaries? Are their monitoring responsibilities clear? Monitoring systems rely on nuts and bolts matters like these. Identify areas in which the partner agency and/or your organisation can assist e.g. helping field staff devise better survey forms.

Did the farmers association play any role in developing monitoring systems and procedures? Does it play any role in analysing the information collected? Chances are the answers will be negative. You will have to get the point across that community participation will not go beyond rhetoric until 'beneficiaries' share in decision making, and this includes decisions about what type of information is collected, the conclusions to be drawn from it and the action that should be taken to ensure the project achieves its development objectives.

5.6.10 Key contacts (day 5 and/or 6)

Additional semi-structured interviews should be conducted with key contacts e.g. the district forestry officer, the leader of the farmers association, the community development worker, a trader, the head of women's group, a local religious leader, etc. to gain their insights on the issues. Some of these interviews could be conducted in the evenings. Some contacts could be interviewed as a small group.

5.6.11 Do-it-yourself exercise (day 5 or 6)

If seedlings are being transplanted, weeded, watered or protective enclosures repaired, participate in the activity for a couple of hours, taking the opportunity to discuss constraints, hopes, etc. with those undertaking the work. Who benefits most from the project? Is the project well managed? Would they go about things differently?

5.6.12 Farmers association meeting (day 6, late morning)

Take any opportunity to attend a community meeting as an observer. Are women participating actively? How is business conducted? What issues are discussed?

Ask partner agency field staff about the processes taking place in the meeting as they understand them. In the context of community development ask field staff: "What would

indicate a good meeting? What about a bad meeting?" On the basis of their answers help them develop 'process indicators' and a format for monitoring such meetings.

5.6.13 Design diagnostic study (day 6, afternoon)

It may become apparent that there is a particular issue that requires closer study. For example farmers may say in semi-structured interviews that the tree types selected by the project are inappropriate and that quite different types should be made available for purchase as seedlings.

You will not have time to resolve this issue. The most useful strategy will be to assist the partner agency to design a short diagnostic study to be implemented in coming weeks.

5.6.14 Analysis (day 7, morning)

On the morning of the final day on site convene a second mini-workshop to reach and test preliminary conclusions. As before, include staff, members of the farmers association and any other members of the community who wish to be present. Ask someone else to chair it and take a back seat but be careful to suggest someone who will keep to the agenda and be most likely to encourage people to conclude with a list of practical action points.

Suggested agenda items

- Analysis of responses/opinions expressed in semi-structured interviews and meetings.
- Assessment of what the findings say about the project, its strengths and weaknesses.
- Review of monitoring responsibilities of field staff and assessment of need for further training.

5.6.15 De-briefing district authorities (day 7, afternoon)

You should ask the district officer (or equivalent) who accompanied you to lead this presentation. If any recommendations are likely to require action by the district authorities, assess whether they would be supportive.

5.7 Final Days in Capital

Provisional schedule:

Day 8, afternoon	Conduct internal de-briefing for partner agency
Day 8, late afternoon	Informal de-briefing for other agencies/NGOs
Day 9, morning	Commence work on structure and contents of report
Day 9, afternoon	Session with partner agency on project design
Day 10, morning	Finalise structure of report, continue drafting contents
Day 10, afternoon	Session with partner agency on monitoring systems



PARTICIPATION WAS A KEY COMPONENT IN THE ORGANISATION'S APPROACH TO LOCAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

5.7.1 De-briefings (day 8)

De-briefings will normally be internal meetings. However, ask if other NGOs, departments, etc involved in the same sector (in this case community forestry) can be invited, if it is thought they would find it interesting. If this is not acceptable organise a separate meeting for them. This should be a chance to outline your findings and get back a 'reality check'. Be careful to invite your partner agency colleagues to accompany you if you set up a separate meeting. Invite the AusAID officer from the Post.

In the de-briefing presentation(s), keep to the key findings and leave equal time for questions/comments. Highlight recommendations involving management issues. Divide the presentation up amongst the members of your team so that the staff who accompanied you present some of the findings. Encourage everyone to keep their deliveries short and punchy. Presentations on cards put up on a wall for everyone to see are very effective.

5.7.2 Structure and contents of the report (days 9 and 10)

Arrange two morning meetings with other team members to first draft and then finalise the structure and contents of the report, at least to rough draft stage. Once again, use cards for this exercise, involving all team members in developing the structure of the report on the wall. When it is complete photograph it for future reference or make a handwritten copy. (You could number the cards and take them with you but it will probably be preferable to leave the cards where they are until the report is finalised.)

Ensure there is a good balance between describing and analysing the project and its context, on the one hand, and drawing conclusions/lessons and recommending action to be taken on the other. Many reports are predominantly descriptive and don't satisfactorily develop an agenda for learning and action. As a rule of thumb at least one quarter of the report should be focused on drawing lessons and framing recommendations for action.

5.7.3 Session on project design (day 9, afternoon)

You studied the project design documents as part of your pre-departure preparation. A basic Project Framework matrix had been prepared for the original proposal but you have now learned that it is not referred to because it is considered inaccessible. As a result work plans are being drafted on the basis of what people perceive the project to be, not necessarily as it was designed.

You should meet with partner agency staff and suggest that you work together to turn the design into something useable. If they are in agreement, use cards and blu tack to put up the goal, objectives and outputs as originally conceived. Does the structure make sense? Is the content still relevant? Move on to the assumptions and risks. Are these still relevant?

You should now be able to come up with a revised basic design that is better framed and more directly relevant (even if it is only the first and fourth column of the Logframe). You can offer to further develop this after you return to Australia. If you are heading towards a design that is substantially different to what was funded you will have to seek approval for its amendment.

Move on to discussing the importance of basing work plans on the design. You could assist by suggesting some formats to ensure design and planning are well integrated. Many of these matters will have to be followed up later - the main thing is to get the ball rolling and establish a support role to ensure you can follow through.

5.7.4 Session on monitoring systems (day 10, afternoon)

The strengths and weaknesses of the partner agency's monitoring systems and procedures should now be apparent to all of you. The report should detail this and make recommendations. In the mean time offer to assist the partner agency to come up with a strategy to develop their monitoring system, starting with an afternoon brain-storming session. Use cards and blu tack to get the ideas up on the wall. If not covered you should suggest that attention be paid to:

- indicators
- forms for primary data collection
- participatory appraisal
- reporting formats

5.8 Back Home

5.8.1 De-briefings

It is important to have de-briefing meetings within your organisation and for any backdonors (in this example AusAID). Use cards and blu tack to present the draft findings and recommendations. Be frank about any problems. Backdonors don't want bad news but it is not ethical to hide the truth and it doesn't serve the cause of development to obscure the difficulties.

5.8.2 The report

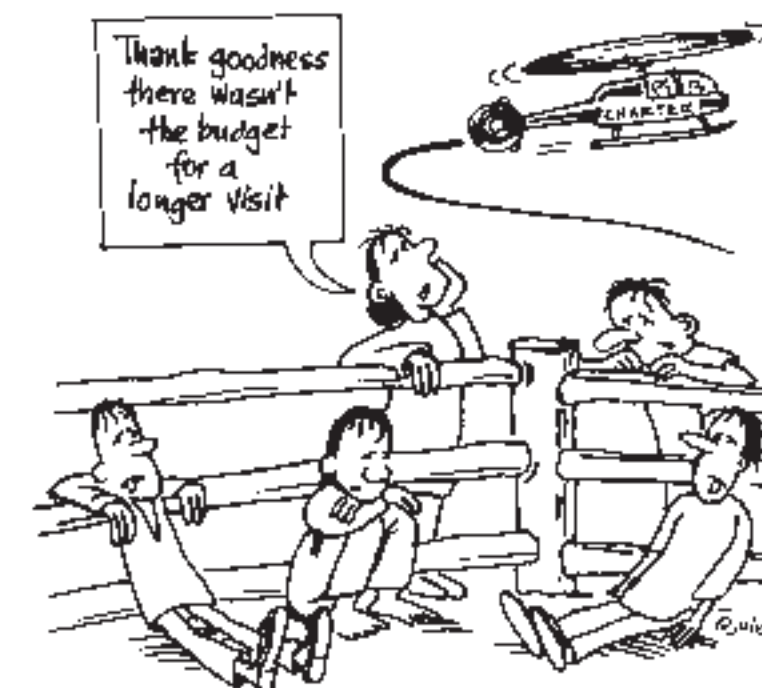
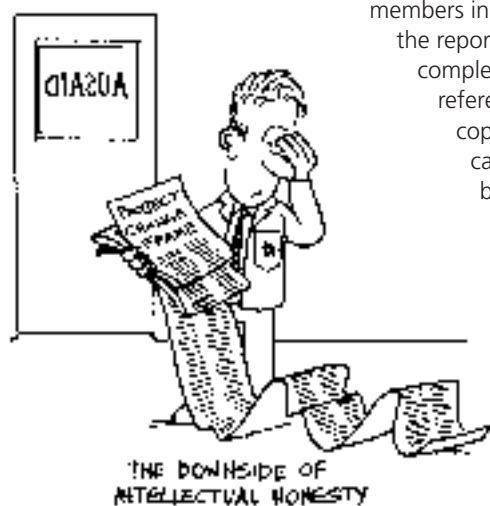
Finish a draft within the first week you are back, keeping it clear and concise and focused on the information needs of those who are expected to read and use it. It will be overtaken by events if you sit on it and it is not distributed quickly. Send a copy to the partner agency (stamped draft) seeking comments. In the normal course of things, comments might not be received back for several weeks, so consider stating in a covering letter that a final document will be distributed on a fixed date (say two weeks hence) if comments are not

received in the intervening period. In some cases this would be too heavy handed an approach. But however you proceed the point is to get the report out as quickly as practicable. This is not to say that comment and revision should be discouraged.

Make sure field staff and the farmers association ultimately receive a copy (in an appropriate language and format)

5.8.3 Follow up

You will have a list of things you have undertaken to follow up for the partner agency e.g. working on the design document, suggesting reporting formats, etc. Don't let them down. This is the best opportunity you will have to build a support role. There probably also be needs of a longer term nature e.g. training. You could suggest a strategy for meeting these needs and in the months ahead work with the partner agency to secure the resources required.



Chapter 6. CONTENTS

6. Planning and Managing Evaluations	
6.1 Introduction	117
6.2 Reasons for Evaluation	117
6.2.1 Evaluating to learn	117
6.2.2 Empowerment	117
6.2.3 Verification and control	118
6.3 Criticisms of Evaluation	118
6.3.1 Value judgements	118
6.3.2 External process	118
6.3.3 Power and control	118
6.3.4 Over-emphasis on accounting to funding agencies	119
6.3.5 Evaluations create tension, they are an imposition	119
6.3.6 Too late, too little impact	119
6.4 Other Issues	120
6.4.1 Learning and verification objectives	120
6.4.2 Extraordinary factors in evaluations	120
6.5 Planning an Evaluation	120
6.5.1 Forward planning	120
6.5.2 Consultative arrangements	120
6.5.3 The use of ToR	121
6.5.4 Clarifying the goal of the evaluation, developing objectives	122
6.5.5 Determining the scope of the inquiry	122
6.5.6 Incorporating other stakeholders' interests in the evaluation	123
6.5.7 Capacity building and training	124
6.5.8 Framing issues and questions	124
6.5.9 Selecting evaluation criteria or indicators	125
6.5.10 Assessing what information should be collected	126
6.5.11 Sources of information	126
6.5.12 Analysis of information	127
6.5.13 Deciding who should lead the evaluation	127
6.5.14 Who else should be involved?	127
6.5.15 Participative evaluation	128
6.5.16 Difficulties of conducting participative evaluations	128
6.5.17 Further options	129
6.5.18 Budgeting for the evaluation	130
6.5.19 Timing	130
6.6 Overseeing the Conduct of the Evaluation	130
6.6.1 Briefing evaluators and drafting workplans	130
6.6.2 Delegation of in-country management of the evaluation	131
6.6.3 Intervening in the conduct of the evaluation	131
6.7 Reporting	131
6.7.1 Debriefing and feedback	131
6.7.2 Structure of the report	132
6.7.3 Presenting the results to different stakeholders and for different uses	132
6.8 Institutional Learning	133
6.8.1 What is done with evaluations?	133
6.8.2 Dealing with failure	133
6.8.3 Institutional performance	133

6. PLANNING AND MANAGING EVALUATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The view taken in this Guide is that although evaluation is important, establishing monitoring systems and review processes should be accorded a higher initial priority. It is possible to do without evaluation, but not monitoring, and many of the functions of evaluation can be incorporated in regular reviews (which are arguably more useful for project implementers).

The types of evaluation discussed here are major mid-term, completion and *ex poste* exercises, which is how evaluation has been distinguished from monitoring and review in this Guide. The emphasis will be on assisting ANGO program managers plan for and manage evaluations rather than on the conduct of field work. Program managers who plan to lead an evaluation themselves, rather than delegating this task to another member of staff or hiring a consultant, should refer to the short visit case study in Chapter 5, which can be expanded to provide the basis of an evaluation plan by allowing 15 to 20 days rather than 10. Additional resources on conducting evaluations are included in the select bibliography.

6.2 Reasons for evaluation

6.2.1. Evaluating to learn

Evaluation is primarily an instrument of learning so the key question is *why* an activity proved a success or a failure. If an evaluation is undertaken as a mid-term review the issue will be determining if modifications are required in the project and/or its management. If an evaluation is conducted at project completion or *ex poste* (after an interval) the focus will be on improving future interventions and supporting institutional learning.

The development record suggests that many organisations and agencies are slow to learn from their experience. Part of the problem is that not enough is done to capture the lessons

and record them in an evaluation report. Procedures also have to be set in place to ensure that the lessons derived from completed projects shape policy and program planning. This is the hardest part - utilising evaluations to improve development practice.

The learning and development involved in evaluation should not accrue only to the party commissioning the evaluation. Evaluations should be a learning process for all concerned, an instrument of development dialogue. This can only be achieved if the evaluators are given a mandate to facilitate a process, not simply extract information, and if the NGO commissioning the evaluation is willing to allow the evaluation to reach critical conclusions. The usual reflex is to protect one's organisation from criticism and to keep other agencies and organisations at arm's length. This is definitely counterproductive to learning and development. Critical feedback from implementing partners and project participants can provide a 'reality check' on relevance, impact, process and effectiveness.

6.2.2. Empowerment

An ancillary purpose of evaluations, related to learning, is enhancing the capacity of partner agencies, project staff and project beneficiaries and participants to use evaluation as an instrument of learning and control. In the case of partner agencies this entails developing the capacity to conduct evaluations for their own purposes. In the case of project staff it entails fostering a 'culture of inquiry' and sharpening analytical skills. Beneficiaries and participants can use the occasion of an evaluation to come together and reflect critically on development assistance and seek more effective ways of utilising it.

6.2.3. Verification and control

There are a second set of reasons for conducting evaluation, distinct from those related to learning, and these concern accountability. For the NGO this usually means accounting to funding agencies on the use of funds (e.g. to AusAID). A government development agency has to account to its minister, the parliament and the public for funds provided to an NGO and this drives the agency's interest in ensuring NGOs acquit grants.

NGOs should also acquit themselves to their partner agencies and to project beneficiaries and participants in whose names funds were raised.

6.3 Criticisms of evaluation

6.3.1 Value judgements

Evaluations are criticised because they involve value judgements. Evaluations certainly should not be judgemental, in the sense of imposing values, but evaluations do make judgements about the development value of activities. That's what they are for. The issue is rather, whose values and interests are involved? The criteria by which success is to be judged has to be negotiated. To do so the manager of the evaluation may have to take the initiative and create the space for the negotiation of values and interests to take place. Practically this comes down to the quality of the consultation that goes into drafting the terms of reference and the ability of the person managing the evaluation to make room for the perspective of others.

6.3.1 External process

Despite the fact that projects have many stakeholders, not least beneficiaries and participants, evaluations are typically conducted by outsiders - normally international NGOs and/or funding agencies. Consequently local partner agencies are led to regard evaluation as an external requirement and (understandably) something to be wary of. Partly for this reason, partner agencies are not inclined to initiate evaluations for their own purposes.

For their part beneficiaries and participants aren't accorded the authority to conduct evaluations - at best they are consulted during the course of someone else's evaluation. The significance of this is that evaluations are not available as an instrument of learning and control to those for whom success or failure is most critical i.e. beneficiaries and participants. This is a serious flaw in the development process.

The challenge for NGOs is to enable partner agencies, beneficiaries and participants to use management techniques like evaluation for their own purposes. One should not be naive or simplistic about this. Empowerment is a complex process involving issues of both authority and capacity.

6.3.3 Power and control

External agents, including NGOs, have legitimate reasons for evaluating the performance of the projects they support and a lot can be done to ameliorate the problems inherent in the exercise by involving local parties. But however participative NGOs try to make them, evaluations are inclined to be one-way affairs - the accountability and performance of the partner agency is regularly put on the line, but not that of the NGO commissioning the evaluation. Partner agencies, beneficiaries and participants are not in the normal course of things given the opportunity to turn the tables and evaluate the performance of those above them in the development food chain.

An external evaluator may have more space to be objective in so far as less may be at stake for him/her personally. Nevertheless it has to be recognised that external evaluations can never be wholly objective or neutral and partner agencies will be reticent to criticise the party commissioning the evaluation because the fate of the project is normally in their hands i.e. they control access to the money.

6.3.4 Over-emphasis on accounting to funding agencies

The background to most evaluations is the need to provide funding agencies with an assurance that their money was not wasted, often coupled with an imperative to secure further funds. This orientation has several consequences. Firstly, it tends to lead NGOs and partner agencies into glossing over problems and talking up successes. The publicity people want success stories and AusAID will not want it to be advertised that taxpayer's money was wasted.

Smillie calls this a "false expectation system" and argues that it

"... creates a barrier between NGOs and the individuals and institutions that support them. It promises results that cannot be delivered, it buries problems, curtails any serious learning from failure, and turns whatever evaluation there is into an adversarial control mechanism, rather than one that might promote better development. And it sets NGOs up, both individually and collectively, for a fall. It is, in fact, self-defeating."*

The growing emphasis on the management of funds tends to displace issues of development policy and practice, either because these aspects are simply lost sight of or because there is a reluctance to seriously question the development thinking the project is based on, particularly where it would involve criticism of ideas subscribed to by the funding agency (i.e. not wanting to bite the hand that feeds).

6.3.5 Evaluations create tension, they are an imposition

Evaluations can and usually do create unease and tension in the ANGO, the partner agency and at the project level - people feel they are being tested, and they often are. We all seem to suffer from a failure to appreciate the necessity for criticism (including self-criticism). Learning has become threatening.

Evaluations can also be an imposition on partner agencies and communities, involving as they do great demands on people and resources. Official funding agencies and NGOs alike are demanding of partner agencies and evaluations are likely to be resented.

6.3.6 Too late, too little impact

Evaluations are also problematic in that they tend to be conducted when it is too late to do anything i.e. at completion or *ex poste*. The findings can serve future programming but experience has shown that the impact of project evaluations on programming is doubtful. This is the problem of institutionalising lessons learnt. Unfortunately, evaluation reports tend to excite a short flurry of activity (often of denial) but after just a year or so few can recall in any detail what the evaluation found.

*NGOs: *Learning, Evaluation and the Real Life of Seals*, Ian Smillie, pp 9-10. See also p 17.

6.4 Other issues

6.4.1 Learning and verification objectives

Acquitting a project, particularly to the extent that it involves auditing, can lead to tension with project partners, interfering with efforts to establish the trust required for a fruitful evaluation. It can be difficult to achieve learning and verification objectives at the same time. But both are important, neither can be sacrificed. The difficulties simply have to be acknowledged. It may be advisable to initially ask the partner agency to make their own assessment of the manner in which they have acquitted funds, steering it towards a self-evaluation.

6.4.2 Extraordinary factors in evaluations

Nobody is thinking of an evaluation early on in a project, whether or not provision was made in the project design for one, and by the time an evaluation is considered or the scheduled time comes around, a lot of water will have flowed under the bridge. Factors unforeseen at the outset will impact on the evaluation, some of them extraordinary. Thus an evaluation may end up being burdened with serious concerns raised internally or externally about the project (or overall program). NGOs have been known to commission 'independent' evaluations to kill off a project, to call a halt. And then there are the more prosaic, somewhat unsatisfactory, strategic considerations. For example an NGO may commission an evaluation to strengthen an application for further funding, that is, by demonstrating accountability and showcasing the project.

6.5 Planning an evaluation

6.5.1 Forward planning

Evaluations should be designed into projects at the project planning stage, not tacked on later. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, effective evaluations depend heavily on base line information and information collected during the course of the project. Evaluation information needs have to be anticipated. Secondly, evaluation should not be something that is sprung on everybody - a shared commitment to evaluation also needs to be established from the outset.

When the time for an evaluation is approaching it is important to allocate adequate preparation time, particularly where there are several stakeholders to consult and in those circumstances where there are inadequacies in the project design. Drafting an evaluation plan and terms of reference will take a lot longer if certain basics can't be adapted from the project design (e.g. key indicators and means of verification, information collection methodologies, etc.).

6.5.2 Consultative arrangements

Arrangements should be made within the ANGO itself to involve other staff members at key stages in the evaluation process to foster communication and shared learning and to ensure that the potential for disagreement or conflict concerning the evaluation's approach or its conclusions is minimised. Consultative arrangements should also be set in place to keep funding agencies, local partner agencies and other stakeholders informed and involved as appropriate throughout the course of the evaluation.

6.5.3 The use of ToR

The best format for developing an evaluation plan is probably the terms of reference (ToR). It is common practice to leave the drafting of ToR until the last minute, as if it were a mere formality, but this is counterproductive. It is the key reference document for everybody involved, including external evaluators if they are used. Accordingly the person responsible for the evaluation (we will assume herein that it is an ANGO program manager) should commence work on the ToR from the first day of preparation for an evaluation, ensuring that it becomes a comprehensive guide for the conduct of the exercise.

A checklist of questions and steps appears below. The checklist is intended:

- to ensure that the rationale for the evaluation and the proposed approach is questioned and tested before it is too late
- to systematically cover the matters that will need to be addressed in the ToR.

The division of the checklist into three phases should not be taken too rigidly. There may be every reason to re-order it to suit particular circumstances and preferences. Moreover, it will be appropriate to ask at various points in this sequence if the evaluation is really necessary and if it is feasible as conceived. Scrutiny of this kind may lead to a reorientation of the exercise, making it more productive. It may even lead to its abandonment. For example, if it becomes apparent that an evaluation has been proposed, in effect, as a substitute for managerial problem solving, the evaluation should probably be scrapped and the problem handed back to management where it belongs.

It is also possible that upon examination it will become evident that a particular project cannot satisfactorily be evaluated, for example because the objectives of the project are not clear or stakeholders cannot agree what they are. If the project has been completed it may be better to leave it un-evaluated and ensure subsequent projects are designed to be evaluated.

Evaluation Planning Checklist

First set

1. **Goal and objectives:** Question the overall goal or purpose of the evaluation and its necessity. Clarify specific objectives. Determine the scope of the inquiry.
2. **Planning process:** Decide who should be involved in planning the evaluation and how.
3. **Information needed:** Assess what information would have to be collected during the evaluation to satisfactorily meet these objectives.
4. **Approach to be adopted:** Consider what approach(es) to evaluation should be emphasised (in broad terms).
5. **Timing:** Determine when the evaluation should or would have to take place.
6. **Budget:** Estimate the cost of such an evaluation and the resources that would be needed.

Second set

7. **Methodology:** For each type of information needed, provisionally determine the methods that should be used to collect it.
8. **Participation:** Provisionally determine who should be involved in the actual conduct of the evaluation, and in what ways.
9. **Capacity building:** Provisionally determine what training/capacity building function the evaluation should serve.

Third set

10. **Draft ToR:** Draft and circulate a draft ToR for comment to all stakeholders or initiate the participatory drafting process as appropriate.
11. **Consultants:** If consultants are to be used, initiate the selection and contracting process.
12. **Advance information:** Begin collecting the documentation and advance information from the field that will be required for the evaluation.
13. **Briefings:** Schedule briefing meetings for evaluation team members.

The tasks and considerations involved in the foregoing points are discussed in more depth in the following sub-sections.

6.5.4 Clarifying the goal of the evaluation, developing objectives

The first task of an evaluation manager should be to ensure that:

- the goal and the objectives of the evaluation are well conceived and clearly focused
- there are compelling reasons for conducting an evaluation with supporting evidence
- the evaluation is not attempting to satisfy competing objectives
- there is a reasonable consensus between the main stakeholders concerning the goal and objectives of the evaluation.

In the normal course of things the evaluation manager will have to start with the original 'unformed' rationale for the evaluation and clarify the overall goal and develop precise evaluation objectives. This process could be initiated simply by calling colleagues together for a brain-storming meeting and asking: *Who asked for the evaluation? Why was it proposed? Who is it aimed at and how will we/they use the results? What is at stake?*

What is sensitive? Are there any issues that we or others are inclined to avoid? What are the projected benefits from the evaluation?

Such a discussion should clarify the rationale for the exercise and help formulate the overall goal. It is particularly important to be clear about any over-riding intent from the outset because it will colour everything else. For example, if the goal is to secure further funding for the project and the main audience is a funding agency, the evaluation is unlikely to be as self-critical

as it might otherwise be. It will also be less likely to address the concerns of partner agencies and project beneficiaries and participants.

An evaluation might also be conducted with no particular intent, for example because it is just routine to conduct an evaluation at certain stages in the project cycle. In circumstances where expectations are low the evaluation manager should ensure that intelligent and challenging objectives are formulated to make the most of the opportunity (and the time and expense involved).

Objectives usually require further refinement in the lead up to an evaluation. The evaluation manager should ensure that they are well conceived and be prepared to consult further to achieve a sharp focus. The evaluation objectives should clearly state what is expected in specific areas and in relation to specific issues.

Evaluation objectives need not be complex. *What have we been trying to do and why? In what areas have we succeeded and in what have we failed? In each case, why? What should we do differently in future?* These are reasonable starting points - specific issues can be developed from them.

Project documentation might make explicit its objectives (e.g. improved health and sanitation facilities) but be silent on the issue of the process to be achieved (e.g. empowerment, conscientisation). In such cases evaluation objectives might have to make these explicit as an area of inquiry.

6.5.5 Determining the scope of the inquiry

Evaluation objectives will normally be framed principally to test whether or not the project achieved its stated objectives. *Is the project successful on its own terms?* However the scope of an evaluation should also be open or broad enough to enable evaluators to 'step outside' the project framework and re-examine its rationale and the way this was reduced to a

project design. *Was it well conceived in the first place (good development and feasible)? Was it an appropriate intervention given the program objectives and mandate of the organisation? Were the goal, objectives and outputs as stated well focused? Was a clear logical flow achieved in the project's design?*

The scope should also be broad enough to enable evaluators to gauge unintended impact. A project might meet its stated objectives but have negative effects undermining its value to a community. On the other hand a project might fail to meet its stated objectives, but nevertheless have positive effects that enhance its impact. Ensure that evaluators ask: *What were the negative effects of the project? What did it achieve beyond its objectives?*

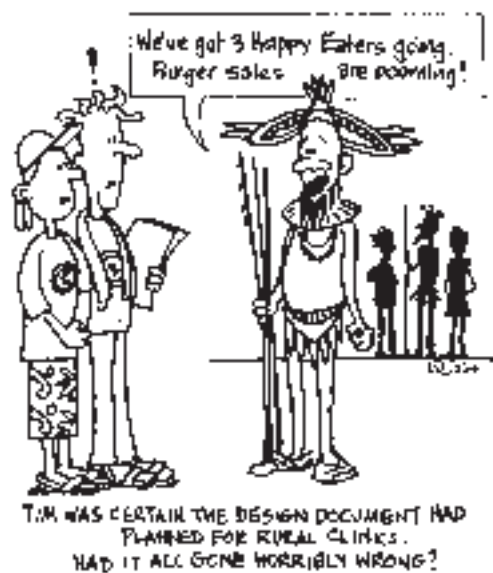
It is sometimes said that there is a choice to be made between adopting an objectives based approach (i.e. measuring achievement against objectives) and an open inquiry into impact (i.e. irrespective of the goals and objectives of the project, program or organisation). Some of the pros and cons of the two approaches are shown below, based on responses from participants in an ACFOA training workshop (PPME, Melbourne, February 1996).

In reality the issue is not which approach, it is rather a question of emphasis and balance. An evaluation has to test a project against its stated objectives but it should also explore unintended outcomes.

6.5.6 Incorporating other stakeholders' interests in the evaluation

In addition there may be particular issues that the partner agency, government and other stakeholders would like to see addressed. So far as practicable these should be reflected in the evaluation's objectives and the issues to be dealt with. If other parties have not indicated what they are particularly interested in focusing on the project manager planning the evaluation should consult them with a view to addressing their concerns in the evaluation.

If possible a participative planning meeting or workshop should be held with the partner agency, representatives of beneficiaries and participants and any other key stakeholders for this purpose. This might seem an inordinate amount of preparation but the alternative may be presenting the evaluation to others as a *fait accompli*. It is unrealistic to expect to secure people's participation in the conduct of an



Restricted to objectives

Pros

- Easier to assess and quantify; quicker
- More likely to clarify activity
- Funding agencies prefer it
- Easier to use in PR

Cons

- May not allow for change brought about
- Not able to capture other achievements
- Rigidity

Open inquiry into impact

Pros

- Flexible
- May examine unintended outcomes
- More needs based approach
- Makes analysis at various levels possible

Cons

- Tendency for naval gazing
- Time consuming for agency and community
- May raise new expectations which can't be met

exercise if they were not invited to fully participate in its planning. Participation is not a tap to be turned off and on when it is convenient. If participation is really problematic, avoid using the word. If no more than consultation is realistic, describe it as such.

6.5.7 Capacity building and training

The manager of the evaluation should determine what capacity building function the evaluation should serve. For example, could the evaluation incorporate training in evaluation techniques for the partner agency? This can be achieved indirectly. If the partner agency is closely involved in the conduct of the evaluation, skills will be imparted. For this reason it will usually be appropriate to invite the partner agency to assign a member of staff to the evaluation team, preferably someone who is already responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

6.5.8 Framing issues and questions

The evaluation manager will have to identify key issues and questions to refine the ToR and provide some practical guidance. The following headings are suggested for grouping issues and questions relevant to the intervention:

- Relevance
- Design
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Impact
- Sustainability

Relevance

Questions should be framed to test the relevance of the project or program to the broader planning context within the ANGO. For example:

- Did the project contribute to the realisation of the mandate of the ANGO?
- Did it prove to be consistent with stated policy and priorities and with relevant program objectives?
- Have any policy based objectives been realised (e.g. human rights and good governance)?

The relevance of the intervention has also to be tested in the particular development context as the evaluators understand it. For example, was the project's concentration on rural credit appropriate? Questions of this nature require the evaluators to step outside the project and the ANGO's strategic plans and ask essentially - *Was it a good idea? How do project beneficiaries and other stakeholders value the project?*

Design

Evaluators should be instructed to study the original project design (in this regard refer to the section on Catch-Up Appraisal in Chapter 5) and ask:

- Did the project prove to be technically feasible?
- Did it prove to have a realistic implementation schedule and were management arrangements adequate?
- How well did monitoring systems and interventions by the ANGO manage risk and the problems that arose?
- What was assumed that should not have been? For example, in a hand-dug well project it might have been assumed that the community would contribute labour for construction and maintenance only to find that the community could not be mobilised as envisaged.
- In short, did the design 'work'?

Efficiency and effectiveness

Many issues and questions will arise under these headings. In relation to the use of funds, cost effectiveness or cost benefit analysis may be an appropriate tool:

- Did the program represent the best and most effective use of the particular inputs?
- Did it demonstrate sustainable benefits that exceeded their cost?

The performance of management is also relevant. Program managers should not leave their own performance out of what is to be evaluated.

Development impact, sustainability and measuring change

An evaluation has to examine development impact and sustainability:

- Who exactly has benefited from the project or program? In what ways?
- How long will these benefits last?
- What costs will have to be borne by government, the community or individual participants to maintain the benefits?
- Who has *not* benefited? Why not?
- Have the poorest groups achieved greater self-reliance?

The distribution of benefits is generally a key issue. This can be approached using 'participation analysis' or 'stakeholder analysis' which involve designing a simple analytical framework based on a determination of the makeup of the community (by age, gender, livelihood, language, ethnic background, income, political allegiance, etc.) and random surveys of beneficiaries to determine who participated and benefited and how they were 'selected'.

It should be borne in mind when conducting this type of analysis that there will be significant differences of interest and opportunity within any community and there will be pre-existing tensions, perhaps even conflicts. The project or

program may have generated new tensions, particularly if changes have been brought about in the status quo. Evaluators can be prompted to ask:

- Has any conflict or tension been created or exacerbated?
- Have any mechanisms been identified/established to resolve conflict/tension? Were they effective?

In many respects development comes down to **process** and **change** - it should involve more than the delivery of a service. There are many pertinent questions that can be asked to explore this. For example:

- In what way did project beneficiaries participate in the implementation of the project?
- Was their involvement empowering in any sense?
- What skills did they learn? What roles did they assume?
- Has the project brought about any change in say the economic security of vulnerable groups or the status of women in the community?
- (In short) what exactly did the project change?

It may not be easy to come up with process indicators but with imagination it is possible.

6.5.9 Selecting evaluation criteria or indicators

The evaluation manager has to provide guidance in the ToR on the criteria or indicators which should be used to evaluate the *impact* of the project. This is a key task, yet it can be problematic. It is difficult to measure results in development, particularly if the emphasis is on social and political change. Criteria or indicators also need to be specified to evaluate the *processes* that were generated within the project or program.

What criteria?

Whose perspective?

Whose concepts?

Whose values?

Whose language?

Whose timeframe?

Whose agenda?

Whose needs?

The design document should already specify the performance criteria or key indicators to be used to measure progress against objectives, so this should be the starting point. However the criteria or indicators specified at the time the project was designed may well prove to be imprecise, even irrelevant. Moreover the evaluation will also be examining the overall rationale of the project and internal project criteria or indicators will be insufficient for this task. Thus it is inevitable that additional criteria or indicators will have to be developed for the evaluation.

Ideally all stakeholders should be consulted about how the project will be judged i.e. what criteria or indicators will be used. Perceptions may vary widely on what is significant and what counts for 'success'. For example, in a project that aims to generate employment the ANGO might be most concerned about the number of women who find employment, but the community might be more concerned about the number of young people employed (or vice versa). In a resource management project the community might maintain that they are more concerned about short and medium term benefits but the ANGO may seek to adopt a longer term conservation perspective (or vice versa). An evaluation should bring out these differences. If these differences cannot be resolved the evaluation will have to consider the project from both perspectives.

It may take time for these differences to become apparent so it is important for the project manager preparing the evaluation to make plain at an early stage what criteria or indicators he/she believes should be used. This would usually be achieved by circulating an early draft of the ToR for comment and later conducting a planning exercise at least with the main project partner to examine the proposed criteria or indicators, and if necessary rework them. If possible representatives of beneficiary groups should be present.

6.5.10 Assessing what information should be collected

Information needs will be governed by the criteria or indicators established for the evaluation. Accordingly, the evaluation manager should make a list of the different types of information that will probably be needed to determine if the criteria have been met and if the indicators are present.

The evaluation manager should also make an assessment of what methods should be used to collect and analyse this information. The methodology shouldn't simply be left open. Those who actually undertake the evaluation may have sound reasons to revise the recommended methodology but the manager of the exercise should have considered the question sufficiently to be able to provide guidance in the ToR.

In determining the information likely to be needed, the project manager should be wary of asking for too much data - it will hinder rather than help. Be wary also of being too prescriptive. The evaluation planning process should allow an opportunity for other stakeholders to signal what information they regard as significant and thereby influence what information is actually collected.

6.5.11 Sources of information

An evaluation should be able to draw on base line data established in the early stages of the project and on a data base developed in the course of ongoing monitoring and review. The strengths and deficiencies of existing project information should be checked before writing the ToR because it impacts greatly on the task. In preparation for an evaluation it may be appropriate to ask a partner agency to collate relevant information to ensure it is readily accessible to the evaluator(s) when they arrive.

An evaluation will also require the collection of information that is external to the project's data base. Additional information collected specifically for the evaluation will include

existing information (e.g. government statistics, other NGO's reports) and new information generated by field work (e.g. survey results, stakeholder's views).

6.5.12 Analysis of information

It is important to consider how information will be analysed and how conclusions will be drawn from it. Some control must be retained over this aspect of the evaluation. It will be important to ensure that the conclusions are well supported by the information collected and with this in mind it would be prudent to make provision for a debriefing workshop to test the evaluators on their conclusions before they complete their report.

6.2.13 Deciding who should lead the evaluation

The initial question is likely to be whether or not to bring in an outsider, e.g. an independent consultant. Some pros and cons are listed below.

If a consultant is used to lead the evaluation team the evaluation manager should ensure that the skills the consultant brings to the task are imparted to participating program staff.

The ANGO does not have to retain control of the evaluation and appoint the team leader. In the interests of capacity building it may be wise to let the partner agency nominate the team leader and provide a resource person with evaluation skills to assist him or her.

6.5.14 Who else should be involved?

There will be many different people with an interest in the project, including the partner agency, project beneficiaries and participants and the funding agency. Their interests in the project will vary considerably. It is important to work out who should be involved, at what points and in what ways. Who should be represented on the evaluation team and who should not? Should a closely involved government department be invited to nominate somebody to be on the team? Should someone

Underlying processes— notes to give to evaluation team

What you ask, who you ask and how you ask it are important.

Ask yourself what baggage you are carrying (preconceptions and agendas)?

What is the nature of the process that you are setting in train?

Are you serious about conducting a participative, empowering evaluation?

Who is framing the questions?

External evaluator(s)	Internal evaluator(s)
<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well developed evaluation skills • No vested interest • A fresh view, new eyes • Can be participatory, given time and skill 	<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closely involved with the activity • Valuable learning experience for person • Develops in-house skills and capacity • Findings more likely to be acted upon
<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constrained by individual style of consultant • Can be superficial (no heart) • Can give those being evaluated a negative perception of the evaluation process 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/community members bring their own agenda • Can't stand back from the project • Lack of time to commit to evaluations • Divided loyalties • May be unwilling/unable to be critical • May lack appropriate training/skills

from the funding agency (e.g. AusAID officer posted to the country concerned) be invited to join in on field trips? What role should project beneficiaries and participants have in determining the focus of the evaluation? These are important questions and the success of the evaluation will depend largely on involving the right people at the right time in the right way.

Not everybody can be involved, certainly not at every stage, but as a general principle be inclusive and be prepared to make other stakeholders full team members. If someone is not to be involved, be clear about why they should be excluded. As others will actually be conducting the evaluation the evaluation manager needs to question how inclusive the evaluation team members selected are likely to be. What is the partner agency's track record with the community in this regard? Will marginalised people and groups get a look in or

will community consultations be dominated by the ascendant and assertive?

6.5.15 Participative evaluation

It is now generally recognised that it is important to strive towards the greater participation of project partners and beneficiaries in monitoring, review and evaluation. Some people would say greater participation involves less reliance on the conventional model of objective scientific research (logical positivism) although this view seems to be based on the premise that beneficiaries and participants are less objective than outsiders, which does not necessarily follow. An outsider may be more systematic, and more intent on objectivity, but there is no single reality out there to be captured, however good the method.

The pros and cons of the positivist approach compared to the participatory approach are listed opposite.

The main difference between the two approaches is that in the more traditional approach the evaluator plays the role of investigator, whereas in the more participative approach the evaluator acts more as a facilitator. The evaluation manager has to make a decision about what she or he thinks is appropriate. It will depend on the purpose of the evaluation and who it is really for.

6.5.16 Difficulties of conducting participative evaluations

It is increasingly common for evaluation ToR to state that an evaluation must be participative, that Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques must be used, etc. This marks a healthy shift in thinking but one should be cautious about making these injunctions. Don't impose requirements that cannot be met.

The meaning of the word 'participation' is fast being diluted. Much of what passes for participation in evaluations is no more than a limited form of consultation and much of what passes for Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is in fact Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), an effective but essentially 'extractive' technique. (See further the discussion of PRA and RRA in Annex 2 - Participatory Approaches.)

In trying to involve project partners and beneficiaries in evaluation don't ignore the underlying realities of effective power and control. Realistically assess what will be involved in aiming for a participative evaluation. It will involve giving up a certain amount of control of the planning and conduct of the evaluation. Evaluation team members will have to be prepared to make room for the judgement and experience of others and rely far less on their own judgement and experience. It will certainly take more time and money.

If an evaluation is really supposed to be participatory, spell out in what ways other stakeholders are to participate. If PRA techniques are really to be used, specify the actual techniques and make sure there is really enough time to use them.

6.5.17 Further options

There are other (not necessarily mutually exclusive) options that can be considered, including:

- joint or collaborative evaluation (e.g. NGOs working in the same sector pool resources to conduct a sector evaluation)
- swap evaluation (e.g. another NGO working in the same area evaluates your NGO's work and your NGO evaluates their work)
- reverse evaluation (e.g. the partner agency evaluates the performance of the supporting NGO)
- parallel evaluations (e.g. the NGO and the partner agency conduct parallel evaluations of a project and hold a workshop at the end to share findings and agree recommendations)
- self-evaluation (e.g. the implementing agency is assisted to evaluate its own performance)
- community (or user) evaluation (e.g. a water users group evaluates a water project)

It would be a good thing if there were more collaborative evaluations. There is a lot of duplication with individual NGOs and donors conducting their own evaluations without adequate reference to what others are doing. This is inefficient and too demanding of the agencies and communities on the receiving end. The manager of an evaluation should go out and look for evaluation partners, particularly other NGOs working in the same sector and/or area. It might mean re-jigging the timing, even the ToR, but it is the responsible approach. It is also wise to check with the partner agency if there is an exercise they wish to conduct that the evaluation can be combined with.

More controlled, positivist approach

Pros

- Quick; easy to quantify
- Straight-forward methodology
- Likely to be directly relevant to the manner in which the project was designed
- Seen to be more accountable
- Easier to deal with and does not raise complex issues related to control of the activity

Cons

- Arrogant and insensitive
- Results likely to reflect the Western values of the evaluator
- Flawed assumptions about independent observation and capacity to capture 'reality'
- Ignores human reality - change, political dynamics
- Assumes simplistic cause and effect

More subjective, participatory approach

Pros

- Views and perspectives of all stakeholders inform the result
- Provides an opportunity for other realities to impinge (i.e. matters beyond the Project Framework)
- Should lead to a closer mutual understanding and sense of shared purpose (the human foundation)

Cons

- May not fit the project format or framework
- Can substitute for a rigorous examination of the achievements of the activity against its objectives
- Few evaluators really know how to use participatory techniques
- Can raise expectations that won't/can't be met.

6.5.18 Budgeting for the evaluation

How much will the evaluation cost and what other resources are needed? Estimates should be made early. Be careful to match the scope of the evaluation to the funds and resources available.

For financial resources the budget should include the costs of staff and/or consultants, possibly translators, enumerators and other local support staff, international and local travel, expenses or per diems, communications, workshop materials, report production, etc.

In budgeting for staff and/or consultants, the amount of time needed for each stage should be detailed e.g. planning, desk research and preparation, pre-departure briefings, data collection and analysis, workshops and meetings, de-briefings and report production.

6.5.19 Timing

Evaluations usually take place mid-term, at completion or *ex post*.

In determining the precise timing it is important to check when it would best suit the partner agency and to seek the partner agency's advice about seasonal considerations, religious holidays, other major visits, etc. It is important to be sensitive to the demands that you are placing on the partner agency in terms of staff and resources.

A GANTT chart can be used to graphically plan the timing of each stage of the evaluation and monitor the completion of each stage within established timeframes. There are also several computer software packages available to help with this work.

6.6 Overseeing the conduct of the evaluation

6.6.1 Briefing evaluators and drafting workplans

Pre-departure briefings provide the last opportunity to directly influence the conduct of the evaluation work. Briefings should be well structured and should aim to bring evaluation team members together and ensure that there is a shared understanding about the conduct of the work. It may be appropriate to further amend the ToR at this stage.

The evaluation manager should assist the evaluation team to draft workplans, provisionally detailing the use of the time available and the main methodologies. This will reveal to the evaluation manager whether or not the evaluation team understand what is required, how well they are likely to work together and whether or not they are likely to adopt a sound approach. For example, the team may propose that they will spend comparatively little time in the villages covered by the project and that they will seek accommodation in a nearby town rather than staying on site. On the face of it this should be challenged.

The opportunity should also be taken to stress the process that should be adopted, e.g. bringing everyone together to seek consensus rather than allowing different 'cells' to develop, and to ensure evaluators are familiar with the tools you would like them to use, e.g. use cards and 'blu tack' in your own briefings to demonstrate how they can be used to externalise problems and build consensus.

It should be stressed to the team that the success of the evaluation will depend largely on the relationship they can build with the people whose work is to be evaluated. This does not mean that the team should be instructed not to express their doubts - this would be paralysing.

6.6.2 Delegation of in-country management of the evaluation

Arrangements need to be made for managing the conduct of the evaluation in-country. Assuming the manager of the evaluation does not participate in its execution the in-country management of the evaluation will have to be delegated either to the local office of the ANGO, to the local partner agency or to a member of the evaluation team. In these circumstances it will be critical to settle how the evaluation is to be managed and supported in-country and to set preparations in train well ahead of the commencement of the evaluation. A team leader should be appointed. Local resource requirements and logistical arrangements should not be left for the evaluation team to settle.

6.6.3 Intervening in the conduct of the evaluation

Ideally, evaluations are opportunities for dialogue and shared learning. However, evaluations sometimes take on investigative functions and this can lead to considerable tension. For example, an evaluation team leader may see the need to audit the books of the local partner agency or to inquire into the conduct of a member of staff. The controversy may be referred back to the evaluation manager. What should he or she do?

If the issue that has arisen is serious and/or of considerable significance it would be counterproductive to sweep it under the carpet but it may be appropriate to intervene and recommend that a separate audit or investigation be conducted. If it is decided that the matter should remain within the scope of the evaluation the evaluation manager should direct the evaluation team leader to ensure that the matter is dealt with fairly and that nobody is put at risk. The evaluation manager should intervene if he or she has any doubts about this, channelling the matter into a separate process (perhaps involving the establishment

of a forum that brings together all parties, chaired by a mutually respected third party).

If a partner agency raises serious concerns about the ANGO in the course of an evaluation e.g. concerning the conduct of an Australian working on the project, the ANGO should have the courage to see that this is pursued in a similarly open manner.

6.7 Reporting

6.7.1 Debriefing and feedback

After completing field work in each location the evaluation team should debrief project staff and project beneficiaries and participants as to its preliminary findings. This is an important opportunity to clarify thinking and correct any misunderstandings the team may have. Once all the field work has been completed the evaluation team should spend a day or two writing up its preliminary findings and then debriefing partner agency staff in the province or capital. This is also an important opportunity for feedback. The team should then spend another day or more preparing a draft evaluation report for all stakeholders to comment on. This is the document the ANGO staff member or consultant participating in the evaluation should return home with. The draft should not be generated in Australia.

Shortcuts in the process of debriefing and feedback described above will result in an inferior product. Debriefings should be seen as opportunities for action. Think strategically about how to use debriefings to reach agreement on conclusions, lessons and recommendations.

6.7.2 Structure of the report

The content and structure required should be specified in the ToR. In terms of content it is important that the formal (or base) report include the following:

- a clear statement of the purpose of the evaluation (goal and objectives);
- the criteria and indicators used for judging 'success' or 'failure' and a critique of their usefulness and validity;
- the places visited, the people interviewed and the methods used to collect information including the reasons for choosing these places, people and methods and a critique of the usefulness and validity of the approach taken;
- a summary of findings and conclusions including an indication of how they were reached and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the information base;
- a summary of the lessons that can be drawn;
- a summary of recommendations including some guidance about how they should be implemented and what difficulties may be involved;
- an assessment of the value of the evaluation exercise to all stakeholders and pointers for future practice.

The summary of key conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for action is likely to be the most important outcome of any evaluation. Evaluation reports have to concentrate on learning and action.

6.7.3 Presenting the results to different stakeholders and for different uses

The formal evaluation report may not be a good means of communicating results to all stakeholders or for all purposes and additional forms of presentation may be required. For example, it may be useful to have the evaluators prepare a flip chart presentation summarising the formal report. This would serve as a useful visual aid for debriefing within the ANGO and could subsequently be used for presenting the results of the evaluation back to project partners and beneficiary groups.

In principle the results of an evaluation should not simply be made available, but made accessible, to all stakeholders. This may mean translating the formal report or a summary of it for beneficiary groups. The results should also be in a form that will be useful to all stakeholders. This may mean tailoring reports and/or presentations for different stakeholders. For example, the report for the partner agency may have an expanded section on the implementation of recommendations specifically relevant to the partner agency.

All stakeholders should be provided with an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation and on the way in which it was conducted. This should be seen as an opportunity to achieve a better understanding between all stakeholders and to improve future practice.

6.8 Institutional learning

6.8.1 What is done with evaluations?

Evaluations are wasted if they don't result in improved performance. In this regard follow-up is critical. It is not enough to generate an interesting discussion, to have a frank exchange between development partners in a workshop. The evaluation exercise will have been a failure if the output is a report gathering dust on a shelf and all parties return to business as usual. It is vital that a mechanism be put in place to ensure that the lessons learnt are institutionalised and that they have an impact on ongoing work. This will require that a meeting be held after the 'dust has settled' to agree what action the NGO should take and what on-going support will be needed to ensure implementation of the evaluations recommendations. Arrangements should be made to review progress after a period of time.

To improve their performance the parties concerned will have to be truly 'hungry' to do so - complacency always stands in the way of change. We need more iconoclasts.

6.8.2 Dealing with failure

A lot of development work is experimental and projects do fail. Unfortunately, failure tends to lead to financial punishment and NGOs are accordingly very reluctant to be seen to be learning from their mistakes. The link between evaluation results and ongoing funding tends to inhibit evaluations and turn them into self-serving exercises.

There is an ethical issue at stake. Keeping the wraps on problems and beating up project successes might be in the interests of an NGO but it is not in the interests of those in whose name development is conducted.

6.8.3 Institutional performance

It is important to go beyond the success or failure of a project or program and determine how much this success or failure had to do with the strengths and weaknesses of the NGO and its project partners. What do the shortcomings of the project say about our organisation? What do we have to change? How can we build on the successes achieved by the project?

Annex 1. CONTENTS

1.1	Background	135
1.2	Aid to Thinking	135
1.3	Live designs	136
1.4	The Matrix - Vertical and Horizontal Logic	136
1.5	Definitions	137
1.6	The project description - 'if-then'	137
1.7	Assumptions	138
1.8	Objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) & Means of verification (MOVs)	140
1.9	Practice makes perfect	140
1.10	An iterative process	140
1.11	Timing	140
1.12	Approach	140
1.13	Referencing	141
1.14	Planning a process	141
1.15	Example	142

Annex 1. THE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

1.1 Background

The Project Framework (or Logical Framework Matrix) is an analytical tool which helps planners and managers think through the logic of their projects and requires that they specify how the activities and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated. It provides a basic analytical structure, helps establish some common key planning principles among users and is a very useful way of presenting a summary of what the project intends to do and how. It is not, however, a tool that community members should necessarily be required to understand or use.

It is important to distinguish between what is known as the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) and the matrix itself. The **approach** involves problems analysis, participant analysis, developing an objective tree, assessing alternative interventions and choosing a strategy. The output of this approach is the vertical logic of the **matrix**. The summary provided below focuses on the principles of the matrix, how it is constructed and used.

The Project Framework was first used in a development context by USAID during the late 1960s in order to assist in the planning, management and evaluation of development activities. It has since been adopted as a planning and management tool by a large number of other agencies involved in providing development assistance. These include the British ODA, Canada's CIDA, the OECD Expert Group on Aid Evaluation, the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), Australia's AusAID and Germany's GTZ.

A fairly succinct definition of the Project Framework is that it is:-

"simply a tool which provides a structure for specifying the components of an activity, and the logical linkages between a set of means and a set of ends. It places the program or project in its larger framework of objectives within the sector. It serves as a useful tool for

defining inputs, time-tables, assumptions for success, outputs and indicators for monitoring and evaluating performance".

The Project Framework can be used not only during project planning but also as a tool for analysing the structure of ongoing projects. It is also a useful management tool during implementation (when appropriately reviewed and modified) providing a clear point of reference for assessing progress towards stated objectives.

1.2 Aid to thinking

Before describing the Project Framework in more detail, it is worth making a cautionary note. For all its advantages when clearly understood and professionally applied, the Project Framework provides no magic solution to identifying or designing good programs or projects. It is merely an analytical, design and presentational tool. The principle of 'garbage in, garbage out' can apply to the Project Framework if it is used mechanically, as it does with computer input-output models. The Project Framework is an analytical tool which aims to make the logical relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, and purpose more transparent. The Project Framework should be seen as **an aid to thinking**. The matrix provides a summary structure of internal logic and is not expected to contain all the detail of the project or program.



1.3 Live designs

Another important point to make is that the Project Framework must be seen as a dynamic tool, which should be re-assessed and revised as the project itself develops and circumstances change. It should be used to provide structure and purpose to project and program planning and budgeting without being perceived as an inflexible and constraining blueprint.

There is a tendency to treat the original project design as the final word with the consequence that the documents are left on the shelf or in the bottom drawer and project staff either leave design inadequacies to fester or learn to work around them. This is counterproductive - the efficacy of a project design is critical and it should be made to work. A design process that inhibits change is not good development. A development 'blueprint' approach will lead to failure because it assumes too much of our capacity to design effective projects and of our understanding of particular contexts. Although every effort should be made to get designs right from the beginning we have to recognise that this will only ever be our best effort.

Figure 1 - Project Framework structure and sequence for completion

Project Description	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs)	Means Of Verification (MOVs)	Assumptions/Risks
1. Goal	8. OVIs	9. MOVs	
2. Purpose	10. OVIs	11. MOVs	7. Assumptions
3. Outputs	12. OVIs	13. MOVs	6. Assumptions
4. Activities			5. Assumptions

1.4 The Matrix - Vertical and Horizontal logic

The Project Framework consists of a matrix, which has four columns and four or five rows (depending on whether or not activities and inputs have been combined).

The **vertical logic** identifies what the project intends to do, clarifies the causal relationships, and specifies the important assumptions and uncertainties beyond the project manager's control (columns 1 and 4).

The **horizontal logic** provides a framework for project monitoring and evaluation through the specification of key indicators of measurement, and the means by which the measurement will be verified (columns 2 and 3).

Project Frameworks may be completed as brief summaries of projects, or may be many pages long in the case of more complex, multi-component rural development projects. Figure 1 below shows the structure of the matrix and indicates the sequence for completing its component parts.

1.5 Definitions

The Project Framework is rather jargon bound, and it is important to understand what the commonly used terms really mean. A brief description of the commonly used terminology is given below:-

- **Project Description or Narrative Summary** refers to the narrative description of the program at each of the 4 levels of the hierarchy used in the means-ends analysis
- **Goal** refers to the sectoral or national objectives to which the project is designed to contribute (e.g increased incomes, improved nutritional status, reduced crime). It can also be referred to as describing the expected impact of the project.
- **Purpose** (or Objective) refers to what the project is expected to achieve in development terms within the sub-sector (e.g increased agricultural production, higher immunisation coverage, cleaner water, more informed and capable people, or improved local management systems and capacity).. Where the project or program is relatively large and has a number of components (activity areas) it may be useful to give each component a purpose.
- **Outputs** refer to the specific results and tangible products produced by undertaking a series of tasks or activities (e.g irrigation systems, village seedling nurseries, areas planted/developed, buildings or other infrastructure built, water supplies, better trained staff, local management organisations). Each purpose must have at least one contributing output, and will often have up to 4 or 5.
- **Activities** refer to the specific tasks undertaken to achieve the required outputs (e.g for a water supply these may include further design, site preparation, establishment of water users committee and maintenance procedures, health and sanitation education, collection of local materials, , tank construction, pipe laying,

digging soak pits, commissioning).

- **Inputs** refer to the resources required in order to do the work (such as personnel, equipment, and materials).
- **Assumptions.** Assumptions/Risks refer to conditions which could affect the progress or success of the project, but over which the project manager has no direct control (e.g price changes, rainfall, land reform policies, non-enforcement of supporting legislation). Pre-requisites for successful program implementation are those prior obligations that need to be fulfilled by agencies involved in the project before things can start (e.g, making land available, passing of enabling legislation, re-structuring of operational units, community group formation).
- **Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs).** Indicators refer to the information we need to help us determine our progress towards meeting project objectives. An indicator should provide a clearly defined unit of measurement and a target detailing the quantity, quality and timing of expected results.
- **Means of Verification (MOVs).** Means of verification should clearly specify the source of the information (our indicators). We need to consider how the information will be collected (method), who will be responsible, and the frequency with which the information should be provided.

1.6 The project description - 'if-then'

Constructing the Program Description/Narrative Summary of the matrix involves a detailed breakdown of the chain of causality implicit in project or program design. Each level of the hierarchy requires the completion of other elements if results are to be achieved. This can be expressed in terms of:-

- **IF** inputs are provided , **THEN** activities can be undertaken;
- **IF** activities are undertaken, **THEN** outputs will be produced;
- **IF** outputs are produced, **THEN** purposes will be achieved;
- **IF** purposes are achieved, **THEN** the project will have contributed towards achieving the overall goal.

It is clearly important, therefore, that inputs are adequate to allow activities to be undertaken, and so on up the hierarchy.

Completing the matrix must be approached as an iterative learning process, however. As one considers and completes new parts of the matrix, this requires reflection on what has been prepared in other parts, and will often require you to review and revise previous descriptions.

1.7 Assumptions

The fourth column of the Project Framework contains assumptions relating to external factors beyond the project's control which have a high chance of impacting on the successful implementation of the project. Understanding and evaluating these factors is an essential part of good design. Failure to realistically assess these constraints or risks is a common source of project failure.

One should start working through the assumptions by starting from the bottom of the logframe. Identify assumptions at the level of activities, outputs and objectives. Each level should contain the necessary and sufficient conditions for the next level above to be achieved.

Figure 2 illustrates the importance of assumptions - only if the objective and the assumption are achieved can the project move to the next level. Pre-conditions differ from assumptions in that they must be met before the project can commence.

Assumptions should be written as positive statements.

The probability of these conditions being met should be estimated as part of assessing the riskiness of the project. The significance of the external factors also needs to be evaluated. Some will be critical to project success, and others of marginal importance. If those critical to project success are considered unlikely to be met, the project should be either redesigned or rejected. A useful way of assessing the importance of assumptions is through the use of the decision tree shown in Fig. 3.

Examples of assumptions might be:-

- Prices of agricultural or other products do not fall below a specified level
- Land distribution is completed in a timely manner
- Local institutions collaborate in planning activities
- Input supplies are adequate and timely
- Suitable staff are identified and recruited - local and (if required) expatriate
- Trainees return to work on the project
- Government policy does not change on private marketing
- Adequate budget allocations are made by funding agencies

The assumptions that it is necessary to make will depend partly on the management and financing structure of the project. The important thing is that the assumptions identified should be monitored during project implementation to give advance warning of implementation constraints.

Pre-conditions/requisites refer to those activities and actions that may need to be taken prior to the project commencing. These might include such things as:-

- Completion of land re-distribution within the project area
- Settlement of a land dispute
- Establishment of a new management team or committee within local implementing agencies

- Recruitment of officers to fill vacant public service positions
- Approval of a new government policy
- Completion of a Memorandum of Understanding between project stakeholders
- Completion of a further study

Fig. 2
The relationship between the project description and assumptions

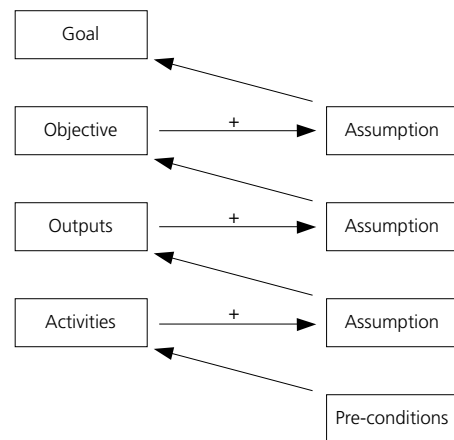
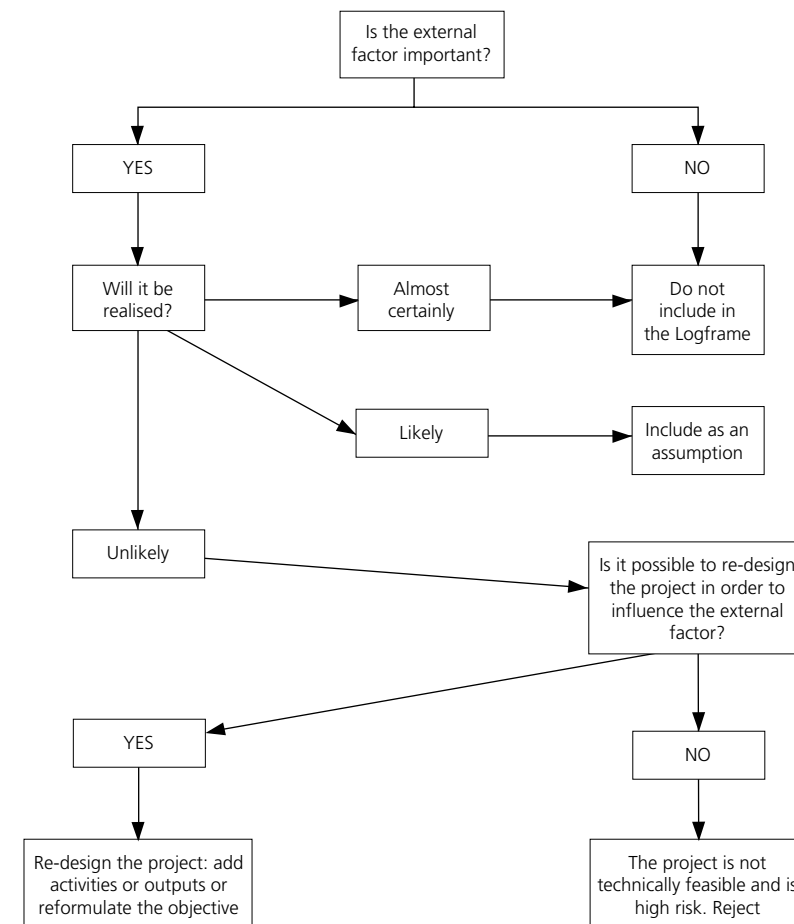


Fig. 3 Assumptions decision tree



1.8 Objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) & Means of verification (MOVs)

For further information on selecting appropriate indicators and identifying the means of verification, refer to Chapter 3 of the Guide.

1.9 Practice makes perfect

While the basic structure of the Project Framework may now be clear(er), it often takes considerable practice before new users become confident in using the technique as a project design and management tool. There is often some initial confusion, for example, in determining what is an objective and what is an output. The level of detail to be included also takes time and practice to determine. This should not daunt those new practitioners applying the technique, however. It happens to everybody and it is worth persevering. Good things don't necessarily come easy!

1.10 An iterative process

Preparing a Project Framework should be approached as an iterative process of refining the initial project description and hierarchy of objectives as the nature of the causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, purpose(s) and goal becomes clearer. What one might initially have assumed to be a project purpose, may in fact be a project output on further reflection. Similarly the nature and scope of



outputs may have to be refined once a full assessment of the required activities and inputs has been determined.

Specification of the Verifiable Indicators, Means of Verification and Assumptions can also require you to reassess or redefine your logical hierarchy. If you find you can't measure your outputs or purpose (as currently defined) and thus could not know whether you have reached it, you must re-assess its definition and try to be more precise.

1.11 Timing

The Logical Framework Approach can be used from the early stages of planning. The full Project Framework (i.e. the matrix) is not usually constructed however until a strategy and preferred design option has been determined. Once you have a sound logical framework, further documentation of the project proposal is given structure and content. It is not appropriate to write up the project and then try and squeeze it into a Project Framework for the sake of complying with project design requirements. The Project Framework is a tool for analysing and testing the logic of the proposed investment and should be used in a dynamic way.

The Project Framework also provides a management information framework for project implementers, particularly when combined with linked activity, input and cost scheduling. It can therefore be used throughout the project cycle as a management tool and provides the framework within which both monitoring, review and evaluation activities can be further designed and developed.

1.12 Approach

The logframe should be developed using a team approach. As with all planning and management tasks, consultation with your colleagues and other stakeholders makes your decision making more relevant and productive. The content and quality of your plan depends

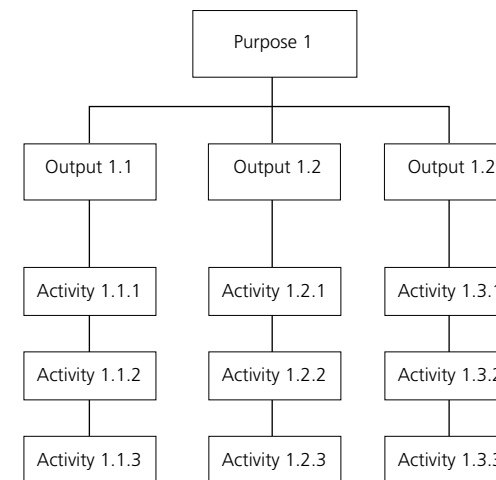
on the inputs of all groups and individuals who will be responsible for managing and participating in project implementation. Consultation reduces confrontation and increases efficiency.

One person, or group of people, must nevertheless be responsible for compiling the draft plan and its associated documentation in a technically sound way. Consultants may be used to assist with this work (in both public and private sectors) due to resource and time constraints within the client group. It is nevertheless essential that implementers participate in this planning process. Understanding logframe principles can greatly assist in this task.

1.13 Referencing

When detailing the project description it is useful to provide reference numbers for each objective, output and activity. This allows the link between each level of the hierarchy to be clearly determined by the reader. It also allows for easy reference between the matrix itself and the activity and cost schedules when they are prepared.

An example is shown below in a flow chart format.



1.14 Planning a process

Many projects focusing on rural or institutional development issues are 'process' as much as 'product' orientated. It is sometimes argued that these processes cannot be planned for using such structured planning techniques, and that the Project Framework cannot adequately account for them. With a little thought and ingenuity, however, it is possible (and indeed necessary) to include them in the framework analysis. An example of how the output and activities expected through project support to a development process might be described is shown below:-

Planning a process

Output

1. Village Development Committees will have been established with a capacity to independently manage and monitor their projects and finances.

Activities

- 1.1 Meet with VDCs to explain purpose and methodology of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and determine ability & commitment to participate. Set timing to undertake PRA.
- 1.2 Conduct basic training in village level planning for participants.
- 1.3 Conduct general PRA to involve villagers in analysing resources, development constraints, needs and priority projects.
- 1.4 Review findings with VDCs and continue more detailed project planning
- 1.5 Assess labour and financial requirements for project implementation, & determine respective contributions and responsibilities.
- 1.6 Provide training to VDC members on basic project management skills and book keeping
- 1.7 Provide training to Extension Volunteers (EVs) and ongoing field level support

- 1.8 Commence project implementation
- 1.9 Conduct ongoing reviews of VDC meetings, financial management and book-keeping
- 1.10 Provide management advice and support to VDCs as requested

The major difficulty is usually in estimating the time it will take to complete each activity when work scheduling. Flexibility must therefore be incorporated into the design and allowed for during implementation to ensure that the process is not forced.

Determining indicators and means of verification for these processes is also always possible (through not necessarily easy). One must after all, have some means of determining whether or not you have achieved (or are achieving) your objectives if the task is to be effectively managed.

1.15 Example

An example of a project framework summary for a community forestry project is shown on the following page. Activities are not included.

Project Description	Key indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions/Risks
<p>Goal To increase wood supply and farmer incomes, & to help arrest the process of soil degradation in the project area</p> <p>Component Objective 1 To establish sustainable community based forest management practices among members of the Ben Da Farmers Association (BFA)</p> <p>Outputs 1.1 Land distribution completed for garden forest & woodlots for 1,600 families 1.2 40 village extension workers identified, trained & resourced 1.3 Farmer field days conducted, supported by appropriate extension & awareness materials 1.4 Management skills & systems within BFA strengthened</p>	<p>-Volume of wood harvested -Family income from tree products -Soil structure & fertility</p> <p>-No. of 'active' BFA members -% of farmers 're-adopting' recommended practices in subsequent years & their understanding of key husbandry/management practices</p> <p>-Area distributed & no. of beneficiaries -No. of VEWs trained, average no. of days training conducted & VEW kits distributed -No. of farmer field days conducted, topics, location & attendance -Frequency and quality of activity and expenditure reports produced</p>	<p>-Annual sample survey of farmers conducted by DFOs -Soil sample survey in years 1 & 4 by FRI</p> <p>-Association membership & meeting attendance records kept by BFA -Annual sample survey of farmers conducted by DFOs</p> <p>-Land register kept by District People's Committee -VEW training register kept by DFOs & Forestry Adviser, reported quarterly. Kit procurement records -Field day records kept by VEWs and reported quarterly -BFA management records & accounts analysed quarterly & assessed against established quality criteria</p>	<p>Market liberalisation policies are maintained Market prices for commercial tree products exceed production costs</p> <p>At least 40 farmers are willing & able to become VEWs District People's Committee provides payment in rice for VEWs working with the project, and these farmers continue to work with the project after training</p>
<p>Component Objective 2 To expand, diversify and improve the tree planting and forest management program in the project area</p> <p>Outputs 2.1 4 nurseries & input supply stores established 2.2 Garden forest established for 1,600 families 2.3 Farmer woodlots established for 400 families 2.4 Protection/economic forest established in selected areas of 'bare' hills for community use 2.5 Agroforestry species trials established</p>	<p>-Ha. planted by species, survival rates, growth rates -% of targeted farmers adopting recommended practices</p> <p>-No. of nurseries established, stock & distrib records -Ha. planted by species & no. of families -Ha. planted by species & no. of families -Ha. planted -No. of trials by species & location</p>	<p>-Annual sample survey of farmers conducted by DFOs & Forestry Adviser</p> <p>-Nursery inventory & distribution records kept by nursery & input supply managers, reported quarterly -VEW field journal planting records, reported quarterly -FRI trial reports kept by field officer, annually</p>	<p>Farmers find the trees and technology on offer relevant to their needs & have the time & resources to participate</p> <p>Farmers are able to transport seedlings from the central nurseries to their gardens An adequate supply of quality seeds can be obtained</p>
<p>Component Objective 3 To strengthen the technical and extension skills of the district forestry service officers working with farmers in the project area</p> <p>Outputs 3.1 DFOs trained in new extension methods & technical skills 3.2 DFOs trained in project management, monitoring & reporting skills</p>	<p>-Client satisfaction with the knowledge & approach of DFOs in the project area</p> <p>-No. of days training conducted per DFO by topic</p>	<p>-Annual sample survey of farmers conducted by BFA (Forestry Adviser)</p> <p>-DFO training records kept by Forestry Adviser & reported quarterly</p>	<p>The District Forestry Service does not prematurely transfer trained officers from the project area DFO continues to actively support project objectives</p> <p>The DFS maintains its commitment to a new approach to extension based on a partnership with farmers Management reporting systems are accepted as relevant & useful by DFOs</p>

Annex 2. CONTENTS

1. Participation in Planning and Management	145
1.1 Introduction	145
1.2 Objectives of participatory approaches	145
1.3 Principles	146
1.4 Approach	146
1.5 Identifying and targeting participants	147
1.6 Intensity of participation	147
1.7 Agents of change	148
1.8 Promoting participation in implementation and management	150
1.9 Training in participatory approaches and methods	153
1.10 Constraints to participation	153
2. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)	154
2.1 Diverse origins	154
2.2 Basic assumptions to PRA	155
2.3 Benefits and weaknesses	155
2.4 PRA Methods	155
2.5 Stages in preparing and conducting PRA	160

Annex 2. PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

1. PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

1.1 Introduction

The first part of this annex provides an overview of what we mean by participation and how participation can be fostered in the process of project planning and management. The second part focuses on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

1.2 Objectives of participatory approaches

1.2.1 Empowerment

Empowerment should be the main objective of popular participation i.e. bringing about a more equitable sharing of power, increasing the political awareness of disadvantaged groups, and supporting them in taking actions that will allow them to take more control of their own futures.

There are both political and economic aspects of empowerment. While there is a strong correlation between economic power and political influence, focusing only on increasing production or incomes among disadvantaged groups will not change the status quo. Poor people who are struggling to provide basic needs are often without adequate representative structures, lack confidence in dealing with other more powerful groups, have limited education and access to relevant information, and are sometimes fatalistic about the quality of their lives ever improving.

There are two dimensions of power - **distributive** and **generative**. Distributive power refers to the balance of power between different groups and is likely to generate some conflict (winners and losers), while generative

power refers to the capacity for individuals and groups to increase their power and influence without directly usurping another group's position (resulting in less scope for conflict).

1.2.2 Capacity building

People learn best by doing things for themselves. If people are assisted to plan and manage their own affairs the outcomes are more likely to meet their real (or at least perceived) needs. Building capacity within local agencies and groups is thus an important objective of participatory approaches.

Capacity building is also important because it is a precondition for the sustainability of development initiatives.

1.2.3 Effectiveness

Participation can be a vehicle for increasing the effectiveness of development projects or programs. If people have a genuine stake in a development activity and are actively involved in decision making, they are likely to give a greater degree of commitment, and shared objectives are more likely to be met.

For example, (i) the participation of the relevant planning and budgeting officers in annual plan preparation will help ensure the timely preparation of budgets and subsequent release of funds; (ii) the maintenance of a lift irrigation scheme will be handled more effectively if local people have established a water user and maintenance committee which is funded from user fees and can respond immediately to maintenance needs, and (iii) a program to increase vaccination coverage of children under five is likely to be more effective if local women have participated in planning the location and regularity of rural clinics and the preparation of an education and awareness program.

1.2.4 Efficiency

While effectiveness is about the degree to which stated objectives are met (using whatever means and inputs that might be required), efficiency incorporates the additional consideration of cost. If project activities can be undertaken in a more timely manner through a participatory approach, it will contribute to the improved efficiency of operations. Farmers who have participated in project planning, for example, and thereby understand the need to undertake new husbandry operations at specific times of the cropping cycle, are likely to reap the full benefits of improved technologies more quickly. Similarly, farmer group participation in establishing a program of training and visit field days may decrease the cost per participant by helping to ensure adequate attendance. If participation reduces delays in the delivery of services, it will contribute to improving efficiency.

1.2.5 Cost sharing

Another objective of participation may be cost sharing between the stakeholders in the project. This may be in cash or kind. Cost sharing can be mutually supportive of other participation objectives. Cost sharing requires the establishment of a participatory planning and management arrangements and clearly defined roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. It in turn encourages commitment to achieving project objectives (effectiveness) and to their ongoing maintenance (sustainability).

1.3 Principles

The following dot points highlight key principles of participatory approaches.

- Involving people as subjects not objects
- Respect for local knowledge and skills
- Ensuring influence over development decisions, not simply involvement
- A learning process as much as an outcome

- An approach and attitude rather than a specific set of technical skills
- A fundamental building block rather than a discreet element of planning

1.4 Approach

Participatory approaches emphasise behavioural principles. These include:

- reversing the traditional roles of outside 'experts' (a reversal of learning - from extracting to empowering);
- facilitating local people to undertake their own analysis (handing over the stick);
- self-critical awareness by facilitators; and
- the sharing of ideas and information.

Participatory techniques are not just tools. The participatory approach is a state of mind, an attitude. It is about having a genuine concern and respect for the values, skills and needs of others, particularly those who are least advantaged.

Those involved in designing or implementing a participatory approach should also recognise that there is no set development model. Personal experience and technical skills must be applied, but should always be set in the context of the specific socio-economic situation that one is working within. Participatory processes should be developed in an iterative and incremental manner. Participation requires 'learning by doing' and making appropriate adjustments as knowledge is gained, skills developed and capacities strengthened among the participants.

An important practical point to keep in mind is that there must be a balance between **process** and **product**. While participation is largely about process, unless there is a tangible product (improvement in living conditions/well-being) resulting from the process, it will be much more difficult to sustain community interest and motivation. The community must see some tangible benefit if it is to participate.

1.5 Identifying and targeting participants

1.5.1 'The community'

In the context of development, the issue of participation is generally focused on 'the community' but there will be significant differences of interest and opportunity within any targeted community. This is generally recognised and most interventions are actually targeted at particular types of people or defined groups within communities.

At the initial project appraisal stage of a project NGOs are faced with the question: *Who should participate?* This is related to determining development constraints and options and to addressing problems of inequality and equity. Once a project is up and running the question will become: *Who is in fact participating (and benefiting)?*

This differentiation can be approached in many ways, including on the basis of:

- wealth (small scale/large scale farmer)
- livelihood (e.g. agriculturalist/pastoralist, farmer/trader)
- property (e.g. landowning/landless, stockowning/stockless)
- employer (e.g. government/non-government worker, employed/unemployed)
- gender (women/men, boys/girls)
- age (including the elderly and children)
- medical status (sick, infirm, HIV positive)
- class, religion, tribe, clan or ethnicity (e.g. only church members participate; indigenous people don't participate)
- politics (e.g. ruling party members have preference)
- nationality or origin (e.g. do refugees or displaced people participate?)
- location (lowland/highland, rural/urban dwellers)

One of the purposes of developing a community management approach is to strengthen the mechanisms by which **conflicts** between different groups can be more effectively dealt with and resolved in the common interest (negotiating for a 'win-win' outcome). Thus when planning or implementing participatory approaches it is important to remember that it is not only the poor or underprivileged who may need to be included as participants, even if they are the main target group. (More discussion about stakeholders and agents of change is provided below.)

1.5.2 Community organisations and government

Although interventions are normally aimed at individuals and groups the participation of community organisations in the project will usually be very relevant.

- Are local churches, cooperatives, associations etc involved officially or unofficially? Are there notable community organisations that are not involved. Why not?
- Are any government ministries/agencies or local government authorities involved (e.g. Ministry of Health, environment agency, village councils)? Are there relevant ones that are not involved? Why not? There may be good reasons but it is worth knowing what they are.

1.6 Intensity of participation

Participation may take on various forms, and occur in varying intensities depending on the nature of the activity and the roles and responsibilities of the people and groups involved. Community members or groups may simply be required to contribute labour or some cash inputs, or be represented on a management committee, or take on full management and decision making responsibilities and authority. The nature, scale

and scope of the project will influence the level of participation that is practical and possible, as will a realistic assessment of skills and capacity among participating communities and groups. Building such capacity is often a specific objective of participatory approaches.

Four levels of intensity might be distinguished (they are not mutually exclusive):

- **Information sharing.** Do people and organisations at least understand what is happening and why? What information is provided, in what form, how often? Have the literacy and education levels of the audience been given due consideration?
- **Consultation.** Is there a dialogue? Between whom? Whose views and opinions are sought and how are they dealt with? Does the dialogue have any impact on management decisions?
- **Decision making.** Participation reaches a higher level when it involves individuals or groups (particularly those who are usually excluded) in actually making decisions. Who has the authority to make decisions within the project and who doesn't? How is authority structured? (e.g. authority may be vested in a village water-users committee or through the water users committee representation on a project management committee). Is decision making responsibility linked to the control of resource allocation (the responsibility may not be meaningful if it isn't)? Who is responsible for financial management (this will often determine where real decision making responsibilities lie)?
- **Initiating action.** The highest level of participation is achieved when people, especially disadvantaged people, take it on themselves to initiate action. To do so indicates a significant level of self-confidence and empowerment and the establishment of some organisational and management capacity. Is anything like this happening?

1.7 Agents of change

1.7.1 Individuals

Individuals are the basic unit on which participation is ultimately based. Personal contact and the building of trust among individuals is key to effective participation. This requires that there be adequate time spent in direct contact with and between people working on the project. Occasional, intermittent and unstructured contact is unlikely to be adequate. This applies particularly to field work (e.g. contact with farmers, women, local businessmen, village leaders) but also to developing a participatory approach with government officials and other institutional stakeholders.

In this respect field workers working full-time in the target area can be an essential instrument for building an effective participatory approach with community members. This is often a difficult and demanding task, and the people undertaking this work need to be appropriately skilled and resourced.

1.7.2 Community-based organisations

Given that community based organisations (CBOs) draw their membership from the local community, and could not by definition exist without some support from that quarter, they can be extremely useful and effective partners in the planning and implementation of development activities, particularly when a participatory approach is desired.

New groups need to be formed to support specific project activities and objectives. Where this is required, the process should be slow, steady and adequately resourced.

1.7.3 Government

Government agencies are usually key participants in rural development initiatives given the authority and resources they command. Governments take on many forms, however, and the issue of 'good governance' is increasingly recognised as a key factor in determining their contribution to development objectives. Government policy, structure and practices may indeed be a significant cause of development problems, particularly when they act as agents of existing powerful groups to help maintain the status quo and protect vested interests. In such cases government agencies may actively thwart the effective participation of disadvantaged and marginal groups.

Nevertheless there are many instances of government agencies playing an important role in promoting participation. Projects may also be designed to help develop this capacity. Various forms of local Government or village councils may provide a democratic and effective forum for allowing community members to participate in development activities. This is particularly so when political powers and financial management authority are devolved. Where there is a supportive national Government policy framework, central government agencies may also play a constructive role in facilitating participatory approaches.

Examples of policy areas that may impact on the design and implementation of participatory approaches would include the government's position on such issues as:

- decentralised political and decision making structures
- the role of the private sector and market mechanisms
- resource ownership (land, timber, minerals) and rights to revenue from their exploitation
- foreign investment and work permits
- rural credit provision
- the role of non-government organisations
- environmental protection

Policy itself, and the power to implement or enforce adherence to it, are two different matters however. There may be cases, therefore, where policy statements may be misleading in terms of their influence over what is actually happening on the ground. The issue for project planners and managers is to be cognisant of the policy framework, both rhetoric and reality, and to plan and manage participatory approaches which take this framework into account.

Where the legal system is seen to be independent from the legislative and executive arms of government and is accessible to less advantaged rural people, the objective of empowering local people to claim their legal rights, and participate in decision making, is likely to be greatly facilitated. This is particularly so in the context of large resource development projects (mines, hydro-schemes, timber) where local residents are often disadvantaged if they cannot gain fair and equal access to legal representation through which to argue their case and interests. The legal aspects of resource ownership are critical in this regard (e.g. land rights).



"Well, if you must know, we're setting up an on-line open-access socio-economic land use central database... Any objections?"

source unknown

1.7.4 Private sector

Traders and commercial companies may be key stakeholders in rural development activities. They must therefore be considered when designing and implementing participatory approaches. As development agencies and governments around the world have moved towards more market friendly approaches to economic and social development, so the role of the private sector has grown in importance within the design of sustainable development strategies. The private sector is increasingly seen as a potential partner in development, with the ability to provide capital, technical and management expertise and innovative solutions to local problems. Government maintains its influence by providing a clear and enforceable regulatory framework to protect public interests.

1.8 Promoting participation in implementation and management

1.8.1 Management structures

Decentralisation of power and decision making authority is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for building community management capacity. It is also essential that the local political structures and administrative units are accountable and capable of responsive decision making. The same top-down and authoritarian approaches may be found equally at local, provincial or national levels. Passing this control down the line does not necessarily provide the required community involvement and local accountability.

Providing effective support to community management also requires moving away from traditional bureaucratic structures. Many government agencies thus find it particularly difficult to come to terms with and adopt 'real' participatory approaches. Addressing this constraint requires that systematic and long-term attention is given to re-orienting

government agencies to become more flexible and focused on supporting the needs of local resource management groups.

Questions to consider in assessing what has been done to build community management capacity include:

- What attention has been given to supporting community/target group management?
- Was community/target group management built on existing community structures? Where these reasonably accountable and representative to start with?
- Were communities/target groups given not only implementation responsibilities but decision making authority as well?
- Was anything done to build the financial management skills of the community/targeted groups?
- Was account taken of the community's legal rights over their resources?
- Were negotiation strategies and skills developed (bearing in mind that conflict may be associated with changing power structures)?
- What has been done to build accountability and transparency (some formality may have to be introduced to community decision making procedures)?
- Has anything been done to integrate and re-orient local government and administrative structures to work with community/target groups?

While management structures are important, personal behaviour also has significant impact on the degree to which management is participatory.

1.8.2 Financing arrangements

Management responsibility without some financial authority significantly weakens the hand of managers. In designing and supporting participatory management approaches the structure of financial management arrangements must be given careful consideration. Who controls the purse strings? What are the funding mechanisms? Effective decision making authority usually rests with whomever has effective control of project funds.

In this respect, building sustainable community management capacity must go hand in hand with developing revenue raising and financial management skills within targeted groups/agencies. While virtually all of us (individuals, groups or nations) are dependent in some degree or other on sources of outside finance, and must usually meet externally determined conditions on the use of those monies, our bargaining power is always strengthened when we can contribute our own equity.

When designing funding mechanisms that help support participatory approaches, consider the following:

- **Flexibility.** Funding mechanisms must allow for the fact that participatory approaches may take more time than traditional top-down approaches. Community groups must be allowed to identify and agree on their own needs and come to a consensus, and this may require protracted internal discussions. Narrowly defined time-lines and funding criteria may serve to limit full participation when these are pre-determined and enforced from outside.
- **Simplicity.** Complicated funding mechanisms, project selection criteria and financial reporting requirements are likely to make community participation more difficult given skill and capacity constraints. Accountability remains important, but this should be provided for without unnecessary complexity. Some compromises may need to be made as capacity is being built.

- **Scale.** Disbursing and managing large numbers of small financial allocations is costly. The result is that larger projects are generally favoured by funding agencies. This tendency mitigates, however, against community based projects, as their capacity to absorb and manage larger financial allocations will usually be limited.
- **Transparency.** Knowing what financial resources are available and when, and how they are managed is important in developing trust among participants. Transparency in financial management arrangements supports participation in both planning and management. If the community has access to information on what money is available and how it has been spent, they are also more likely to contribute their own resources and be more understanding if and when funding delays arise.
- **Capacity building and sustainability.** Participation should be geared towards the development of sustainable management systems so that communities or local agencies can maintain benefits when external support ends. This requires a process approach and generally takes time. Appropriate training should be incorporated in design, and sustained field level support provided to develop the required skills and capacity.

1.8.3 Staffing

Participatory approaches depend significantly on having the right people in the right place with appropriate support. Staffing arrangements therefore play an important part in the successful implementation of participatory community development initiatives. Key issues include:-

- **Location.** Adequate staff must be located in rural areas to allow easy access to and frequent contact with community members.
- **Responsibilities and authority.** Staff working in rural areas need to have adequate authority to make decisions and take appropriate action as circumstances demand. Their skills and knowledge must be valued by their 'superiors', just as community development workers must value and respect the knowledge and skills of village people. Re-structuring (or debureaucratising) certain agencies may be an essential pre-requisite to developing a capacity to work in a more participatory manner.
- **Skills and approach.** Supporting participatory approaches may require that staff develop new skills. Many government agency workers have traditionally seen their role as implementing top down pre-determined programs or projects. This has generally focused on instructing people what to do and delivering a set package of services to people who it is assumed need and want whatever is being provided. This is not a participatory approach.
- **Personality types - selection criteria.** Not everyone is suited to using participatory approaches, either because of temperament or because of professional biases which cause them to place little value on what they consider unscientific and subjective approaches. This may be overcome by education and training, but not always. Selecting appropriate people to undertake participatory field work is therefore important.

- **Resources.** Adequate operational resources are required to allow field staff to travel, organise and conduct meetings, train, resource and motivate community participants. Such resources must also be provided in a timely manner and in such a way as to allow some flexibility in their use. Rigid and time consuming requisitioning, approval, procurement and delivery systems can seriously compromise the ability of field workers to effectively respond to client needs.
- **Incentives.** Rural development work at village level is often accorded little status, is poorly paid and offers limited opportunities for training or promotion. The poorest and most remote areas may indeed be used as 'punishment' posts for staff who do not perform or conform. Poor housing and other essential services (power, water, health and education) compound the problems that rural staff face. This is a difficult problem to tackle, but can be addressed by improving incentives to rural staff - better pay or allowances, training opportunities, improved housing and motivational management support can all help to make rural staff more committed and effective.

1.8.4 Information

Knowledge brings power and ignorance helps perpetuate isolation and weakness. The process of empowerment (often an explicit objective of participatory approaches) thus requires that appropriate and timely information is available to targeted individuals and groups. Issues to be kept in mind include:-

- **What information?** Selectivity. Optimal ignorance. Who determines information requirements. Minimum information systems.
- **Sources and collection methods.** Getting rural people involved. Appropriate imprecision. PRA techniques.

- **Method of dissemination.** Use of visual techniques (Maps, diagrams, charts, film, photographs) and radio are often more effective than the written word in rural areas.
- **Feedback.** Making sure that information is not simply 'extracted' and used solely by outsiders in their decision making. Ensuring there is opportunity for discussion and analysis within the community.
- **Ownership and access.** Information provided by the community should be owned by the community. There is an important issue of trust, as some information may be personal and sensitive. If outsiders wish to use such information for other purposes, or disseminate it to other outsiders, permission should be sought and given before such action is taken.

1.9 Training in participatory approaches and methods

A focused program of both formal and informal training may be required to develop participatory skills and local resource management capacity. Issues to be considered and addressed in designing and implementing appropriate training activities include:

- **Selection of participants.** Who needs training - outsiders or villagers? Which mix of participants should be included (e.g. socio-economic status, rank within organisation, geographic location)?
- **Needs analysis.** What are the task related skill gaps and training needs? To what extent is behavioural training required in addition to specific technical skills. The design of training activities should itself be carried out with the involvement of the target group.

- **Program design.** What range of topics should be included, how many participants/trainees should be involved, what should the duration of the training be, and where should training take place? What degree of formality or informality is desired and required?
- **Participatory training methods.** Training may be conducted using a number of different methods or approaches. Participatory methods emphasise (i) learning by doing, (ii) the use of visual learning aids and techniques, (iii) incorporating the knowledge and skills of participants, (iv) group work, games and role plays, and (v) the trainer as facilitator not lecturer.
- **Trainer selection/skills.** Designing and implementing participatory training programs requires having trainers with both personal and technical skills and experience. The best planned participatory events can be seriously de-railed with the wrong trainer/facilitator at the helm.
- **Evaluation.** Various groups may be involved in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of training, namely (i) those who have received the training, (ii) those who are responsible for managing and supervising trainees in their subsequent work, and (iii) the recipients of services provided by those who have been trained. Ideally, an evaluation of training should be carried out some time after the training has actually been completed.

1.10 Constraints to participation

The following dot points outline some of the main constraints that may be faced in developing and implementing participatory approaches to community resource planning and management.

Bureaucracy

- Rigidity and time-consuming nature of approval procedures
- Remoteness of decision making authority from the field
- Hierarchical top-down structures of authority
- Lack of scope for individuals taking initiative and applying experimental approaches

Professionalism

- Professional integrity often seen to be based on quantitative (statistical) analysis
- Professional advancement often has urban (high-culture) bias
- Peer-group pressure to excel in technical fields at expense of 'soft' issues, and to focus on product rather than process
- Continued low status accorded to views and opinions of rural poor in many professional fields

Politics

- The selfish gene - the primacy of narrow self-interest as against that of the wider group
- Distributional dimension of power - the losers will fight against empowerment of disadvantaged groups
- Short-termism (a day is a long time in politics)

2. PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL (PRA)

2.1 Diverse origins

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) describes an overall approach and incorporates the use of several tools.¹ PRA has its roots in a research approach developed in the 1970s which was concerned with refocusing attention on enabling people and communities to undertake development for themselves. This points to a radical, political agenda. However the label 'PRA' points to the direct connection with a field work methodology, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) developed at the end of the 1970s, which relies heavily on accessing local knowledge. As used by NGOs RRA describes techniques adopted from agricultural research to gather timely, useful information, often in an emergency setting. This points to a practical 'extractive' intent. These two elements, the development intent on the one hand and information gathering on the other, don't sit very easily together and it has left some confusion about what deserves the label PRA.

PRA stresses the participative side and the role of the NGO as a facilitator. Taken to its fullest an NGO adopting PRA would be solely concerned with enabling people to initiate and manage their own development (and to conduct monitoring and evaluation for themselves). However the reality is that monitoring and evaluation is usually driven by external management needs and NGOs set the monitoring and evaluation agenda, even if participation is built into the approach.

In any case NGO representatives turning up in small communities are typically treated with great deference and have considerable influence, while having a very incomplete understanding of the community concerned and limited field work skills. It is impossible under these circumstances, other than perhaps after a long period of association and learning, to act as a development facilitator.

But even if we may rarely, if ever, participate in pure PRA, opportunities can be seized in monitoring and evaluation for more participative, empowering work. Moreover participatory approaches are effective in generating qualitative information and the exchange can have a beneficial impact on our understanding of each other. On the other hand, we should remain self-critical when using participatory techniques and not pretend that we are doing more than we are in terms of empowerment

2.2 Basic assumptions to PRA

- that village people know a great deal and their knowledge can drive innovations
- that popular participation in planning is fundamental
- that working with the strengths in local systems is vital to success
- that if villagers cannot manage or control development it will not be sustainable

2.3 Benefits and weaknesses

The participatory approach can be good fun for the NGO researcher. Participatory techniques also tend to be satisfying for participants and they can reduce apprehension and increase confidence in their role.

Moreover, the staff of partner agencies tend to become interested in the approach when they are involved in its application. This positive view of PRA can lead partner agency staff to learn more about such techniques, becoming more competent in monitoring and evaluation. It also tends to lead to a greater respect for people as it becomes evident how much they know when they are given the opportunity to express themselves.

The weaknesses of PRA have been described as follows:

- The results apply to the communities visited and do not allow you to make generalisations about the whole population
- It is difficult for people outside the team to verify the results because statistical methods are not used
- Direct observation limits you to what you see before you
- If not done systematically, the results may be impressionistic
- The results may not carry the same weight with decision makers as quantitative data

2.4 PRA Methods

There are a wide range of methods or tools which make up PRA. There is no blueprint. Participation, by its very nature, generates diversity and encourages people (both insiders and outsiders) to develop new methods with which to collect, analyse, and present information and decide what action to take.

A sample of PRA methods which can be used to support the active involvement of the community in planning, review and evaluation is presented below. These do not include non-participatory, but complementary, methods such as reviewing secondary information sources and conducting simple questionnaire based surveys. The majority of the tools focus on (though not exclusively):- (i) the use of visual rather than verbal analytical and presentational techniques, (ii) seeking and promoting the view and opinion of the group rather than the individual, and on (ii) comparing rather than counting.

Whoever they are or wherever they come from, people are most easily engaged *visually*. Visual presentation should therefore be regarded as an indispensable tool in any participatory learning process.

¹ See for example *Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*, Robert Chambers, 1992; *PLA Notes: Notes on Participatory Learning and Action*, published monthly by IIED in London (International Institute for Environment and Development)

Experience indicates that using a number of methods or tools together and in sequence is often likely to increase the intensity of participation and the veracity of the outcome. The principle of 'triangulation', the collection of information from different sources and using different methods, is also an essential feature of effective PRA.

The brief discussion of PRA methods that follows should be complemented by reference to Chapter 5, Project Site Visit, and further reading. There are a number of texts that deal in depth with PRA, some of which are mentioned in the bibliography. A good resource for practitioners is the monthly **PLA Notes** (Notes on Participatory Learning and Action) published by the International Institute for Environment and Development in London.

2.4.1 Participatory mapping and modelling

Maps or site plans are a useful starting point in field work. They:

- give you and your colleagues a better feel for the area
- get the community members' perspectives on the area
- provide information and ideas for further field work.

You could ask people to make a map or plan using pencil and paper but rural people are generally far more comfortable depicting an area by making a model of it on the ground using whatever materials are available. Based on this approach people can construct a model of their village on the ground, utilising sticks, rocks, etc. The use of rangelands can similarly be described by pastoralists, and so on.

The area modeled or mapped can be very small (a market garden) or very large (marketing networks).

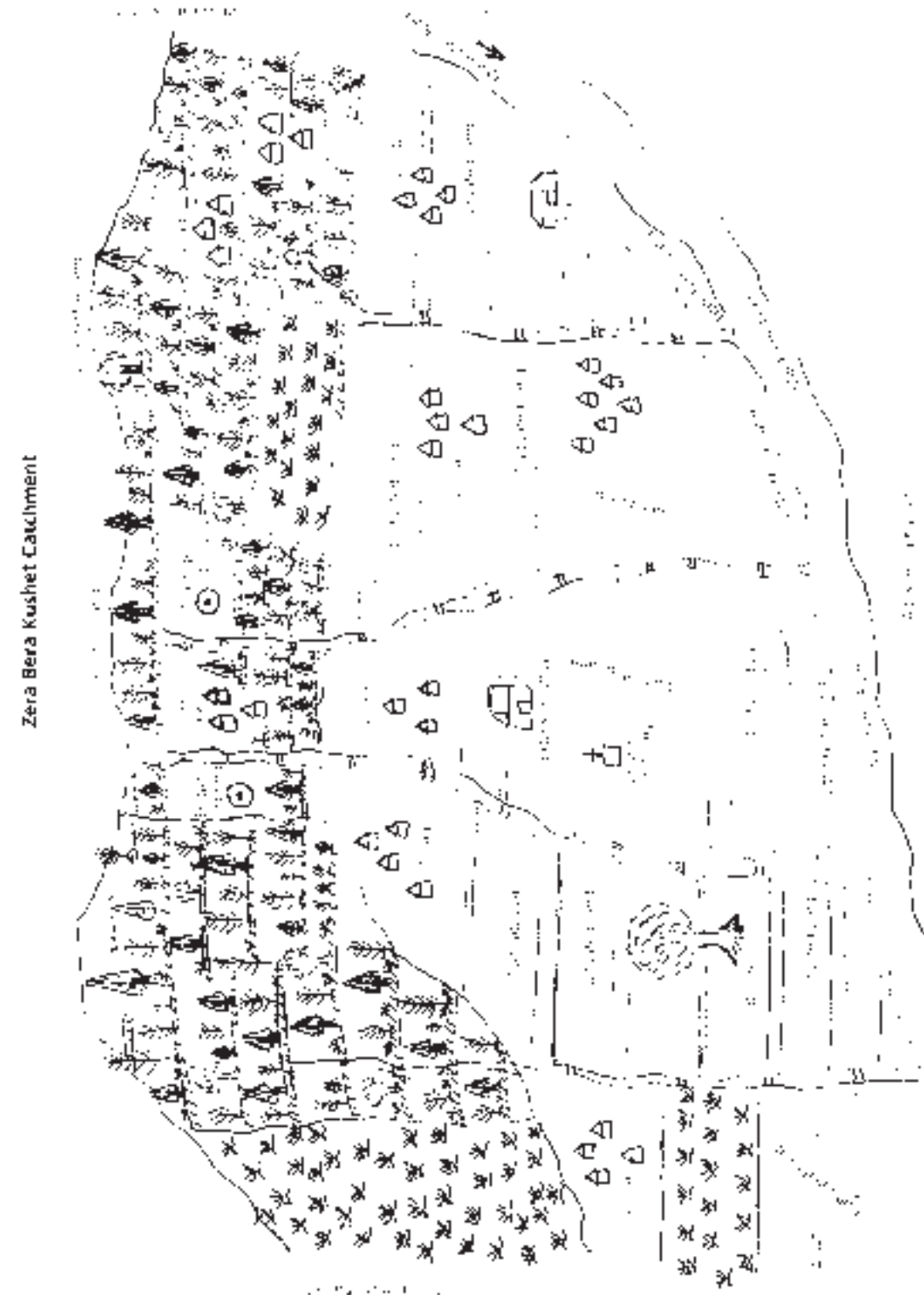
Modeling has the benefit of lending itself to greater participation. People get involved and become absorbed in the task, provided nobody is allowed to dominate. You will need to ask your colleagues to organise a cross-section of people from the community for this exercise. (Specify a time when people are free from important tasks.) In some cases there will be value in having different groups make their own maps or models e.g. men separately from women, agriculturalists separately from pastoralists.

The request to make a model may initially leave people puzzled but in practice the exercise takes off quickly. Don't be too suggestive about what people should record - leave people to record what is most significant to them and ask for more detail if something you are interested in is missing.

The completed model provides a great source of questions. You can use it to explore the relative wealth of the households depicted and as the basis for a random selection for semi-structured interviews.

Don't conduct the discussion solely by direct translation between yourself and community members because this will usually slow down the process and take the initiative away from your colleagues. You can ask them to pursue points and set up further exercises from an agreed checklist, and report back to you when the meeting has dispersed.

The map opposite was copied from a model made on the ground by a group of men and women in Tigray. It depicts their hillside village, four gullies caused by erosion and their reforestation efforts.



2.4.2 Transect walks

Transect walks simply take you through the project area or its environment along a set line between chosen points e.g. starting at a river bank and progressing up through the different land use zones to the highland, or from a well to the most outlying households etc. You should be accompanied by an informant who knows the area well. In some cases it is useful to be accompanied by a small group e.g. of farmers.

Information is gathered by direct observation, by questioning those accompanying you and by impromptu interviews with people you encounter along the way. You should stop periodically and instigate discussion about features encountered e.g. protected springs, urban sanitation problems, etc.

It is advisable to discuss the encounter interviews beforehand with your 'guide' and ask him or her to initiate discussion with people met on the way and cover a few agreed points before bringing you into the discussion.

As you go, draw a diagram depicting the different zones, resources, buildings, services etc and anything else of note e.g. evident problems such as erosion, distances women travel to collect water or the quality of housing in an urban area. Also note the positive e.g. a thriving cattle market, a large number of bicycles or a grinding mill run by a women's cooperative.

2.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are almost always the most important tool used in this kind of work. Details are provided in the main body of the Guide in Chapter 3. Some practical tips are provided below, adapted from a PRA training manual by Theis and Grady:

- the interviewing team should consist of between two and four people of different disciplines
- begin with traditional greetings and state that the interview team is here to learn

- relax and don't appear to be pushing to finish the points on your checklist
- make sure the interviewee is comfortable (not standing with a baby under her arm)
- begin the questioning by referring to someone or something visible
- conduct the interview informally and mix the questions with discussion and humour
- be open-minded, interested and objective
- let each team member finish their line of questioning (do not interrupt)
- carefully lead up to sensitive questions (start with the easier ones)
- assign note taker rather than all struggle to get it down (but rotate)
- be aware of non-verbal signals
- avoid leading questions and value judgements
- in general, avoid questions that can be answered by 'yes' and 'no'
- individual interviews should not last longer than 45 minutes (unless a pastoralist is relating the geneology of his or her cow!)
- group interviews should not last longer than 2 hours

2.4.5 Key informants

Individuals with particular skills, knowledge or roles within the community are identified and selected with the agreement of the community to help inform an outsider about what is happening inside the community and why. Such individuals can also play the reverse role of keeping the community informed about 'outside' activities based on information/news supplied by outsiders (e.g. extension staff or government agency planners).

2.4.6 Community members doing the analysis and presenting their results

This is about 'handing over the stick' and letting community members collect and analyse data (supported, as required, with some preliminary training and guidance) and then presenting their findings. This promotes ownership of the information gained and commitment to any decisions subsequently made on action required. It also builds confidence among village people in their own ability to address local problems.

2.4.7 Trend analysis

Identifying trends may be easier for people than trying to describe only the current situation, particularly if quantification is difficult. Comparison with previous seasons or years may help tell you whether things are getting better or worse, and thus help in determining whether intervention is warranted, and what type.

2.4.8 Seasonal diagramming

In rural areas, life is much more influenced by the seasons than in urban areas, particularly for those dependent on rain-fed farming systems. Labour availability, water supplies, disease incidence, food supply and income may all be significantly influenced by the time of year. Understanding these seasonal patterns may be critical to both identifying the real problems, and designing appropriate solutions. Various visual tools (e.g. bar charts and matrices) can be used to document and analyse seasonal impacts on village life.

2.4.9 Scoring and ranking

Groups of people can be encouraged to reveal their opinions in a participatory way by ranking exercises. This can allow them to score their preferences for such things as tree types for a community forestry project, or reveal which health problems they consider most serious in the village. This approach does not require asking for specific quantification (e.g. how many trees of which species would you like, or how many times were you ill with a specific ailment) which may provide unreliable and spurious data in a village setting.

2.4.10 Stories

Encouraging people to recount stories of what happened in certain situations can be a useful and entertaining way of gaining a better understanding of how people deal with issues or crises. Story telling is often an important part of village life with respect to communicating ideas and community values.

2.4.11 Do-it-yourself

Outsiders can break down traditional barriers between 'the expert' and 'the villager' and learn more about the reality of specific aspects of village life and work by working alongside people. Spending a few days planting a crop or processing and marketing dried fish can provide both insights (and data) which otherwise might be very difficult to either collect or accurately verify. If you are on a short visit, get up at dawn and go collecting firewood with women, assist a health worker in a clinic for a couple of hours or catch a bus with an urban worker into the city. Simple things are worth trying just to appreciate how hard they are, like carrying water or digging a field with a hoe.

2.4.12 Participatory planning and budgeting

This is a more proactive method in which you support people in the preparation of their own development plans and budgets. Simple formats can be prepared, and with appropriate training and support, the community can take on the task of framing their plans and making the required trade-offs associated with allocating limited financial (and other) resources between competing demands. If people have access to an office or another suitable building, help them to put project plans up on a wall for all to see and track.

2.5 Stages in preparing and conducting PRA

A PRA study should be planned as a workshop activity involving all team members. The workshop should:-

1. Clarify goals and objectives of the study
2. Choose main topics to be investigated
3. Prepare a list of sub-topics, indicators and key questions
4. Identify sources of information for each sub-topic
5. Select tools to gather and analyse information
6. Agree on how and when the analysis and presentation of findings will be carried out
7. Plan the detailed field logistics

The selection of appropriate methods should be based on an understanding of:-

- the level of participation the appraisal/review/evaluation needs to achieve
- the type and level of accuracy of information that is required
- the intended use of the findings
- who the primary agents of change are (and their skills and capacity to participate); and
- the institutional and policy framework.

Annex 3. CONTENTS

1. Learning	163
1.1 How we learn	163
1.2 What we remember	163
1.3 Adult learning	163
1.4 Being a learner	163
1.5 Adult learning problems	163
1.6 To encourage learning in adult trainees	164
1.7 The motivation to learn	164
2. The Trainer/Facilitator	164
2.1 What makes a good trainer	164
2.2 From manipulation to facilitation	164
2.3 The importance of feedback	165
3. Workshop Preparation	165
3.1 Basic preparations	165
3.2 Workshop purpose	166
3.3 Responsibilities of the facilitator	166
3.4 Training objectives	166
3.5 Knowing the participants	166
3.6 Timing and duration	167
3.7 Training venue, furniture and equipment	167
3.8 Seating arrangements	168
3.9 Detailed session plans	169
3.10 Training materials	170
Acknowledgment	170

Annex 3. LEARNING & WORKSHOPING

1. LEARNING

Learning is not usually an outcome of formal teaching. Instead it comes from a process of self development and through experience.

1.1 How we learn

- 1% through taste
- 2% through touch
- 3% through smell
- 11% through hearing
- 83% through sight

1.2 What we remember

- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 80% of what we say
- 90% of what we say and do

1.3 Adult learning

- Adults are voluntary learners. They perform best when they have decided to attend the training for a particular reason. They have a right to know why a topic or session is important to them.
- Adults have usually come with an intention to learn. If this motivation is not supported, however, they will switch off or stop coming.
- Adults have experience and can help each other to learn.
- Adults learn best in an atmosphere of active involvement and participation.
- Adults learn best when it is clear that the context of the training is close to their own tasks or jobs. Adults are best taught with a real-world approach.

1.4 Being a learner

People learn best if they:-

- are able to involve themselves fully, openly and without bias in new experiences: **concrete experience.**
- reflect and observe these experiences from many perspectives: **reflective observation.**
- create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories: **abstract conceptualisation.**
- use these theories to make decisions and solve problems. **active experimentation.**

All learning is best done through active involvement.

1.5 Adult learning problems

Adults have a problem with learning. As we grow older our short term memory faculty becomes less efficient and more easily disturbed. Any method that relies too much on short term memory, such as lectures or demonstrations, is unlikely to be successful.

- Without reinforcement many people forget vital parts of what they have learned after about 6 months.
- A well designed learning program continues to build on skills and knowledge learnt earlier. Without reinforcement the skills will fade.

1.6 To encourage learning in adult trainees

- Ensure that they feel necessary, involved or important. This gives them the motivation which is necessary for learning to take place.
- Communicate clearly what the training program will entail. They must be convinced that it will be relevant, and that specific skills learnt will fulfil needs.
- Ensure that there are plenty of practical exercises. As they are 'doing', self confidence increases and they are able to adapt what they are learning to their own circumstances.
- Respect and encourage individuality since people learn at different rates and have different styles.
- Continue to relate new material to information and skills which they already know.

1.7 The motivation to learn

There are many reasons why participants may not be motivated:

- They have been instructed to attend against their personal wishes
- they do not know why they are attending
- they are aware of work mounting up in their normal place of work, so their minds are elsewhere
- your teaching style is not sufficiently participatory to involve their knowledge, skills and insights
- they have been taught all this before, so they feel they already know it
- they harbour misconceptions about you or your organisation

2. THE TRAINER/FACILITATOR

2.1 What makes a good trainer

- a warm personality, with an ability to show approval and acceptance of trainees
- social skill, with an ability to bring the group together and control it without damaging it
- a manner of teaching which generates and uses the ideas and skills of the participants
- organising ability, so that resources are booked and logistical arrangements smoothly handled
- skill in noticing and resolving participants problems
- enthusiasm for the subject and capacity to put it across in an interesting way
- flexibility in responding to participants' changing needs
- knowledge of the subject matter

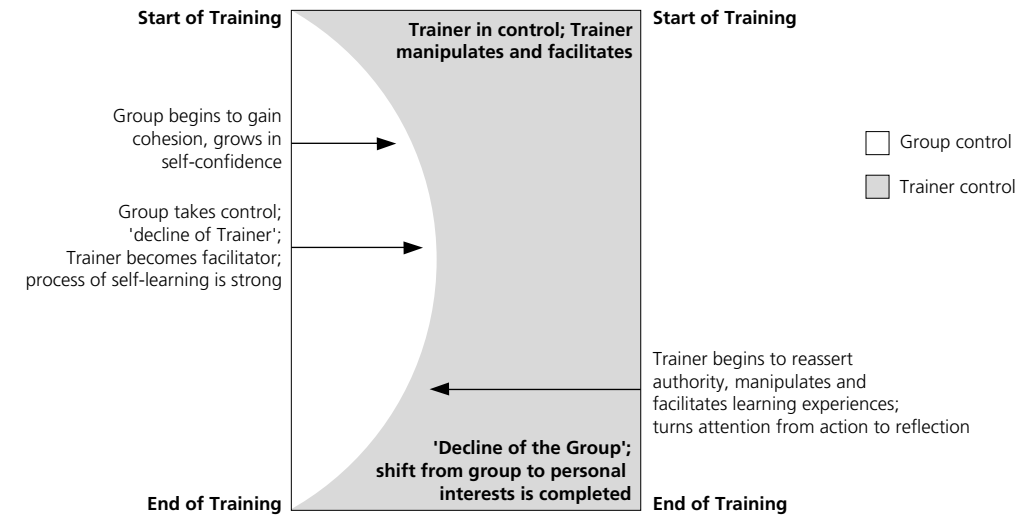
2.2 From manipulation to facilitation

There is a big difference between manipulation and facilitation. Manipulation is trainer centred. You are in charge and everyone knows it. You yourself rarely learn.

Facilitation is learner-centred. You are helping others to learn, and you will be learning too.

Ideally a training session should be a balance between trainer guidance and trainee participation. At the beginning and end of each workshop session the facilitator/trainer should usually be in control in order to first explain what is to be done and then to summarise the main outcomes and the end. The period in the middle should be participatory and learner centred.

Stages of Control in the Training Process



2.3 The importance of feedback

A good trainer/facilitator will always give constructive feedback to the trainees/workshop participants.

If people have gone to the trouble of attending a meeting and contributing they should be acknowledged and rewarded for their effort.

Similarly, if people have failed to understand the objectives or the content of the discussion the facilitator should correct or redirect the participants as soon as possible.

Failure to do so, could lead to the reinforcement of incorrect assumptions and information among the participants.

- In correcting or redirecting the attention of participants, the facilitator should always avoid direct criticism of the person or group.
- It may be necessary to conduct follow-up discussions if the issues cannot be resolved

3. WORKSHOP PREPARATION

The following section discusses the role of the trainer/facilitator and some ways to plan for your workshop.

3.1 Basic preparations

You need to be clear about your position and responsibilities early on in your preparations to prevent any inappropriate interpretation of your role as a trainer/facilitator.

Before you begin you must be clear about the objectives of your assignment:

- Why are you training/facilitating
- Who is your target group
- What is the primary content you are hoping to communicate

3.2 Workshop purpose

A workshop may have a number of different purposes, such as:-

- To change behaviour
- To persuade people
- To inform
- To stimulate thought
- To entertain
- To motivate for action

The purpose will shape the way you conduct the workshop and what information you present.

3.3 Responsibilities of the facilitator

- It is important to define your role as a trainer/facilitator. Unless the group understands your role, they will probably view you as an authority and will not see that they have to take responsibility for their own learning process. Keep reflecting back to the group their need to take responsibility for learning.
- Remember you cannot expect to meet your own needs or push your own agenda while working as a facilitator. Do not be tempted by the power delegated to you.
- Being a facilitator does not mean that you are qualified to meet individual or group needs.
- It is essential that the group understands what you are doing with them: what your objectives are, how you expect to meet their needs, what you can or cannot give them, and how your going to do it. It is the group's right to hold you accountable for what you do with them.

3.4 Training objectives

It is important to set objectives for the training or workshop activity so that facilitators and the participants do not lose sight of what they are doing and where they aim to end up.

In setting objectives it is useful to establish general and specific objectives.

- **General objectives** usually describe the outcome you expect after training is completed e.g. to improve the quality of project monitoring reports being prepared by field staff. Such objectives are difficult to evaluate however, particularly during the workshop or training activity (as the results will not be seen until later).
- It is therefore useful to have a set of more **specific objectives** related to what participants are expected to learn during the training. What specific new skills do you hope participants will have? Examples might include such things as "Trainees will be able to complete the required monthly monitoring format", "Participants will be able to design and conduct a farmer survey on technology adoption rates" or "Trainees will be able to prepare quarterly work programs and budgets". These types of objectives can be assessed more easily by both participants and outsiders.

3.5 Knowing the participants

No assignment should proceed until you are clear about who you will be training/ talking to.

Try to find out:

- How many people will be present?
- Why they are attending; is it their own choice or have they been told to come?
- What are their hopes and expectations?
- What are their fears and concerns?
- What range of experience, age, gender and status is likely to be represented?

- Do they have any biases towards or against you or your organisation?
- Is there any major conflict among the group which is likely to disrupt proceedings?
- What prior knowledge might they have about the subject matter being presented?

These questions will help you determine the sort of program you will prepare and the training materials and teaching aids you will select.

3.6 Timing and duration

When planning a workshop or training session, make sure you consider the following points:-

- what are the overall time constraints? Who has set these?
- select appropriate start and finish times for each day's work through consultation with colleagues, counterparts or participants
- make allowance for the fact that you may have to start later than you originally planned. If you are prepared for this eventuality you will be more relaxed when the workshop does kick off. (Particularly in village settings, workshops may start some hours later than originally scheduled due to communication and transport difficulties)
- keep verbal presentations or lecture style sessions to no more than 30 minutes at any one time - then incorporate an activity which requires active participation
- be flexible with the duration of individual sessions depending on the response of participants, while remembering that overall time constraints still apply.
- if participants are restless or sleepy - change the pace with an energising activity

3.7 Training venue, furniture and equipment

The choice of venue can influence the success or otherwise of the workshop. You may have little choice in the matter, but it remains important that you try and visit the venue at least one day prior to the workshop commencing, or if this is not possible, make sure you allow at least an hour or two for setting up the venue on the day the training starts.

Key considerations include:-

- light, ventilation and acoustics
- space for group work
- availability of chairs and tables
- wall space for displays
- availability of white or black boards
- availability of photocopying facilities on site or nearby
- proximity to potential distractions (e.g. phone, offices, busy roads, pubs)
- access for participants (e.g. is it difficult to get to?)
- toilet facilities for men and women

The nature of the workshop and the available budget will strongly influence what is both desirable and feasible.

3.8 Seating arrangements

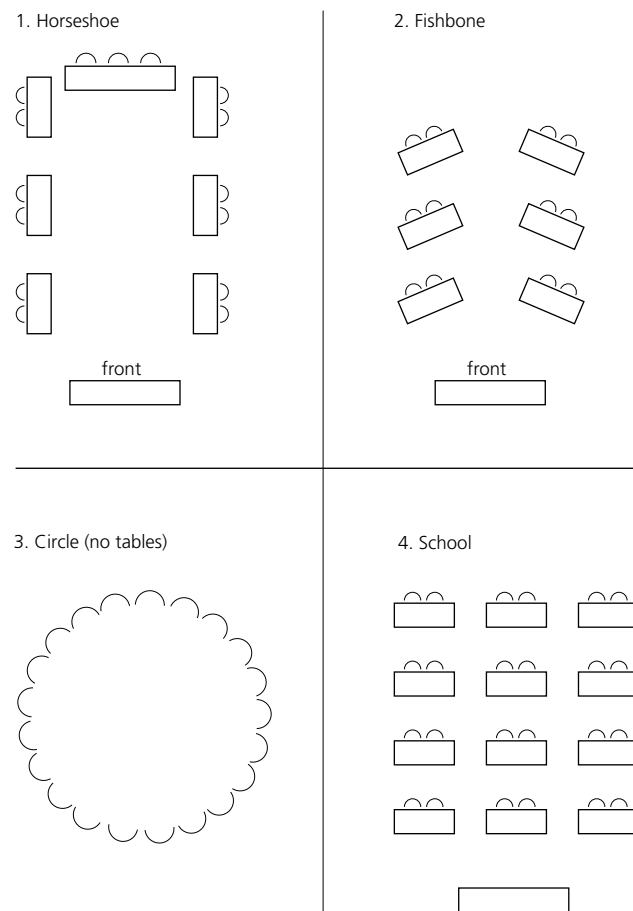
Seating arrangements will influence the way in which participants and the trainer/facilitators interact. There are a number of possible options. Selecting the most appropriate options will depend on:-

- the training methods you plan to use (particularly the amount of group work)
- the size and layout of the venue

- the number of participants
- the background and expectations of the participants

Try to avoid the traditional schoolroom approach (lines of chairs and desks all facing the front) unless the workshop is to be almost exclusively lecture based.

Some of the main options are shown in the figure below.



3.9 Detailed session plans

Each main workshop session should be planned in some detail. A session planning format is a useful tool for ensuring that this task is undertaken systematically. An example is shown below:-

Session 1.4	Stakeholder analysis
Responsibility	J.Hampshire
Time/Duration	9.40 - 10.30 50 minutes
Purpose	To identify the main groups with rights over, or interests in, the use of the land covered by the Mount Pierre pastoral lease
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to clarify who is involved. This is an important starting point in understanding the issues and then developing a plan to deal with them • Two main groups of interests - Aboriginal and 'outsider' • Who are the main families with rights over the land covered by the Mount Pierre lease, including the Mimbi caves are? • How many people in each family (roughly?) • Who are the main outside interests? e.g. government or business • What are their main stakeholders? What do they want? • Which of these outside groups are the main players? e.g. causing most 'humbug' • Once the profile is developed and recorded, emphasise the importance of developing an understanding of the other interest groups so that one can negotiate from a well-informed position
Method	<p>Lead into next session - lets now look specifically at the interests/objectives of the workshop participants (the TOs).</p> <p>Brief verbal presentation to explain purpose of session and how it will be run. Then ask participants the relevant questions about stakeholders. Record ideas on white board or cards</p> <p>Sort and comment on ideas. Encourage reflection and new ideas from participants. Re-read what has been recorded a number of times to ensure people are reminded of what has been said (particularly for those who don't read).</p>
Materials & Handouts	White board and/or cards, pens & blutack

3.10 Training materials

The type of training materials you will require will depend on the nature of the workshop and the participants attending. Some general tips are given below for workshops delivered to participants who can read and write:-

- have all written and visual materials prepared well in advance - including copies that you are going to hand out. Assume that the photocopier will play its usual tricks!
- if you are using overhead transparencies, make paper copies for each participant so that they can use these as a reference and make additional notes directly on to these sheets
- make sure that the text in transparencies is produced in a large enough font so that all participants can easily read them
- find out well in advance whether or not you can purchase the required materials locally. If there is any doubt, take adequate supplies with you
- provide each participant with paper and pen and a folder for keeping all handouts
- if you are recording participant responses to questions/issues raised during the workshop - record these on butchers paper or cards rather than on a white/black board. Then they won't get erased once the board is full
- spend time organising and laying out any handouts before the workshop starts so that you can access them quickly as you need them
- don't provide too much reading material during workshop sessions. This can overload the participants and distract them from engaging in more participatory activities

If you are conducting a workshop in a village setting with participants who do not necessarily read and write, material requirements will tend to differ considerably from those required for classroom based workshops.

Acknowledgment

Part of the text in Annex 3 has been drawn from *Participatory Learning and Action - A Trainers Guide* (Pretty et al) published by the International Institute for Environment and Development, London, 1995.

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