Making Evaluations Matter:

A Practical Guide for Evaluators

stakeholder engagement

situational responsiveness

evaluation

principles
framework
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influence-aware

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utilization-focused

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critical reflection

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competencies

stakes

change

Cecile Kusters

with

**Simone van Vugt, Seerp Wigboldus,
Bob Williams and Jim Woodhill**

Centre for
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Disclaimer

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With:

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A letter to the reader

Dear Reader,

This guide is primarily for evaluators working in the international development sector. However, if you are a commissioner of an evaluation, an evaluation manager or a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer, you too will find it useful.

Too often evaluations are shelved, with very little being done to bring about change within organisations that requested the evaluation in the first place. This guide will explain how you can make your evaluations more useful. It will help you to better understand some conceptual issues and appreciate how evaluations can contribute to changing mindsets and empowering stakeholders. On a practical level, the guide presents core guiding principles and pointers on how to design and facilitate evaluations that matter. Furthermore, it shows you how you can get your primary intended users and other key stakeholders to contribute effectively to the evaluation process.

Learning is an important aspect of any evaluation. Without this, it would be difficult for change to take place at any level. A case is also made for evaluations to be integrated into the existing learning process within organisations. Strategic questions such as 'Am I doing the right things for the 'right' people?' and 'Am I doing things right?' are also addressed with a view to improving the way in which organisations manage their development interventions.

You can be a facilitator of change. You can do this through your interactions with your colleagues – commissioners, evaluation managers, evaluators, M&E officers and other key stakeholders – by promoting good evaluative practice.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this guide and, at the same time, gain a deeper appreciation of how useful 'good' evaluations can be in strategically managing development interventions and making a difference in the lives of people.

Dr. A.J. Woodhill

Director
Centre for Development Innovation
Wageningen University & Research centre

Introduction

Our evaluation experiences matter – to ourselves and to those we engage with during the evaluation. But to what extent do these evaluations contribute to changing the lives of the people we work with? To what extent are evaluations useful? Can the findings be used and can evaluations be influential in bringing about change? What are the consequences of the decisions we make around an evaluation? Making evaluations matter to the primary intended users of development programmes or initiatives and other key stakeholders is at the heart of this document.

Stakeholder: an agency, organisation, group or individual who has direct or indirect interest in a development initiative, or who affects or is affected positively or negatively by the implementation and outcome of it.

Primary intended users: are those who have responsibility to apply evaluation findings and implement recommendations. They may consist of a range of different stakeholders.

Conducting an evaluation of a development intervention is often a complex process, invariably because reality is complex and unpredictable where issues emerge that need responding to. An evaluation, especially a one-off exercise, can only capture part of this reality. A common problem associated with evaluations is that they are generally not used because many evaluations:

- fail to focus on intended use by intended users and are not designed to fit the context and situation

- do not focus on the most important issues – resulting in low relevance

- are poorly understood by stakeholders

- fail to keep stakeholders informed and involved during the process and when design alterations are necessary.

This guide is therefore timely as it provides a basic foundation on how to make evaluations matter. It brings together existing concepts, evaluation methods and tools that have been found to work well in the field in a way that is straightforward and easy to follow. Stories of people's experiences have been used to illustrate key points. In addition to this, the chapters have been written in a way that allows you to read them independently.

The guide is not a comprehensive book on how to carry out evaluations. Rather, it attempts to provide an overall framework with guiding principles for conducting an evaluation. The guide draws heavily on the experiences of the Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research centre particularly with its work around 'managing for impact' in the international PPME-managing for impact course, a regional IFAD-funded capacity development program on managing for impact in East and Southern Africa, strengthening M&E systems of organisations and the many evaluations carried out by CDI. The guide also draws heavily on Michael Quinn Patton's Utilization-Focused Evaluation approach (2008). The importance of good evaluative practice and the need to embed evaluations into existing learning processes within organisations are emphasised.

Chapter 1 presents four core principles underpinning evaluations that matter. These are: utilization-focused and influence- and consequence-aware; focusing on stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning; situational responsiveness; and multiple evaluator and evaluation roles.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of suggested steps for designing and facilitating evaluations that matter, with a particular focus on utilization and being aware of the possible influences and consequences of evaluations. It stresses the importance of including primary intended users and other key stakeholders in the evaluation so as to enhance understanding of the development intervention. The key steps of the evaluation process – establishing ability and readiness; focusing; implementing and evaluating the evaluation – are covered. In Chapter 3, the role of stakeholders is highlighted in terms of their stakes, participation, consequences of choosing who to involve and who not to involve in the process. The need to balance content and people processes is also discussed.

Core concepts and ideas centred on making evaluations learning experiences are presented in Chapter 4. Barriers to learning and ways of enhancing learning among stakeholders are also explored. Chapter 5 brings the possible influences of evaluation on change processes to the surface and explains how you can go about managing change. Central to this is Kotter's (2002) suggested steps to facilitate change.

You will find in the Annexes an example of learning purposes, evaluation questions, uses and users of an evaluation for a food security programme, a table comparing traditional programme evaluation with developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011), as well as a list of references followed by a glossary and acronyms and abbreviations.
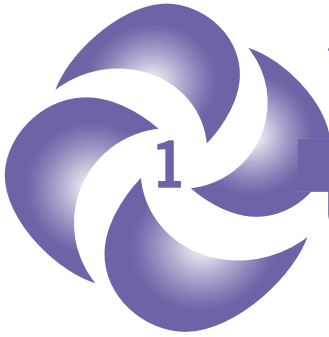
1 Core principles for guiding evaluations that matter

Evaluation aspires to make a difference in the world. This is a noble enterprise even as we move with some degree of uncertainty in our collective efforts to do it better (Melvin M. Mark, 2009, p. 77).

For an evaluation to matter, it needs to be underpinned by principles that ensure the specific needs of the key stakeholders, particularly the intended primary users, are taken into account, in addition to the situational and contextual issues of the development initiative.

It is important for different stakeholders to understand each other's views, principles and values when embarking on an evaluation. Often, donor-funded development initiatives are judged based on mid-term and final evaluations, with little or no consideration of what happened in between. As an evaluator, you need to be aware of such challenges and to recognise that the decision-making power of some stakeholders (e.g., donors) may be more influential in determining the evaluation agenda. Your role is therefore to facilitate dialogue and yet at the same time bear in mind that there are times when meaningful dialogue with some stakeholders may not always be possible.

In this chapter we draw on our own experience and the work of Michael Quinn Patton (2008) to suggest four core principles that underpin evaluations that matter. These principles are based on theoretical foundations and practical experiences that are interlinked and reinforce each other.

The evaluation process need not be a single event. Rather it should be viewed as part of a broader process of evaluative practices to assess development initiatives and inform decision-making for change.

The four core principles for guiding evaluations that matter are:

- Utilization-focused, influence- and consequence-aware
- Stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning
- Situational responsiveness
- Multiple evaluator and evaluation roles.

Discussing these principles with the evaluation stakeholders (e.g., evaluation managers, M&E officers, other participating stakeholders) will help uncover the differences in their views, beliefs and values about the

evaluation, and assist them to reach an agreed understanding of which principles should underpin the evaluation process.

1.1 Utilization-focused, influence- and consequence-aware

1.1.1 Utilization-focused

Utilization-focused evaluation is "evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses" (Patton, 2008, p. 37). By this, Patton argues that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. Moreover, given that use – how people apply the findings – is affected by the way the evaluation is designed and carried out, it is your role, as an evaluator, to keep a close eye on how things are done from the beginning to the end of the evaluation. The emphasis in utilization-focused evaluation is therefore on *intended use by intended users*. It is a process to help primary intended users select the most appropriate content, model, methods, theory and uses for their particular situation (Patton, 2008).

UTILIZATION_FOCUSED

Thinking through the utilization of an evaluation beforehand also helps to maximise the results and minimise the 'inputs', such as time, money and resources. Focusing on utilization has consequences for evaluation design and facilitation. In a specific situation, getting people to think through how they intend to use the findings will assist in focusing the evaluation. For this reason, stakeholder participation (discussed later in Chapter 3) is crucial in utilization-focused evaluation.

Evaluation use can be influenced by a range of other factors as well (see Box 1.1). Threats can often be minimised or overcome by focusing on the issues raised in discussions with the different stakeholders. For example, if the threat to utility is a lack of focus on intended use and users, then to minimise this you would need to focus on intended use, etc.

Box 1.1 Threats to Utility

- Failure to focus on intended use by intended users
- Failure to design the evaluation to fit the context and situation
- Inadequate involvement of primary intended users in selecting methods and in decision-making
- Focusing on unimportant issues – low relevance
- Inappropriate methods and measures given stakeholders' questions and information needs
- Poor stakeholder understanding of the evaluation generally and findings specifically
- Low user belief and trust in the evaluation process and findings
- Low face validity
- Unbalanced data collection and reporting
- Perceptions that the evaluation is unfair or that the evaluator is biased or less than impartial
- Low evaluator credibility
- Political naïveté
- Failure to keep stakeholders informed throughout the process.

Source: Patton (2008, p. 412)

Evaluation is often done in complex situations where issues emerge and are unpredictable, and where decision-making for policies and programmes is often uncertain. In these situations, the evaluator may have limited knowledge about the context of those intending to use the evaluation. Not everything can be predicted and often things do not happen as planned, e.g., people involved in a development initiative may get replaced, some commitment to action may get forgotten, or the political situation may change making some of the findings irrelevant.

As an evaluator it is important for you to:

- question your own assumptions, principles and values for evaluation, in relation to the different contexts, and to assist those commissioning and participating in the evaluation to also think through theirs. This is crucial as underlying assumptions, values and principles influence the focus and approach for an evaluation and ultimately influence the utility and use.

- be clear about your personal principles and values as well as those of stakeholders participating in the evaluation as they can influence utility and use of the evaluation (see Box 1.2).

- consider which principles are non-negotiable, and what the positive and negative consequences might be of the choices for evaluation focus and approach.

Box 1.2 Being Clear about Your Own Principles for Evaluation

A colleague was asked to carry out a gender audit of an international organisation. An approach involving stakeholders in focusing and implementing the evaluation was proposed which would have resulted in additional budgetary requirements. The commissioning body refused to provide the extra funds as they did not see the value of stakeholder interaction in the evaluation. However, this colleague insisted, explaining that stakeholder engagement would contribute to making the evaluation more useful and relevant for all involved.
After some consideration, a few weeks later, the commissioning body agreed to provide the extra funding and the evaluation was able to go on with the proposed stakeholder engagement - a process that also promoted shared learning.

Source: Adapted from Kusters (2009)

1.1.2   Influence- and consequence-aware

The main objectives of any evaluation are often about measuring big and small changes (proving) as well as bringing about betterment in the lives of people (improving). How an evaluation is carried out (its process), as well as its outcome, can influence the way people make decisions and have an impact on the lives of the people it was intended for. A case in point is an evaluation which was carried out by an organisation to find out the underlying causes of under performance of schoolchildren in a given minority group. The highly consultative way in which the evaluation was carried out and the room given to primary intended users to express themselves resulted in empowering them and improving the self-image of the people targeted. Even though the outcome of the development initiative was not immediately clear, the evaluation was considered a success by the various stakeholders engaged in this process. This illustrates clearly how important the evaluation process can be and how evaluations can influence the way people think and behave.

For many evaluators, the way in which evaluation findings are used can have different consequences – intended and unintended. Thinking through these possible consequences, especially for the intended primary users, is an important consideration in making your evaluation matter.

According to Mark (2009, p. 61), evaluators tend to differentiate between direct, conceptual, process, symbolic and relational use of evaluations and the change they can bring about. In addition to this, Bob Williams (2009) cites value use and external use as important evaluation uses, and which have their own set of consequences (see Table 1.1):

- **Direct (or instrumental) use:** evaluation leads to immediate and specific actions, such as programme continuation, expansion, revision, or termination (Caracelli, 2000)

- **Conceptual use:** sometimes called enlightenment, refers to more general learning that takes place as a result of the evaluation, with stakeholders having an improved understanding of a problem or its possible solutions

- **Process use:** refers to use that arises not because of the findings of an evaluation, but as a result of participation in the evaluation process

- **Symbolic use:** includes such actions as the use of evaluations to justify pre-existing positions or simply to signify the purported rationality of an agency

- **Relational use:** includes efforts to modify aspects of ongoing relationships, structures and organisational processes

- **Value use:** where use of the evaluation can shape what we believe in, what our aspirations and motivations are

- **External use:** how use of an evaluation can lead to changes beyond the development programme being evaluated.

The consequences of evaluation use can include:

- **Individual change** i.e., within a particular person. This is when evaluation changes something within the individual, such as one's thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, or actions

- **Interpersonal change:** i.e., between individuals. This refers to changes triggered by interactions between individuals, such as when the evaluation's findings are used to persuade others about the merit of a programme or policy

- **Collective change** i.e., at a more macro, organisational unit level. This means changes in the decisions or practices of organisations or systems, such as when policy change happens as a result of an evaluation, or when an initiative is expanded, continued, or terminated.

It is important to be aware of the possible consequences and influences of evaluation, whether conscious or unconscious. Involving stakeholders in a participatory way can lead to a change in mindset in the way they think and feel about the evaluation and how they use the results. Evaluation experiences can also shape the way evaluators manage future evaluations. You should also bear in mind that values and paradigms that affect the way we think, feel and act, and which may or may not be affected by evaluations, often underpin the individual, personal and collective changes. Table 1.1 provides an overview of possible consequences for different uses of evaluation.

Table 1.1 Consequences of Evaluation Use

Evaluation consequences affect:	Evaluation consequences affect:	Consequences at individual/ personal level affect:	Consequences at the interpersonal level affect:	Consequences at collective or organisational level affect:
Direct (immediate) use	Behaviour and actions	What individuals will do (e.g., taking up extra tasks)	What individuals do together (e.g., sharing tasks to achieve a common goal)	What an institution does (e.g., strategic decisions about a programme or policy)
Conceptual use	'Thinking', such as knowledge and attitude	The way an individual thinks about certain issues (e.g., realisation of the importance of contextualisation of a development initiative)	Attitudes towards working with each other, or towards what people do (e.g., more willing to interact with other stakeholders)	How the institution values certain kinds of thinking; change in values and aspirations (e.g., valuing both dialogue and dialectic; empowerment)
Symbolic use	Behaviour and actions	A person's justification for or acknowledgement of an evaluation	How people influence each other in terms of justification or acknowledgement of an evaluation	An organisation's justification or acknowledgement of an evaluation
Process use	Behaviour, actions, thinking, broader aspirations (as a result of being engaged in the evaluation process)	What individuals will do, think, believe	People's actions, attitudes, understanding in relation to collaboration with others	An organisation's actions, values, role
Relational use	Ongoing relationships, (organisational) structures and processes	Role and functioning of an individual in relation to others (e.g. more empowered to fulfil their tasks)	Role and functioning of groups, networks (e.g., more shared learning)	Role and functioning of an institution in society (e.g., learning organisation)
Value use	Broader goals, aspirations, motivations – what we believe in	Personal goals, aspirations and motivations (e.g., in relation to the work they do)	How people understand and value each others' perspectives	Formal goals, values and aspirations
External use	Changes beyond the immediate interests of a development initiative	How other individuals adapt, adopt or work against the evaluation process and findings	Collaboration with other groups (previously not actively involved)	Other organisations to take up similar ideas or work against them (as they negatively affect their own interests)

Source: Adapted from Williams (2009) and Mark (2009)

1.2 Stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning

It is important to think about which stakeholders to engage with in the evaluation, why, what their stakes are and what the possible consequences are for their inclusion or exclusion.

Stakeholders can learn from each other by sharing and critically reflecting on their own and others' actions, behaviours, experiences, views and perceptions. Engaging stakeholders in dialogue can be a useful way of finding a common ground and identifying differences.

Negotiating stakeholder engagement in evaluations is crucial. Stakeholders have particular information needs, particular perspectives of what change means to them, and they live and work under specific circumstances. These perspectives and contextual factors will need to be integrated in the evaluation design in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of reality. Engaging stakeholders and dealing with their particular realities, perspectives and stakes can make an evaluation more relevant and spur them on into action (during and) after evaluation.

For evaluations to have maximum utilization and influence on change, the engagement of stakeholders, especially the users and 'influencers' of the evaluation, needs to be encouraged. This stakeholder engagement should be facilitated in a process of shared learning, from the very beginning to the very end of the evaluation. Getting stakeholders to contribute effectively is covered in detail in Chapter 3.

1.3 Situational responsiveness

Appropriate (impact) evaluation design requires situational responsiveness – matching the design to the needs, constraints and opportunities of the particular case (Rogers, 2009, Cairo workshop).

Situational responsiveness involves matching the evaluation design to the needs, constraints and opportunities of the particular situation (Rogers, 2009). In the light of this, two key questions that need to be answered before developing your evaluation design are:

- What is the nature of the intervention?

- Why are you carrying out an (impact) evaluation?

Thinking through the purpose and situation of an evaluation is particularly important: How can this evaluation become utilization-focused and influence change? What theory do we have to bring about this change through evaluation? What characteristics, capacities and conditions are in place that help or hinder this process? How can we best design and facilitate the evaluation, given its context?

Every situation is unique. A successful evaluation (one that is useful, practical, ethical, and accurate) emerges from the special characteristics

and conditions of a particular situation – a mixture of people, politics, history, context, resources, constraints, values, needs, interests, and chance.

There isn't a single method or methodology that is universally applicable. The design of a particular evaluation depends on the people involved and their situation. As an evaluation unfolds, evaluators and primary intended users must work together to identify the evaluation that best fits their information needs and the programme's context and situation. This means *negotiating* with stakeholders, especially primary intended users and other key stakeholders, and adapting the evaluation design to financial, political, timing and methodological constraints and opportunities (Patton, 2008).

Situational responsiveness requires you to constantly look out for the unexpected, familiarising yourself with local situations, and to adapt quickly as issues emerge during preparation and implementation of an evaluation. Close collaboration with stakeholders is important as you will need to share information on what is happening, think through the options for change and make quick decisions to respond to the emerging issues.

SITUATIONAL RESPONSIVENESS

Although every intervention should be tailored to the specific situation at hand, Hummelbrunner (2000, p. 17) proposes four basic dimensions which can help you in the design of your evaluation:

- **Theme/topic:** What the evaluation seeks to address, e.g., a problem or topic.

- **Time:** When and at what stage you need to intervene. Different processes will require different time-scales and intervals, depending on contextual issues within the organisation and how quickly people respond to change.

- **Social structure:** Who within the organisation will be included in the evaluation? Team composition is crucial, so try to bring people together who are involved in a problem or capable of finding a solution. Consider carefully who to invite for which sessions or meetings.

- **Place/Location:** Where the intervention will take place (e.g., office, conference room) or elsewhere, indoors or outdoors, what the arrangements are for the meeting room(s) or the seating plan.

1.4 Multiple evaluator and evaluation roles

Different people have different roles to play in evaluation. An evaluation manager is responsible for ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and products and is heavily involved in the initial stages of an evaluation (assessing and agreeing on readiness for an evaluation; focusing the evaluation). But this needs to be done in collaboration with key stakeholders (especially primary intended users of the evaluation). An evaluator may come in to facilitate this process, ensuring that different perspectives come out and consequences are thought through. The evaluator takes up a bigger role in the actual design and facilitation of the evaluation. During this process, stakeholders need to come in not only to provide information, but where possible, also to assist in data collection, analysis, critical reflection, communication and feedback of the findings. When thinking through actions for change, key decision-makers need to be on board so that a pathway for change after the evaluation can be planned.

The roles played by an evaluator in any given situation will depend on the evaluation's purpose, the circumstances and the evaluator's own personal knowledge, skills, style, values and ethics. Your role as an evaluator may therefore vary: collaborator, trainer, group facilitator, technician, politician, organisational analyst, internal colleague, external expert, methodologist, information broker, communicator, change agent, diplomat, problem solver, and creative consultant.

1.5 Some key points on core principles for guiding evaluations that matter

1. Evaluation can make a difference and help bring about change. For this to happen, it needs to be underpinned by four core principles which take into account the needs of key stakeholders, and primary intended users in particular. Evaluators, commissioners of evaluators, M&E officers and other key stakeholders need to understand and agree on these (or other) principles so that they can share common ground and experiences and learn from each other.

2. The four core principles for making evaluations matter are that they should:
    *   be utilization-focused, influence- and consequence-aware
    *   focus on stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning
    *   be responsive to the situation
    *   have multiple evaluator and evaluation roles.

3. Evaluations are often carried out in complex situations which can affect their usefulness. To increase the chance of an evaluation being useful, evaluators need to engage stakeholders in the evaluation process. Evaluators also need to participate in the decision-making process as well as produce sound evaluation reports.

4. Consequences of evaluation can result in changes at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels and can affect not only people's behaviour and actions but also their beliefs, values and aspirations.

5. Evaluators need to be realistic about evaluations and recognise that some stakeholders have the power to determine the evaluation agenda. And although engaging in dialogue with some stake-holders may help to bridge the gap, it does not always work.

2 Suggested steps for designing and facilitating evaluations that matter

Evaluation design is as much a process as it is a product (Patton, 2008). Thinking through the evaluation process, from assessing readiness for and design of the evaluation up to use and possible consequences of the evaluation, is critical.

In this chapter we look at the process for designing, facilitating and implementing evaluations that matter. The approach is based on theoretical and practical experiences, and is underpinned by suggested principles and other core evaluation ideas which you encountered in the previous chapter.

In Chapter 1 the following core principles were suggested:

- Utilisation-focused, influence- and consequence-aware

- Focusing on stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning

- Situational responsiveness

- Multiple evaluator and evaluation roles.

These principles, and possibly others, will need to be carefully considered when working through the suggested evaluation process. Also, it is important to review and agree on the standards that will underpin the evaluation.

The key issues to remember are the following:

- Engagement of key stakeholders in evaluation makes sense on practical and ethical grounds, and can help to enhance the understanding of a development initiative and its impact on people engaged in it.

- The objectives of an evaluation can go far beyond those of the programme that is being evaluated. In a useful evaluation, the potential consequences are important in terms of ethics and of effectiveness of future development work.

- Understanding how a development initiative works, for whom and in what context, is essential in order to make a sound judgement of its effectiveness.

While the process suggested below focuses on a single event, evaluation must be part of the bigger picture for the overall development initiative.

Stand-alone evaluations without enough depth, in terms of understanding the development context, may risk making poor judgements. Learning from past experiences (e.g., a monitoring and evaluation system or other evaluations), and adapting to changes in the environment are very important. We think that development can only be understood and influenced when looking not only at the tip of the iceberg, but also at what lies beneath. The process we suggest here is therefore a combination of concepts, ideas and practical experiences.

The suggested steps for designing and facilitating evaluations that matter are:

- Establish ability and readiness for evaluation
- Focus the evaluation
- Implement the evaluation
- Evaluate the evaluation.

Figure 2.1   Flow Chart – Evaluation Design and Facilitation
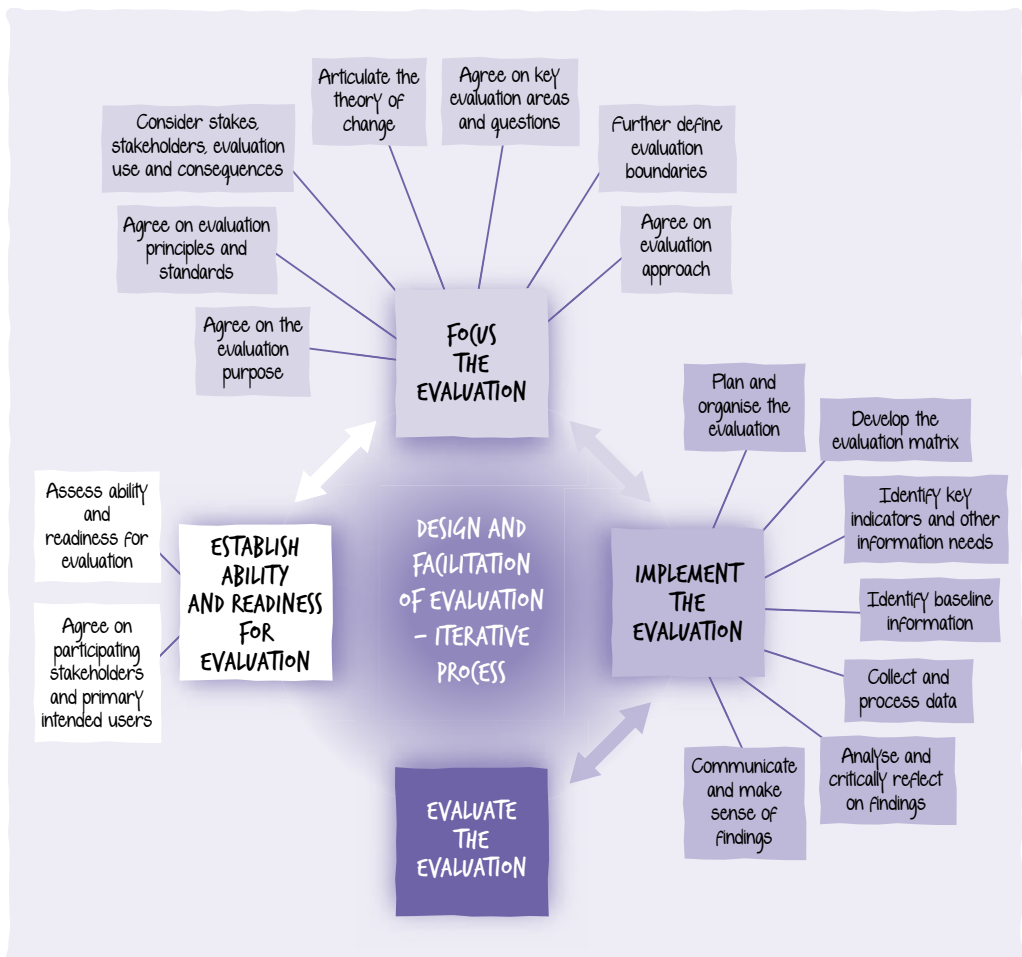
Evaluation is an **iterative process** – at any point in time you may need to go back and revise what has been decided at an earlier stage, and some steps may not necessarily happen in the suggested sequence.

In evaluations that matter, each stage of the process has a design and implementation element. Where appropriate, we explain the issues that you need to pay special attention to.

Figure 2.1 shows the various activities for each phase of the process. Each step involves different stakeholders with different roles, e.g., in the early stages, a manager responsible for the quality and products/outputs of the evaluation may draw up the **terms of reference** (ToR) in collaboration with the key stakeholders, such as the project manager and M&E officer. ToR are not always set in stone and as an evaluator, you may suggest an approach that has consequences for the initial thinking behind the evaluation. Your role is to get engaged in the evaluation process as early as possible and to properly assist in the process throughout. Often there will still be room for negotiation regarding the underpinning principles, standards, and approach and particularly to what extent the evaluation can be utilisation-focused, influence- and consequence-aware. This is important, as you may need time to share ideas and thoughts with the evaluation manager and other stakeholders. You also need to consider the potential consequences of different choices made for the evaluation and their implications for stakeholders. Furthermore, thinking through a pathway of change after the evaluation may set the ground for a more influential evaluation.

Terms of reference: sets out the work to be carried out for the whole evaluation process.

The role of the evaluator may turn out to be more influential later on in the process. As a facilitator encouraging stakeholders to learn from each other and agree on directions for the future, you should ensure that the evaluation process takes place in line with agreed principles and standards, and that quality and ethics are respected.

2.1 Establish ability and readiness for evaluation

Are the key stakeholders (especially primary intended users of the evaluation) ready to accept and use evaluation findings so that development efforts will become more effective? Is the time and place right and are stakeholders available and ready to participate in the evaluation? Are there financial restrictions hampering the evaluation? Are stakeholders ready to think through the consequences of the evaluation? To what extent is situational responsiveness possible?

2.1.1   Assess ability and readiness for evaluation

Assessing ability and readiness is mainly the role of the evaluation manager, the person responsible for the evaluation process and products/output. It is important to discuss ability and readiness with the project manager, M&E officer and other key stakeholders. At a later stage, the evaluator may assist in this process.

Once the decision for an evaluation is taken, find out whether the development initiative (or organisation or network) is able and ready for the evaluation. Some suggested criteria for assessing ability and readiness are described in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1 Criteria for Assessing Ability and Readiness for Evaluation

Criteria	Description
Timing and stakeholder availability	Are there competing demands on staff and other stakeholders right now? Will the people who need to participate in the evaluation be able to do so when required? Are there other pressing matters?
Available information	Is there adequate information to engage in an evaluation?
Financial considerations	Are sufficient funds available? Can additional resources be raised? Is the evaluation cost-effective? Are the benefits greater than the costs?
Utility, influence and consequences	Is there a high probability that the evaluation will be used to improve the development initiative and benefit the target groups? Will key stakeholders, especially primary intended users, be engaged in making evaluation decisions? Are decision-makers supportive of the evaluation and ready to accept and use the evaluation findings? How do primary users intend to use the findings? Are stakeholders ready to think through the consequences and influences of decisions?
Situational responsiveness	What is the nature of the intervention? Why is an (impact) evaluation being done? What organisational or other factors in the environment affect the responsiveness during and after the evaluation?
Leadership	Good leadership is important. Without it, supporting the use of evaluation findings becomes difficult. Good leaders who understand the importance of evaluation for development also play a vital role in facilitating stakeholder participation and learning throughout the evaluation process, e.g., by setting a good example, being present at key meetings, etc.

Source: Adapted from IUCN (2004, p. 14)

The evaluator needs to be sensitive to the issues listed in Table 2.1: How do people value the evaluation process, its possible use and its consequences? Personal beliefs, values, assumptions, and trust are important factors to consider as they may undermine the utility of an evaluation. Power issues may also play an important role.

Box 2.1 Readiness for Evaluation… Readiness for Change?

A large rural development programme in Zanzibar is fortunate to have an inspirational leader. He welcomes new ideas, encourages critical reflection and feedback, and is quick in adapting to changing situations. Without him and the support of dedicated staff, it would have been impossible to change the mode of management to a more adaptive style. In addition to their quantitative system of data collection and analysis, they have now started generating information that is more qualitative in nature, capturing farmers' stories (on video), and a wealth of other information for decision-making. Through self-reflection, they are now better placed to respond to issues in the field.

Source: Adapted from Kusters *et al.* (2009)

Box 2.2 Adding Rigour to the Evaluation Process

An evaluator needs to understand the client's level of openness to learning and how the findings for change are to be used. We were once asked to carry out a gender audit of a programme in India. Our client wanted it done quickly, with little or no involvement of stakeholders. We refused to conduct the evaluation because we felt, as a colleague well expressed, *"that if stakeholders did not have a chance to share their learning, no real change would occur"*.

In the end, the client listened to us and agreed to a different evaluation process, providing more funds for stakeholder engagement, including a stakeholder workshop at the beginning to focus the evaluation and another at the end to validate findings. The client's acceptance to use a learning and utilization-focused approach resulted from a change of mindset about the relevance of the evaluation in making strategic choices that lead to impact. This bold step helped improve the client's readiness for change.

The evaluation process led to remarkable changes in this programme, and most of the recommendations were adopted a year after the evaluation. The process of negotiating with the client for a learning process and the actual involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process helped to bring about this change.

Evaluators often want quick results of the evaluations they are engaged in, even though integrating feedback and recommendations takes time – time to influence those in high decision-making positions, for example. In a follow-up with our client, we told them how glad we were that the exercise had been of some use – to which they replied *"It wasn't just of 'some' use – it's been extremely useful! Particularly since [the director-general] was fully bought in"*.

Source: Adapted from Kusters (2009)

When assessing readiness for evaluation, the following can assist in decision-making:

- People are ready to actively participate in the evaluation

- There is enough information to work with

- The budget is available to finance the evaluation

- People expect many benefits from the evaluation

- Stakeholders have clear ideas about how they intend to use the evaluation findings

- Stakeholders are ready to consider the potential consequences of the evaluation and to take necessary action

- There is leadership support for the active engagement of stakeholders in the evaluation process to ensure it is utilisation-focused, influence- and consequence-aware

- There is openness to critical feedback and to take action on the findings.

2.1.2 Agree on participating stakeholders and primary intended users

Who are the key participating stakeholders? Who are the primary intended users of the evaluation findings? How can we help them prepare for the evaluation and its possible influence or consequences?

Those who wish to engage in evaluations that matter need to establish the extent to which the development initiative is open to engage key stakeholders (especially primary intended users responsible for action after the evaluation) in the decision-making process. This involves their engagement in focusing, designing, implementing the evaluation (including analysis of and reflections on the findings), and in the use and possible influence or consequences of the evaluation. It is important to agree on which stakeholders to include or exclude and to consider what potential consequences may result from their inclusion or exclusion.

An evaluator (e.g., hired externally) may not necessarily intervene at this stage of the process, but can assist the organisation requesting the evaluation, to review their choices for stakeholder participation and what the consequences are for these choices. S/he can also assist in thinking through the extent to which the evaluation can be utilization-focused, influence- and consequence-aware.

After inviting users/stakeholders to assess incentives and barriers, they can be requested to be specific about these and to think through possible ways to strengthen incentives and minimise or avoid barriers. An evaluator can also give some ideas. You can also ask stakeholders what their concerns are in terms of time and money. Perhaps you may find

out that money is not the problem, but time is. And time may be only part of the problem. It may also be a matter of perception with respect to the expected benefits of the evaluation. A discussion may therefore be needed on the possible benefits of the evaluation.

Situational factors (see Chapter 3) are also important to consider as they can influence the extent of stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process.

2.2 Focus the evaluation

Evaluations will need to be focused on the use of the findings, and the consequences that may result thereafter. How can the evaluation be useful and beneficial? Who are the primary intended users? Who decides what to evaluate and what are the consequences of these decisions? This section takes a closer look at the who, what, where, when, why and how of the evaluation.
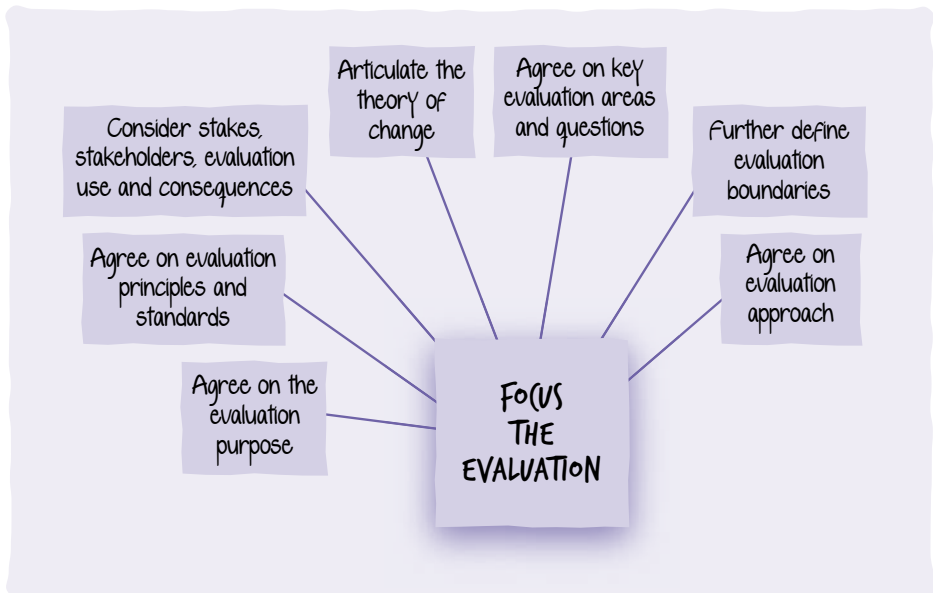
Focusing an evaluation needs to be done together with key stakeholders especially those responsible for taking action on the evaluation (primary intended users). Holding a stakeholder workshop at the start of the evaluation is a useful exercise to find out what their needs and expectations are so as to help focus the evaluation and get some initial insights.

At the start of any evaluation, you need to be clear about the:

• **Purpose** – Why do you want to carry out the evaluation?

• **Principles and standards** – What principles and standards should underpin the evaluation?

- **Stakes** – What are the key stakes or issues?

- **Key stakeholders (especially primary intended users)** – Who are they? What are their stakes? Who will use the evaluation findings?

- **Intended use** – What is the intended use of the findings?

- **Consequences** – What are the possible consequences of the decisions made, e.g., to include or exclude certain stakeholders? To what extent should the evaluation have an influence, e.g., on people's behaviour and actions, future steps, etc.?

- **Theory of change** – What pathway of change underpins the initiative to be evaluated?

- **Evaluation/learning questions** – What are the key evaluation/learning questions that need to be answered?

- **Boundaries** – What are the other boundaries of the evaluation?

- **Evaluation approach** – What particular approach(es) should guide the evaluation process?

As an evaluator you can help stakeholders to consider these issues as they decide on how to engage in an evaluation. Annex A provides examples of purpose, evaluation questions, use and users of an evaluation. Each of these will be further explained in the paragraphs below.

2.2.1   Agree on the evaluation purpose

Why do you want to carry out an evaluation?

After an agreement is reached about need, ability and readiness, you will need to focus the evaluation. This can be the responsibility of the evaluation manager in collaboration with key stakeholders. Focusing starts with making explicit the main reasons for carrying out the evaluation, and of course taking into account the perspectives of the various stakeholders. These reasons can be different depending on the individual or stakeholder group. It is important to see where reasons overlap and where they differ and to discuss any non-negotiable issues that need to be included.

Purpose relates to why the evaluation is being carried out. The evaluation purpose varies and can be for the following reasons:

- accountability

- strategic management (programme and organisational improvement)

- operational management

- policy-making or influencing

- knowledge development.

However, there are theories that suggest other potential purposes for evaluation, such as:

- empowerment of stakeholders

- development of learning organisations

- creation of forums for democratic deliberation

- advancement of social justice

- enhancement of practical wisdom and good practice judgements (Mark, 2009).

As the list of theories about purpose grows, so does the list of potential evaluation consequences (see Chapter 1, Section 1.1.2).

Framing an evaluation from its 'purpose' can sometimes be narrow, as generally broad statements are formulated. It is important to assist stakeholders to think about different purposes and uses of an evaluation and the consequences of choices being made.

An evaluator also needs to be aware of the underlying tensions that may exist in terms of why an evaluation is being carried out. Evaluation for accountability, e.g., to funding agencies or donors, may be given more attention than evaluation for knowledge development or empowerment. Even though it is possible to combine a range of different purposes in one evaluation, it is important to think this through carefully beforehand and be aware that the focus may change during an evaluation – sometimes taking part in the evaluation makes people more conscious of its possible uses and this can shift the agenda, depending on, e.g., power in place.

2.2.2   Agree on evaluation principles and standards

What principles and standards should underpin the evaluation?

Evaluation principles

We suggest four **core principles** underpinning evaluations that matter (see also Chapter 1):

- *Utilization-focused, influence- and consequence-aware.* Utilization-focused means that the evaluation is carried out with specific, primary intended users in mind and for specific, intended uses. Influence- and consequence-aware means thinking through the possible consequences or influences of the evaluation process and findings and choices made along these lines.

- *Focusing on stakes, stakeholder engagement and learning.* What are the stakes in the evaluation and in the development initiative under review? Who has these stakes? Which stakeholders can or cannot engage in the evaluation? Who is considered to have expert knowledge? What are the consequences of the choice of stakeholder engagement? Stakeholder engagement can enhance a better, more comprehensive, and deeper understanding of development, and thus, make an evaluation more relevant and useful.

- *Situational responsiveness.* As an evaluation unfolds, evaluators and stakeholders engaging in the evaluation (especially primary intended users) must work together to identify the evaluation that best fits the information needs of stakeholders and the context and situation of the development programme under review. Flexibility is required from all parties engaged in the evaluation.

- *Multiple evaluator and evaluation roles.* This involves thinking through the evaluation process whilst allowing different perspectives and values to be aired. As an evaluator you will need to play different roles in evaluation, but also the stakeholders involved in the process will need to be flexible in their roles. This requires capacity development of everyone in evaluative practice.

Evaluation standards

It is important for the evaluation manager and key stakeholders to agree on the extent to which evaluation standards such as utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy (see Box 2.3) should guide the evaluation. Standards will need to be adapted to each situation or context, as they may sometimes prove to be conflicting in reality.

Box 2.3 Standards for Evaluation

UTILITY: To ensure that an evaluation will serve the practical information needs of intended users.

FEASIBILITY: To ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic and frugal.

PROPRIETY: To ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

ACCURACY: To ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the programme being evaluated.

For the full set of detailed standards, see http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/

Source: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994)
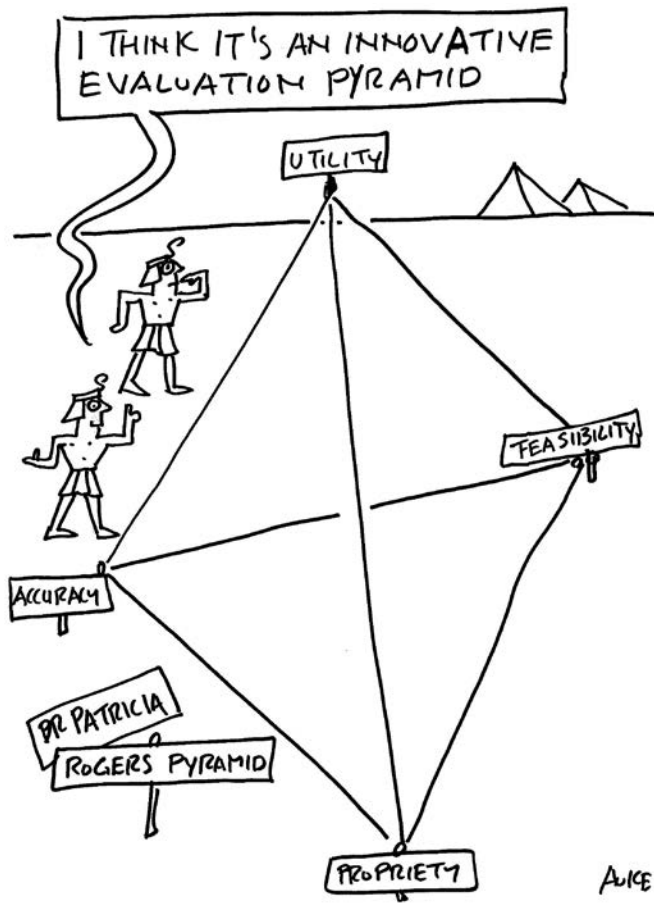
2.2.3 Consider stakes, stakeholders, evaluation use and consequences

Once the main reasons (purposes) for carrying out the evaluation are clear, you need to identify the key stakeholders who will engage in the evaluation as well as the primary intended users of the evaluation findings. The choice of stakeholder engagement is important as it will influence not only the way the evaluation process is designed and implemented, but also the consequences.

Focusing on users is important, as their active engagement is necessary to enhance 'ownership' of the evaluation process and active use of its findings, thereby increasing the utility of the evaluation. If primary intended users cannot commit themselves to the use of evaluation findings, then what is the point of the evaluation?

There are different factors that influence how an evaluation is used.

These can be organised into four categories (Alkin, 1985):

- **Evaluator characteristics** – such as commitment to make use a priority, willingness to involve users or key stakeholders, political sensitivity, and credibility

- **User characteristics** – such as interest in the evaluation, willingness to commit time and energy, and position of influence

- **Contextual characteristics** – such as size of the organisation, political climate, and existence of competing information

- **Evaluation characteristics** – such as nature and timing of the evaluation report, relevance of evaluation information, and quality of the data and evaluation.

2.2.4   Articulate the theory of change

What is the envisaged pathway of change for the development intervention? How do stakeholders think change will happen? What critical assumptions have been made for this pathway of change?

The logical framework (logframe) has traditionally been used widely as a tool in development planning to systematically structure development interventions. In recent times, however, other frameworks and approaches have gained popularity, such as the **theory of change**, due in part to the limitations of the logframe.

Logframe

The logframe matrix comprises different levels of objectives with supporting activities aimed at achieving these objectives. There are also a column for underlying assumptions about cause and effect relationships and potential risks and columns indicating how progress will be monitored. It is based on 4 (or 5) levels of linear interrelated objectives while in reality cause-effect relationships are more complex and cannot always be predicted. Often the logframe is used inflexibly without adapting to changing circumstances. Another drawback of the logical framework is that a lot of attention is given to the results chain without giving enough attention to the processes and relationships which underpin this process of change.

In this guide we advocate using the theory of change – sometimes used interchangeably with the theory of action – because although it uses the same basic elements as the logical framework it gives you a broader (visual) perspective of the development initiative, taking into consideration underlying processes and assumptions for change to happen. It can also help to make explicit roles and relationships. Figure 2.2 shows an example of a theory of change for Agri-ProFocus[1], a Dutch partnership. Theory of change is defined as making explicit how people think change happens and what critical assumptions accompany this perceived change. Different people have different theories of change. It is your role as an evaluator to make these explicit, and to look for commonalities and where fundamental disagreement exists. Including or excluding stakeholders will have consequences for the program theory of change as different people have different theories about how change happens. A theory of change requires you to have a well-articulated and clear testable hypothesis about how change will occur that will allow you to be accountable for the results.

The theory of change can be used to:

- Check milestones

- Document lessons about what really happens

- Keep the evaluation implementation process transparent

- Help prepare reports of findings, policy, etc.

Particularly, critical assumptions will need to be evaluated and more rigorous attention is needed where issues are complex or emergent and where there is a lot of uncertainty. Connecting people in interdisciplinary teams that reflect on these emerging issues is critical. Visualizing a

[1] Agri-ProFocus is a partnership of Dutch donor agencies, credit institutions, companies, training and knowledge institutions, with the goal to promote farmer entrepreneurship in developing countries. Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research centre has facilitated the articulation this Theory of Change.

theory of change for more complex issues is not enough. The evaluator needs to get people to tell their stories so that their underlying theories about how change happens become more explicit.

There are various ways in which to conceptualise theories of change (Patton, 2008, p. 346):

- **Deductive approach**: drawing on academic literature on a specific topic (e.g., how behaviour is altered in order to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS)

- **Inductive approach:** doing fieldwork to gather facts, data and information about the theory of change

- **User-focused approach:** working with intended users to produce their theories of change.

All three approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. You may need to use a combination of approaches, as no single approach will provide the full picture of a situation. Intended users may know what is going on in reality but lack the expertise in a particular topic, which could be obtained from a deductive approach. You also need proof (inductive) of whether or not something works in a particular context. This can be done not only by asking stakeholders about their experiences and views (which can be subjective), but also by observing and field-testing.

For more on causal maps visit the website of IHMC Cmap Tools: http://cmap.ihmc.us/conceptmap.html

For software that is specifically aimed at evaluation and planning specialists, visit the website of DoView: http://www.doview.com/

There are numerous ways to conceptualise theories of change or action. One relatively simple way is to develop a causal map to illustrate:

- intended cause-effect relationships

- underlying assumptions.

The intended cause-effect relationships should indicate the following key elements as well as clarify how they are interlinked and what factors might influence these linkages:

- **Activities:** What the development initiative sets out to do.

- **Outputs:** What the development initiative was directly responsible for delivering (tangible services and projects, e.g., numbers of people trained, or types of study reports produced).

- **Outcomes:** What changes/effects were expected as a result of the outputs. This may include changes in awareness, motivation, skills, knowledge as well as behaviour and performance.

- **Impact:** Changes in socio-economic and/or environmental conditions the programme sought to contribute towards.

- **Assumptions:** external factors (i.e., events, conditions or decisions) that could affect the progress or success of a development programme. They help to explain the causal linkages. Not all elements of a theory of change can be visualized, for example our values that influence our thinking about how change happens.

Figure 2.2 A Theory of Change for Agri-ProFocus (APF)

APF agenda is influenced by external factors at local, national and international level

Poverty reduction (MDG1)

APF agenda is influenced by external factors at local, national and international level

The APF partnership is convinced that strong producer organisations are crucial for systemic change

Improved farmer entrepreneurship

Collaboration is needed between the public sector, private sector, NGO's/service providers, financial services/MFI's, research & learning

Each actor takes his responsibility to use the learnings from the APF Agri-Hub in his own interventions

Effective interventions and services by different actors towards improved farmer entrepreneurship

Cross country learning improves our approach in the thematic areas

Intensifying exchange leads to new skills and insights

Organising farmers

The APF objectives are an integral part of the existing programs of the partners

Learning & Innovation

Market access (VCD, BDS and MIS)

Coordination, harmonization of existing efforts

Vibrant Agri-Hubs at country level link multiple actors on farmer entre-preneurship

Linkages to external stakeholders

Access to finance

The thematic areas are based on a joint country analysis which combined contribute to improved farmer entrepreneurship

Joint action

Gender in agriculture

Sustainable production and climate

Policy influence and debate

Through working together operational costs can be reduced and more value can be created

The Agri-Hub develops an appropriate local coordination structure at country level

APF agenda is influenced by external factors at local, national and international level

APF agenda is influenced by external factors at local, national and international level

| Impact | Outcome | Output | Link to 5C's framework (ECDPM) | Assumptions | Crosscutting themes / Thematic focus | Sphere of Control | Sphere of Influence | Sphere of Interest |

Source: Agri-ProFocus and Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research centre

2.2.5 Agree on key evaluation areas and questions

Who needs what information? What are the broad areas of concern for stakeholders? What questions need to be addressed? How can we summarise the key issues and steps in the evaluation process?

You need to prioritise the areas and questions to be evaluated based on the intended uses and the possible consequences or influences of the evaluation. This includes making explicit what can and cannot be realised through the evaluation. Different stakeholders have different information needs. It is important to find out about these different information needs and how stakeholders, especially primary intended users, intend to use the findings, including, e.g., for influencing change. Careful negotiation is needed on what evaluation areas and questions to focus on during the evaluation.

Evaluations often assess the following: *impact, relevance, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency* (DAC criteria for evaluation) and *efficacy* (see Box 2.4). It is essential to understand the meaning and implications of each of these criteria and whether others need to be included. For example, when assessing relevance, does this mean relevance to the funding agency or to the implementing agency, or target group? And cost-effectiveness may be a more appropriate criterion than efficiency. What does impact mean and to whom? You also need to consider the weighting given to criteria as they may not all have the same value in terms of importance. Chianca (2008) provides a wealth of information and ideas on criteria and suggestions for improvement. Stakeholders should suggest what criteria to use and how they understand these criteria. Cross-cutting issues like gender and diversity, rights, etc., often aligned to the key principles and approaches

of an organisation can also be included in key evaluation areas. However, particularly where issues are complex in nature, it is important to ensure flexibility in the evaluation process regarding the issues being addressed. Open-mindedness, expecting the unexpected, looking for surprise and patterns are crucial in this respect.

Box 2.4 Definition of Key Evaluation Areas

Impact: The changes in the lives of (rural) people, as perceived by them and their partners at the time of evaluation, and sustainability-enhancing change in their environment to which the development initiative has contributed. Changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development initiative are consistent with the target group's priorities and the recipient and donors' policies

Sustainability: The likelihood that the positive effects of the development initiative (such as assets, skills, facilities or improved services) will persist for an extended period after the external assistance ends

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which the development initiative attains its objectives at the goal or purpose level, i.e., the extent to which the development initiative has attained its intended objectives, and is the right thing to do

Efficiency: A measure of how economically inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs. A comparison of the value (not necessarily monetary) of the output of the system and the resources needed to achieve that output

Efficacy: The extent to which a development initiative's objectives were achieved or expected to be achieved given the means used

Source: Adapted from Guijt and Woodhill (2002) and Checkland *et al* (1990)

Not all areas require assessment in evaluations. Additional evaluation criteria (or performance areas) may be added, depending on the ToR and what stakeholders consider relevant. The emphasis on different criteria may vary, e.g., there may be particular focus on impact with little emphasis on efficiency. As discussed earlier, it is useful to base the identification of evaluation criteria on the needs of the different stakeholders, in particular the primary intended users. This can be done by discussing with them why each area should be assessed, to what extent the information can be realistically obtained and how the information will be used.

Evaluation questions

The art of good evaluation is to ask the right questions at the outset, motivated by existing knowledge gaps and to tailor the data and analysis to answering those questions in the specific context (Martin Ravallion, 2009).

Key evaluation questions can now be formulated based on the selected areas for evaluation.

Evaluation or learning questions are broad questions that help to focus the evaluation and can assist in telling a comprehensive story when presenting the key findings of the evaluation. Different stakeholders will have different (sometimes overlapping) questions and it is important to negotiate and agree on which questions the evaluation should focus.

Box 2.5 Evaluation / Performance / Learning Questions

- Help to focus information gathering on what will truly advance understanding and improve performance of the development programme in relation to specific objectives and therefore help guiding strategic learning

- Help to get a more integrated and meaningful picture of the overall project achievement.

- Activate cross-cutting issues & principles and assumptions/risks

- Help identify use, users and possible consequences of the evaluation

- Make it easier to specify which specific indicators are really necessary

- Are not just about what has been achieved but also about why there is success or failure, who exactly has been impacted and what has been learned to improve future action

- Need to be developed for all levels in an objective hierarchy

- May lead you to rephrase the objective(s) to make it sharper in its definition

Source: Adapted from Guijt and Woodhill (2002)

Evaluation or learning or assessment questions should be formulated in such a way that they can be linked to each purpose of an evaluation, see Annex A. These questions help to focus on what stakeholders wish to learn from, or assess through, the evaluation. How these questions are related to the key evaluation areas (impact, relevance, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency, efficacy) can be found in Box 2.6.

Box 2.6 Examples of Evaluation Questions in Relation to Key Evaluation Areas

- *Impact – what changes have resulted?*
  To what extent has the development initiative contributed towards its longer term goals? Why or why not? What unanticipated positive or negative consequences did the development initiative have? Why did they arise? To what extent has the development initiative contributed towards e.g. poverty reduction (or other long-term goals)? Why or why not?

- *Relevance – are we doing the right things?*
  Was/is the development initiative a good idea given the situation needing improvement? Does it deal with target group priorities? Why or why not?

- *Sustainability – will changes last?*
  Will there be continued positive impacts as a result of the development initiative once it has finished? Why or why not?

- *Efficacy – is the initiative working as expected?*
  Are the objectives of the development initiative achieved or expected to be achieved, given the means used? Why or why not?

- *Effectiveness – are we doing things right?*
  Have the planned purpose and component purposes, outputs and activities been achieved? Why or why not? Is the intervention logic correct? Why or why not?

- *Efficiency – is the initiative worthwhile?*
  Were inputs (resources and time) used in the best possible way to achieve outcomes? Why or why not? What could we do differently to improve implementation, thereby maximizing impact, at an acceptable and sustainable cost?

Source: Adapted from Guijt and Woodhill (2002) and Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research centre

2.2.6　Further define evaluation boundaries

How broad or how narrow is the evaluation going to be? What are the additional factors influencing the boundaries of the evaluation? What is the level of stakeholder participation throughout the evaluation process? How detailed should the information be? What capacities and conditions are available to carry out the evaluation? Who is regarded as an expert? What is 'expert knowledge'? What is the 'world view' affecting the evaluation? What contextual factors influence the evaluation?

In the previous sections you were encouraged to think through some issues that affect the boundaries of an evaluation: purpose, use and consequences, stakes and stakeholders, evaluation and learning questions. This section looks at additional elements that will help you define the boundaries of an evaluation: level of stakeholder participation, type of information needed and level of detail, capacities and conditions, geographical coverage, and time period. These will further shape the design of the evaluation, its use and possible consequences or influences. Your role as an evaluator is to facilitate the process of decision-making by the evaluation manager in collaboration with key stakeholders.

Additional factors influencing the boundaries of an evaluation (adapted from Guijt and Woodhill, 2002) are listed below:

- **Level of stakeholder participation:** Who is to be involved in the design, implementation and use of the evaluation? For example, if communities are to define their own indicators of change and also assess this level of change, then choosing a participatory evaluation may be useful. The widely documented experiences on how participatory approaches can be used for evaluation reveal that explicit decisions have to be made prior to the evaluation about the range of stakeholders to be involved and the extent of their participation. Table 2.2 below provides an example of stakeholder participation in various phases of the evaluation process.

- **Type of information and level of detail:** What type of information do you require to address the evaluation/assessment questions? What type of information do you require to guarantee the use and think through the possible consequences or influences of the evaluation? How much information do you need to provide for decision-making (Less is more!)? Should this information be qualitative (e.g., narrative) or quantitative (e.g., numbers)? Qualitative information can often address the 'why' question and support quantitative data. The level of detail may differ for different aspects being evaluated – you may need a lot of detail where finances are concerned and less detail when trying to get a holistic view of the situation being evaluated.

Table 2.2 Example of Stakeholder Participation in Evaluation

Stakeholder	Deciding on evaluation purpose	Deciding on key information needs and key indicators	Collect and process data	Analysing and making sense of data and information	Communicating and reporting on findings	Decision-making for future programming	Using findings (e.g., for action, thinking, motivation)	Influencing change at different levels
Implementing agency	xxxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx	xxxx
Communities/ primary stakeholders	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxxx	xxx	xxx	xxxx	xxxx
Other key stakeholders	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx	xx
Funders	xxx	xx	x	x	x	xxxx	xxx	x

x — little/no participation

xx — some participation

xxx — moderate participation

xxxx — very high level of participation (e.g., decision-making)

- **Capacities and conditions:** What capacities and conditions need to be in place to carry out the evaluation? Questions that you may ask include:

  a. Human capacity: Are those to be involved in the evaluation process equipped with the necessary skills to carry out the evaluation?

  b. Incentives: Are these people motivated to be engaged in the evaluation? What incentives (e.g., skills training, acknowledgement) are in place? Intrinsic motivation (e.g., sense of personal accomplishment) tends to be much stronger than extrinsic motivation (e.g., small financial benefit) because it personally connects an individual to behaviour.

  c. Finances: Are there enough funds to carry out the evaluation?

  d. What knowledge management and sensemaking approaches are in place to support the learning from an evaluation? To what extent are people already used to critical reflection processes and methodologies (e.g., narratives) that can help to make sense of complex situations, and where flexibility and adaptability are key?

  e. Expertise: what is considered expert knowledge and who has this expert knowledge? What are the consequences of including some (e.g., scientists) and excluding others (e.g., local farmers) in terms of expertise?

Knowledge management (KM): comprises a range of practices used in an organisation to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organisational processes or practice.

Sensemaking: is the ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sensemaking is the process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions. It is "a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively".

Source: Klein *et al.* (2006)

In addition to the above, you will need to consider the time period and geographical coverage. When an initiative is widely spread and covers a large area, the extent to which stakeholders can be engaged in the process may be more difficult. Also, the time period given for an evaluation may further limit or allow stakeholder participation and learning, and influence the evaluation approach.

2.2.7 Agree on evaluation approach

How do we wish to undertake the evaluation?

Thinking through the focus (including purpose and utility) of an evaluation assists in deciding on the evaluation model or approach, and vice versa. Utilization-focused evaluation can encompass different approaches. You need to develop an approach that best fits the situation and the users of the evaluation. You may decide to embark on:

- a formative evaluation (to learn and improve), or

- a summative evaluation (to judge the overall value), or

- developmental evaluation: a departure from the traditional type of evaluation. It 'supports innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments' (Patton, 2011).

Appreciative Inquiry: Often known as AI, was developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in the 1980s. The approach is based on the premise that 'organisations change in the direction in which they inquire.' So an organisation which inquires into problems will keep finding problems, but an organisation which attempts to appreciate what is best in itself will discover more and more that is good. It can then use these discoveries to build a new future where the best becomes more common.

Source:
http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/Appreciative.htm

As an evaluator, you can assist the key stakeholders in choosing the most appropriate method or approach. If the evaluation is focused on empowerment, e.g., you may choose an **empowerment-focused evaluation**, which is conducted in a way that affirms participants' self-determination and political agenda (Fetterman and Wandersman 2005, in Patton, 2008, p. 302). If you are looking at your organisation's best practices, then you may opt for **appreciative inquiry**.

The choice of a particular evaluation model or approach depends mainly on the purpose of an evaluation, and can be influenced by the possible consequences or other factors that influence the boundaries of an evaluation. Annex B shows the comparison between traditional evaluation and complexity-sensitive developmental evaluation (Patton, 2011). These differences can have a major impact on evaluation design, utility as well as influence and/or consequences. Interpersonal communication and networks may also play a role. For example, in a development initiative with good interconnectedness, where learning and adaptation is part of the development process, stakeholders may find it easier to respond to (complex) issues arising from the evaluation and therefore be more ready for the evaluation process. As an evaluator, you need to raise some of these issues for discussion, e.g., through formal and informal, individual and group discussions, within and outside the organisation.

2.3 Implement the evaluation

Implementing an evaluation involves the following steps as shown in the diagram below.
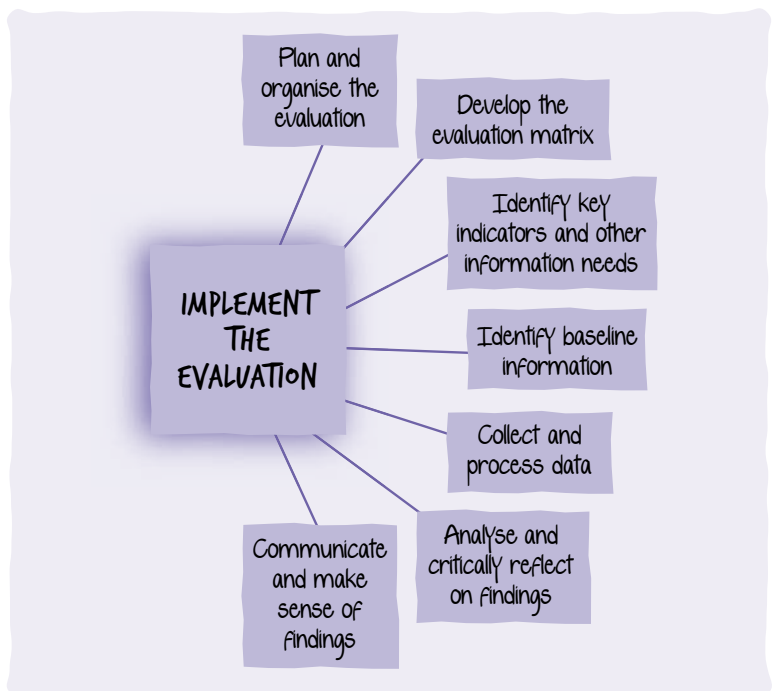
2.3.1   Plan and organise the evaluation

What do you need to plan and organise an effective evaluation process?

When planning and organising the evaluation, you and the evaluation manager need to consider a range of issues:

- Evaluation focus: Purpose, key evaluation/learning questions, use and consequences, stakeholders, and other boundaries of the evaluation. This is a role mainly for the evaluation manager and key stakeholders, and can be facilitated by the evaluator.

- Evaluation approach or methodology, including theories, standards, principles and values that underpin the evaluation. The evaluator can make suggestions to the evaluation manager and key stakeholders who then decide which approach to use.

- Evaluation process: This can be specified in, e.g., an evaluation matrix (see Section 2.3.2). The evaluation matrix is an important guiding tool for the design and implementation of the evaluation. This is a task mainly for the evaluator, with input from stakeholders.

- Activities, time, role and responsibilities: Develop a time sheet that specifies when the various activities should occur and who is responsible. This is also mainly a task for the evaluator, with input from stakeholders.

- Human resources: Who is going to actively take part in the evaluation? What role will they play and what skills training (e.g., in data collection) do they need to effectively support the evaluation process? Who are the evaluation team members and the resource people (e.g., translators, local facilitators)? Have you selected the right people with the right skills (both process and content)? The evaluation manager and the evaluator may carry out a quick needs assessment to ensure that they have the right people.

- Material resources: What tools (e.g., ranking charts, interview checklists) do you need to develop to implement the evaluation process? What materials (e.g., flipcharts, markers) and other resources (e.g., video equipment to capture stories) do you need to support the process? This is the task of the evaluator.

- Finances: Develop a budget for the whole evaluation process, from focus and design up to evaluation of the evaluation process. This can be done by the evaluator but the final decision is with the evaluation manager.

- Reporting: Although this is the task of the evaluator, the way in which an evaluation is reported needs to be agreed with the evaluation manager and key stakeholders (especially primary intended users).

Planning activities tends to be an iterative process throughout the evaluation. Box 2.7 suggests a format for an evaluation work plan.

Box 2.7 Suggested Outline for a Work Plan for an Evaluation

1. Project/programme overview

2. Evaluation mandate

3. Evaluation matrix

4. Methodology

5. Evaluation team

6. Activity and effort analysis

7. Schedule of activities

8. Budget

9. Outline of the evaluation report

Source: IUCN (2004, p. 26)

When all the elements of the planning for the evaluation are clear, you should develop your terms of reference (ToR). As mentioned earlier, the ToR for an evaluation provide the guidelines for the work to be carried out for the whole evaluation process. Developing a ToR is an iterative process. Box 2.8 lists the items that could be covered in a ToR.

Box 2.8 Sample Format for Terms of Reference

1. Rationale or purpose for the evaluation

2. Use and primary intended users of the evaluation

3. Theory of change and context for the evaluation (what is the development initiative about and in what context?)

4. Stakeholders to be engaged in the evaluation

5. Key evaluation/learning questions

6. Scope of the evaluation: level of participation, level of detail, capacities and conditions availability

7. Evaluation methodology or approach

8. Standards (and principles) for evaluation

9. Required competencies of the evaluator(s)

10. Work plan

11. Outputs and deliverables

12. Cost

13. Appendices (including the evaluation matrix)

2.3.2 Develop the evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix is a key tool used in designing evaluations and helps you to summarise the implementation of the evaluation process. It assists in focusing the key evaluation questions and clarifying ways in which these key questions will be addressed during the evaluation. Flexibility is required in using this evaluation matrix, particularly where issues are complex in nature and clear objectives and indicators cannot be defined. An example of an evaluation matrix is provided in Table 2.3.

The evaluation matrix is usually developed after an initial literature review and discussions with key stakeholders and primary users, or when conceptualising the theory of change (see Section 2.2.4). In doing so, it is important to understand the wider context (environmental, political, economic, etc.) and, if necessary, to work with individuals who do.

Key elements of the evaluation matrix may include:

- **Evaluation focus/ key performance areas**: Key areas to be explored during the evaluation

- **Key evaluation questions**: Broad questions that help to focus the evaluation on the information needs of the primary intended users of the findings

- **Key information needs**: These may include a range of different types of information to answer the key evaluation questions. Often referred to as indicators but can be broader

- **Baseline information**: What baseline information already exists?

- **Data gathering**: What sources and methods are going to be used for data collection?

- **Planning and resources**: What tools, planning, training, expertise are required and who does what?

- **Information analysis, critical reflection, reporting and feedback**: How will analysis of the findings take place? How will feedback and reporting take place? Who is responsible for what?

- **Information use, influence and consequences**: How will the findings be put to use? Who are the users of the findings? How will the evaluation be used to influence change at different levels? What can be the possible consequences of the evaluation? Who is responsible for what?

Important in all of the above is that stakeholders, especially primary intended users, are engaged in the process of making decisions at each of these stages.

Table 2.3 Example of an Evaluation Matrix for an Agricultural Development Initiative for Improved Livelihoods

Purposes of the evaluation *Why do you want to carry out the evaluation?*	Strategic management – adjust overall intervention strategy in relation to internal and external context E.g., to assess to what extent the overall intervention logic, chosen strategies, approaches and targeting have contributed to change in people's lives or the environment, and how they related to other interventions and situations that affect people's livelihood.
Key evaluation areas and questions *What do you want to know?*	Impact: To what extent are strategies leading to (un-) expected changes in people's lives?
Stakeholders and primary intended users and use ('ownership') *Who will use the information and how will they use it?*	Primary intended users: Programme managers, policy-makers, funders
	Use: to make strategic decisions on how to proceed in the next phase, e.g. in terms of strategies (e.g., agricultural production, income generation?); approach: participatory, targeting (women and children? men? Low-income families?)
	Programme managers and other stakeholders: To be able to see the whole picture as far as people's lives are concerned and what role the development programme can play in this respect
Key information needs *What information can answer the key evaluation questions?*	Types of positive and negative changes in the lives of the target group (stratified by gender and age group) as a result of program activities; quantified per type of change
	Factors influencing these changes
Baseline data *What baseline data are available and where?*	Only nutritional data available from mother-and-child clinics
Data gathering: methods & sources; responsibilities *How to collect the data, what are possible sources of information and who will collect this information?*	Most significant change technique (or MSC, story telling technique); impact flow charts; matrix ranking; food and nutrition security survey
	Farmer Field School (FFS) staff, M&E officers, communication staff, evaluator

Planning & resources: tools, planning, training, data management, expertise, responsibilities	Train field staff in MSC technique, facilitating discussions on impact flow chart, matrix ranking, etc.
What do we still need to plan or organise in terms of people's skills, materials, managing the data etc and who will do this?	Cards, markers and flipcharts
	Develop story collection formats
	Excel sheets
	SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to analyse data
Information analysis, critical reflection and reporting & feedback; responsibilities	Discussing and selecting MSC stories and discussing findings from participatory exercises at farmers', district and regional levels
How will we analyse and make sense of the data and information?	Hold national stakeholder workshop to reflect on key findings
	Different reports for different levels
How do we report and get feedback on the findings? Who is responsible?	FFS staff, M&E officers, communication staff, management team, key stakeholders, evaluator
Information use, evaluation influence and consequences	Decision-makers will use the evaluation to decide on whether or not to continue with the programme.
Who will use the findings and what is the intended use?	Programme managers: improved thinking on how development works in this particular context and what changes are required
How can the evaluation influence change at different levels? *What are the possible consequences of the evaluation?* *Who is responsible?*	Different stakeholders: understanding each other's values, perspectives, experiences (personal, interpersonal, collective)

SUGGESTED STEPS FOR DESIGNING AND FACILITATING EVALUATIONS THAT MATTER

2.3.3   Identify key indicators and other information needs

What indicators and other information needs can assist in answering the key evaluation/learning questions?

Each evaluation question will have a range of indicators or other information needs to answer the question. When used together they can give a comprehensive answer to the question being evaluated. As much as possible indicators need to be negotiated with stakeholders, especially primary intended users of the evaluation. Different stakeholders may have different ideas about what indicators to use for a particular evaluation question but they may also use different standards to measure success.

An **indicator** can be defined as 'a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance. A unit of information measured over time that can help show changes in a specific condition. A given goal or objective can have multiple indicators'.

Source: Guijt and Woodhill (2002)

Making the most of indicators (and seeing their limits) means deciding whether or not to use indicators – or opt for questions – and if so, how to construct and use them to tell the story of change.

Source: Guijt (2007, p. 27)

Box 2.9 Measuring Change with an Open Mind - Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique and Participatory Video in Zanzibar

An IFAD-funded programme in Zanzibar integrated the use of the most significant change technique and participatory video in their M&E system. In their farmer groups, farmers can tell their most significant change story on video, responding to the question: In your opinion, what has been the most significant change in your life since your involvement in the programme? The farmers could indicate changes in their lives according to their own measures of change in addition to those set by outsiders.

During the most significant change technique and participatory video training we learned important lessons about significant changes in the lives of farmers, such as the woman whose story was selected, not because she increased her chicken production a lot (she didn't), but because she was able to practise the appropriate skills and set an example to other farmers. Sharing these reasons for choice with other farmers is important for the learning process. Another farmer explained a negative change as a result of being engaged in the initiative. He did not have any land, but was allowed to use some of his brother-in-law's land. However, as the farmer and his brother-in-law got trained in improved farming practices, the brother-in-law wanted him to return the land so that he (the brother-in-law) could implement his newly gained knowledge and skills. As a result of the initiative, the storyteller gained knowledge, but lost the land he was using for agricultural production. After reflecting on this story, the farmers' group decided they needed to assist this farmer. Capturing negative change stories is also important for managing for impact.

Sources: Kusters *et al.* (2009); Kusters (2009); informal discussions during a writeshop (2009)

2.3.4   Identify baseline information

What baseline information is already available? For which evaluation questions and indicators do we need additional baseline information? How are we going to get this?

Baseline information is information about the initial starting point or situation before any intervention has taken place. If done well, an initial basis for comparison can help you assess what has changed over a period of time and whether it was as a result of the development initiative and how useful this has been. A baseline can also help in redefining a development initiative at start-up. It is not always necessary to use baselines for making comparative analysis. Baselines may not be very useful when trying to make sense of a complex situation, where many issues emerge all the time. In fact, some of the best baselines are those constructed much later in the development initiative.

Some baseline information may already be present, e.g., through the situational assessment for the development initiative, or secondary data like reports, or statistical data from other organisations. Not every indicator will need baseline information. Some baseline information can be acquired retrospectively such as through storytelling.

2.3.5   Collect and process data

How will we collect and process the data?

Once you have identified your indicators, you will need to decide which methods should be used to measure and explain changes in the indicators. These often come from approaches that contain a mix of methods and guiding principles. You should consider various methods for data collection, collation and storing (and later on for analysis, critical reflection and communication). Methods and methodologies can be adapted after pretesting them for appropriateness and accuracy, as well as reviewing them on the basis of data generated (e.g., through daily reflection meetings with the evaluation team). If necessary, train people in the use of the methods.

Identify specific sources of data and methods by which the information may be acquired, such as documents, surveys, interviews, stories, pictures, matrices, etc. Also, think about who is going to collect and process the data. When identifying appropriate data sources and methods, the following may be useful to bear in mind:

- Secondary data review: Try to understand and gather information about the existing M&E system of the development initiative as well other M&E systems that may be implemented by other key stakeholders or studies carried out by others (e.g. research centres, bureau of statistics etc).

- **Triangulation** of methods, sources of information and team members.

> **Triangulation** is a crucial stage of the assessment and involves cross-checking data for validity and reliability. This can be done by:
>
> - Using a mix of methods: participatory versus less or non-participatory, individual versus group-based, or methods dealing with quantitative versus qualitative forms of data
> - Using a mixed team: different people from different stakeholder groups, to make up the team for designing and implementing the evaluation
> - Using a mix of sources: from road-side to far-off places, from women to men, from urban to rural, secondary data such as previous studies, reports and existing M&E data.

Before selecting your methods, bear in mind the following:

- Decide whether you need quantitative or qualitative data, or both. Some data collection methods are more suited to one or the other.

- Data collection methods can be individual or group-based. Some information may need to be gathered individually, e.g., very sensitive information. Others can be gathered in a group setting, e.g., to encourage shared learning, and/or ensure cross-checking of information.

- Data collection methods need to be participatory (where possible), especially when shared learning is important.

- The methods you select will depend on the kind of information you require and the purpose of the evaluation.

> **Participatory methods**
>
> To make the evaluation more utilization-focused, participatory and learning oriented methods can be useful. Methodologies such as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) focus on engaging stakeholders in a shared process from learning to action. You can find out more about PLA and the quarterly PLA-notes magazine from http://www.planotes.org/
>
> The IFAD Guide for Project M&E provides a useful list of methods: http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm
>
> Other useful resources can be found on the WUR portal on Participatory Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation: http://portals.wi.wur.nl/ppme/

To gather quantitative data, a range of different methods such as surveys can be used to record information in numbers or anything that is measurable. In the case of qualitative data, which can often also be quantified, specific methods are needed such as:

- story telling techniques, e.g., the most significant change (MSC) technique or learning histories

- participatory video

- matrix ranking

- flow charts

- Venn diagram

- participatory mapping

- mind-mapping

- role plays

- time lines

- semi-structured interviews

- focus group discussions.

Often these qualitative methods will help you to find out the reasons behind particular changes in a development initiative; they can help to explain the quantitative data.

While there has been a lot of emphasis on obtaining quantitative data, it is important to also ensure that qualitative data is gathered. This will help you develop a more comprehensive picture of reality and improve the reliability of your evaluation findings.

Quantitative data collection techniques such as surveys with 'yes' and 'no' answers produce quantitative data which enable you to make generalisations about your findings. The drawback to having solely quantitative data is that it limits interpretation so you will need to be prudent about the meanings you draw from such data. For this reason, combining both methods – qualitative and quantitative data collection – is a useful way of getting a balanced set of findings.

2.3.6   Analyse and critically reflect on findings

How are we going to analyse the data and make sense of the findings? How is this going to influence our decision-making, our thinking, our actions?

After collecting the data, you need to organise it into a manageable form ready for analysis. This involves transcribing data into a systematic format, entering the information obtained from each respondent or group and putting it into an appropriate format (e.g., in a computer database). Analysing findings requires looking closely at the information (ideas, facts, impressions), clarifying and structuring it, understanding connections and identifying core elements, in order to arrive at conclusions that can lead to action (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002, p. 6–22). Again, it is important to consider who will be involved, how you will undertake the analysis and critical reflection and what the consequences of your choices will be.

When analysing issues that are 'ordered' (cause-effect relationships are known), you can use deductive approaches for analysis. However, when issues are complex, an abductive approach may be more appropriate i.e., looking for multiple observations and explanations, patterns and relationships without necessarily looking for causality. Here, it is important to get many people involved in thinking about and suggesting what works or not, and the average will be close to reality. This will help speed

up decision-making for action. Particularly where complex issues are concerned, you need to be on top of things to make decisions based on 'rough' data. For this purpose, you need to understand, manage, and 'stimulate' the things that go well and quickly address those that do not.

NOT ONLY COLLECT DATA, BUT ALSO....

Create 'space' (physically and emotionally) so that people are able to critically reflect on findings. Sometimes special events are needed, such as a **citizens' jury** (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002, p. 8-15/16). Other ways of creating space include:

- Organising separate homogeneous groups

- Focusing on understanding and deciding rather than describing

- Creating thematic learning groups.

Citizens' jury is a participatory technique. It is based on the rationale that given adequate information and opportunity to discuss an issue, a group of stakeholders can be trusted to make a decision on behalf of their community, even though others may be considered to be more technically competent. Citizens' juries are most suited to issues where a selection needs to be made from a limited number of choices.

Source: http://www.nccsap.net/documents/pdf/StakeholderExercises.pdf

To deepen the understanding of the development initiative being evaluated, you should try bringing out the different viewpoints that may exist among the stakeholders. There are a range of methods to facilitate this process:

- Circular Dialogues are used to help tell a complex story, especially in cases where there is little information to go on. In Circular Dialogues participants are guided by facilitators to observe a problem or issue from various perspectives and finally to arrive at a conclusion based on what they have learned during the dialogue session (Williams *et al.*, 2008 and Hummelbrunner, 2000)

- Circular identification plays an important role in distinguishing problems with and without solutions – a contradiction exists when no solution can be found, and a solution exists when no contradiction can be found (Dubois *et al.*, 2009)

- Circular interviewing can help participants not only to generate information but also to reflect on and generate new questions and ideas. In circular interviewing, participants (in a circle) each take on the role of interviewer and interviewee. This form of interviewing, which is largely unstructured, often leads to 'new' information and helps participants make their own 'connections' and insights into the development initiative. It is also particularly useful when there is some doubt about the information to be collected

- Ritual dissent/assent is a workshop method designed to test and enhance proposals, stories, and ideas by subjecting them to ritualised dissent (challenge) or assent (positive alternatives). Ritual dissent is a forced listening technique, not a dialogue or discourse (Cognitive Edge, 2007)

The advantage of using these methods is that they allow you to continually question what you have heard and seen, and not just jump to conclusions, adding rigour to the data analysis process. These methods deliberately keep you in a 'puzzling' space for as long as possible.

2.3.7 Communicate and make sense of findings

What information needs to be communicated to whom, when and how? How can we get feedback? How can we make sense of findings for use and influence?

An evaluator can facilitate:

- the process of negotiation and agreement between key stakeholders, especially primary intended users of the evaluation

- how and when the evaluation findings need to be communicated

- how stakeholders use these findings.

S/he can also:

- organise feedback from different stakeholders on the key findings in order to make sense of what these findings mean in their particular context, and what the consequences are for individuals, interpersonal relationships and organisations

- discuss how the findings can be used to influence change and develop a communication strategy for this purpose, ensure that findings are transparent, understandable and meaningful to stakeholders, in order to stimulate use (e.g., actions) and influence (e.g., different thinking) of the evaluation.

Box 2.10 Poor Feedback with Serious Consequences

"A colleague was once the subject of an evaluation. With her experience in evaluations, she decided to be completely honest during the process 'knowing' that her feedback would assist the project to do better in future. However, after only one interview and no further feedback on findings, the final evaluation report was written. It came as a shock to her when she found out that her openness to share experiences had not been dealt with appropriately. The negative experiences she highlighted had been blown out of proportion and she had not been able to correct this or respond to this. Hereby communication was damaged and the project put on hold".

Source: Adapted from Kusters (2009)

When presenting information for feedback and action, the following practical considerations proposed by Guijt and Woodhill (2002, 6–29 to 6–31) should be taken into account:

- Ensure **clarity of message** for specific audiences: the interests and concerns of different primary intended users vary and will require adapted reports or other communication, both in terms of content and language. Each primary intended user will be interested in the answers to the key evaluation questions that they formulated.

- Agree on **when** the information is to be communicated: information needs to be timely, and is often related to decision-making processes.

- Consider **location**: people need to feel comfortable and at ease, often in their own environment, when findings are being presented.

- Use **different media** to communicate findings: this can involve written reports (from special studies to informal briefs), oral reporting (e.g., stories, meetings, radio), or visual displays (e.g., maps, graphs, videos, photos), relevant to the audience.

You also need to facilitate a process of sensemaking. This is particularly important when thinking about how evaluation findings will be used to influence change. As an evaluator you need to take particular care in how you communicate your results. Patton (2008) proposes a number of guidelines for making useful and practical recommendations (see Box 2.11).

Communicate findings and organise sensemaking of and feedback on these findings at different levels. What do the findings mean to us? How can we use them? How have they influenced us, our relationships, our organisation? Also, make sure you can substantiate the findings with adequate data and minimal generalisations. Differentiate findings from value-based interpretations and judgements, in order to assist those involved in the development initiative to make adequate decisions for change. Assess what the consequences of the evaluation might be on people, e.g., in terms of a change in thinking or action. Develop a change management or action plan with stakeholders that indicates the key actions to be taken and by whom (see Chapter 5). It is also important to have management involved in this process. A pathway of change after the evaluation to ensure use and think through the consequences can be drawn up together.

Evaluation can contribute by extending, enhancing, and checking the natural sensemaking that people engage in about policies, programmes, their environment, themselves. There are cultural variations in the ways in which people make sense of the world around them and in evaluations you will need to take this into account (Mark, 2009).

Hummelbrunner (2000, p. 19) mentions two forms of communication – 'digital' communication, where the represented object is given a name, and 'analogous' communication, where the object is expressed non-verbally through similarities (e.g., pictures). Although these two forms

are complementary, people tend to use analogous communication more as it is better suited to human relations. It is no surprise therefore, that analogous techniques are used in (evaluation) interventions, as they are better suited to deal with emotions and the relational aspects of communication. The most frequent ones are:

- stories and metaphors

- jokes and cartoons

- pictures and sculptures

- role play and exercises (e.g., positioning).

Use of the technique **positioning**: Social systems are represented through the spatial distribution of people in a room; their positions and relative distance represent relations to each other or with respect to certain topics. In this way, crucial aspects such as proximity, distance or exclusion can be expressed non-verbally and are directly felt by the actors. Positions can easily be changed. Therefore, this technique is well suited for experimenting with different options and finding new solutions.

Source: Hummelbrunner (2000, p. 19)

2.4 Evaluate the evaluation

How can we evaluate the evaluation?

It is important to allow participating stakeholders in the evaluation to critically reflect on the evaluation process and its outcome and the extent to which expectations have been met, e.g., in relation to the ToR – What did we do well? How could we do better next time? What have we learned from this? The evaluation manager has a key role to play in taking the lead in evaluating the evaluation, but the evaluator can also integrate this into the process. Of course, this should not be left only to the end of the evaluation. It is important throughout the evaluation process to keep in touch with key stakeholders, especially the evaluation manager, in order to adapt the evaluation to the specific needs, interests and situation of the stakeholders engaged in the process.

Evaluating our evaluations is a useful exercise which demonstrates our commitment to improving practice by following up our evaluations to find out how they were used – How were findings and recommendations used, if at all? What was valuable about the evaluation processes and findings? What was not helpful? What can be learned from this particular evaluation to improve future practice? (Patton, 2008, p. 573).

The (often inexplicit) consequences and influences of evaluation on people and interrelationships or organisations are also important to consider. Often, we do not see the immediate impact of evaluations that have been carried out, which makes it difficult to learn lessons for the future.

2.5 Some key points on suggested steps for designing and facilitating evaluations that matter

1. The engagement of stakeholders in an evaluation process makes sense on practical and ethical grounds and will enhance the understanding of the development initiative and the usefulness of the evaluation. Engaging stakeholders in thinking through the possible consequences of choices made in the evaluation process at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels is also important in designing and facilitating evaluations that matter.

2. The suggested steps for designing and facilitating evaluations that matter are:
   - Establish ability and readiness for evaluation
     - Assess ability and readiness for evaluation
     - Agree on participating stakeholders and primary intended users
   - Focus the evaluation
     - Agree on the evaluation purpose
     - Agree on evaluation principles and standards
     - Consider stakes, stakeholders, evaluation use and consequences
     - Articulate the theory of change
     - Agree on key evaluation areas and questions
     - Further define evaluation boundaries
     - Agree on evaluation approach
   - Implement the evaluation
     - Plan and organise the evaluation
     - Develop the evaluation matrix
     - Identify key indicators and other information needs
     - Identify baseline information
     - Collect and process data
     - Analyse and critically reflect on findings
     - Communicate and make sense of findings
   - Evaluate the evaluation

EVALUATE YOUR EVALUATION

3   Getting stakeholders to contribute successfully

People are more likely to use the results of evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings; they are more likely to understand and feel ownership if they've been actively involved; by actively involving primary intended users, an evaluation can prepare the groundwork for active use of the findings and application of recommendations (Patton, 2008).

In Chapters 1 and 2, we have seen where stakeholder engagement enhances an evaluation, making it more relevant and useful. We have also seen that this engagement has consequences which can lead to change at the individual, interpersonal and collective levels. But how do you engage stakeholders and get them to actively contribute to the evaluation process? Often, there is no best way of going about this. No doubt you will make mistakes, underestimate the time needed and fail to engage some of the 'right' stakeholders. It is important to accept that it is through mistakes that practice will improve. However, if you ask yourself the following key questions and use the frameworks/tools suggested, they may help you get your stakeholder strategy right:

- Who are the stakeholders?

- What are the stakes and who has these stakes?

- Why encourage stakeholder engagement?

- How much participation and what is the role of self-evaluation?

- Who to engage and what are the consequences of these choices?

- What evaluation roles are needed in balancing content and people processes?

- How to engage stakeholders effectively?

3.1   Who the stakeholders are

A stakeholder can be any institution or organisation, individual, community, or group of people having a direct or indirect interest in the outcome of a development initiative and its evaluation or who affects or is affected, positively or negatively, by its implementation and its outcome. There are often three main types of stakeholders – primary stakeholders who are directly affected by the development initiative such as community members; secondary stakeholders who have a direct role

in the initiative, such as programme implementers and key partners engaged in the process; tertiary stakeholders are those stakeholders who have a (in)direct stake but do not play an active role in the initiative.

To promote the use of the results of an evaluation, you need to know who from your group of stakeholders are your primary intended users and involve them as much as possible at every stage of the evaluation, from the planning and design stages, to being part of the team as well as a source of information, and providing feedback on the findings and thinking through the next steps. This not only helps to enrich the evaluation process, it often creates a sense of ownership and hereby increases the chance for utilization.

How deeply the stakeholders, especially the primary intended users, are committed to the evaluation process and its outcome, is dependent, in part, on factors such as the stakes they have in the development initiative and their level of involvement in the evaluation.

3.2 What are the stakes and who has these stakes?

What are the stakes? Who has these stakes? Conducting a stakeholder analysis or drawing up an influence matrix (see Figure 3.1) can help you address some of these questions and can give some insight into:

- the key stakeholders to engage, especially primary intended users

- the kind of interest they have in the evaluation, whether positive or negative

- those who are powerful actors in ensuring the initiative's success or failure

- those with little power or awareness to secure their own engagement.

In many development initiatives, you will find that stakeholders have multiple stakes. Let us consider the example of the street kid's programme in Ghana in Box 3.1. In this example, we see the different stakes of the stakeholders. However, in the case of the young girl and the grandmother, the stakes are similar. An important point to note is that within some stakeholder groups not all stakeholders are the same and may therefore have different stakes. For example, sex workers can be young, old, male or married or single and their stakes may vary from getting enough money to survive and send their children to school, to obtaining the latest designer clothes to gain respect from their peers.

3.3 Why encourage stakeholder engagement?

Once the main reasons or purposes for carrying out the evaluation are clear, you need to identify the stakeholders who will participate in the evaluation, especially the primary intended users of the evaluation, and think through the reasons for engaging with stakeholders. Engaging stakeholders can:

- provide a more balanced picture of reality of what the evaluation should be about, particularly in complex situations. If stakeholder participation is limited, it can lead you to make incomplete or even 'wrong' assumptions about how change happens or has happened. An evaluation can therefore have different consequences depending on the degree to which stakeholder views and perceptions are included.

- make the evaluation more relevant as they will influence not only the way the evaluation process is designed and implemented, but also the possible consequences and influences of the evaluation.

- spur primary intended users and other stakeholders into action during and after the evaluation.

Encouraging participation and collaboration, according to Patton, "… can [also] lead to an ongoing, longer-term commitment to using evaluation logic and building a culture of learning in a program or organisation" (2008). If stakeholders experience the evaluation process negatively, e.g., because of poor stakeholder participation, then there is very little chance that they will want to use the evaluation. Defining your primary intended users too narrowly also has consequences for the evaluation and actions for the future. Negotiating stakeholder engagement is therefore crucial.

3.4 How much engagement?

There are varying degrees and types of stakeholder engagement in an evaluation. How you engage stakeholders is also dependent on what it is you want from them and the resources available to you.

Common levels of participation include:

- Restricting participation to only informing stakeholders about the evaluation, its progress, disseminating findings and generating interest in the results

- Keeping stakeholders informed and consulting them regarding possible pitfalls, priorities and enhancing the credibility of the evaluation

- Actively involving the stakeholders in parts of the evaluation design or implementation process, e.g., in deciding on methods, data collection, etc.

- Collaborating with stakeholders to the extent where a lot of room is given to them within the evaluation process (from focusing up to implementing and evaluating the evaluation) to give advice, suggestions and to be part of the evaluation (decision-making) process. Here, the stakeholders are primary intended users and have a strong sense of ownership

- Empowering the stakeholders (see Box 3.2) – here stakeholders have ownership of the evaluation, they make the decisions, while the evaluator supports and facilitates the implementation of the decisions made. The capacity of stakeholders through the evaluation process is built in terms of their participation in evaluative thinking and practice.

Box 3.2 Empowering Stakeholders through Evaluation

Application of participatory methodologies has brought about a noticeable change in the way farmers cooperate in exchanging information, as well as in their capacity to apply information for decision-making. It has also increased their willingness to give information and their transparency. One of the factors at play here is the engagement of different stakeholders from the very beginning when the M&E system was designed. This has helped them to understand the process and to be aware of the usefulness of data and information. Most of the farmers and livestock keepers can now make use of data and information collected to identify problems and make decisions. It is now very common for the extension and technical officers to be challenged by farmers based on data and information collected in participatory M&E.

Source: Adapted from Kusters *et al.* (2009)

The last two levels of participation – collaboration and empowerment – are what you should aim for in your evaluation, and what we refer to as **meaningful participation**. This means that the key stakeholders are engaged in the evaluation to such an extent that it is relevant to them and that they are prepared to take action, leading to some change or impact on development.

3.4.1   Strengthening stakeholder engagement through self-evaluation

Self-evaluation has as its main objective the promotion of learning through the sharing of experiences and reflection so as to bring about change within the individual or organisation. Self-evaluation can have a wide range of benefits and, if conducted properly, can enhance meaningful participation within the evaluation process and bring about real

change. Self-evaluation can be part of the approach chosen for the evaluation. In Box 3.3, we see how the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), Wageningen University & Research centre facilitated self-evaluation within a private sector firm, and in so doing, helped them to become more open and change mindsets.

Box 3.3 Integrating Self-assessment in Evaluation: A Story from the Centre for Development Innovation

Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), Wageningen University & Research centre agreed to assess the services of a Dutch consultancy firm which provides capacity development support to development organisations in the South. The CDI team negotiated with the firm to have self-assessment as part of the evaluation process.

The methodology used in the self-assessment was aimed at promoting learning and evaluation by representatives of all stakeholders concerned. Evaluation criteria and indicators were developed in an interactive process with stakeholders where the formulation of performance questions was the starting point.

Results of the firm's work were assessed by the different stakeholders, and examined in an interactive sensemaking process. Learning was promoted through the application of the experiential (adult) learning cycle in workshops bringing together the experiences of all participants in participatory sessions. Experiences were analysed and reflected upon, further generalisation took place and common conclusions and differences were explored.

The evaluation was organised in a way that created dialogue, and allowed evaluative issues to be continuously considered and reconsidered, examined and re-examined with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

According to the firm, this self-assessment process has led to real changes. The change in mindset and openness to learning has encouraged more openness to change in the evaluation process.

Source: Kusters (2009)

Key points in carrying out self-evaluation include:

- Respecting and not penalising people for their openness

- Ensuring that there is confidentiality. It takes time, good facilitation skills and a 'safe environment' to create trust among people to share their views, experiences and expectations

- Allowing sufficient time and money for dialogue and for documenting the evaluation process

- Allowing the evaluator to assess and change some of the capacities and conditions necessary to allow people to actively participate in the evaluation process.

Carrying out self-evaluations is not easy, and is often dependent on the extent to which:

- Stakeholders are willing to critically reflect on self

- There is a culture that allows for critical reflection by different stakeholders

- There is management support for a learning culture
- Budgets have been fixed for evaluation or can be adapted to allow for stakeholder engagement.

3.5 Who to engage and what are the consequences of these choices?

Who to involve in your evaluation and the extent to which you can engage stakeholders will depend on a variety of situational factors:

- Purpose of the evaluation

- Evaluation or learning questions

- Use and users

- Other factors that influence the focus and boundaries of the evaluation.

Situational factors can also affect the level of engagement of your key stakeholders and the use of the findings of the evaluation. In Table 3.1, the column on the left-hand side gives an overview of the various types of situational factors. In other columns, two extremes of a spectrum of situational factors, possible implications in terms of users' participation and use are also explained. Some situational factors may be interlinked, e.g., if there is no prior history of evaluation within some stakeholder groups, you may encounter some resistance to engagement in the evaluation. No single factor, however, can lead to a high level of participation and high use. It is the combination of factors that determines the level of stakeholder engagement and use of the evaluation.

Table 3.1 Examples of Situational Factors in Evaluation that Can Affect Stakeholders' Participation and Use

Situational factors:	From one extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use	To the other extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use
1. Number of stakeholders to be dealt with	One primary decision-maker	Low participation of and low use by other stakeholders	Large number of decision-makers	High participation, use can be limited
2. Purpose of the evaluation	Formative purpose (improvement)	High participation, high use	Summative purpose (reading a decision)	Limited participation, limited use
3. Stakeholders' attitude toward evaluation	Enthusiasm	High participation, high use	Resistance	Low participation, low use

Situational factors:	From one extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use	To the other extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use
4. Stakeholders' knowledge about evaluation	Limited or no knowledge	Low participation, low use	Highly knowledgeable	High participation, high use
5. Interaction patterns within and between stakeholder groups in the development initiative	Cooperative	High participation, high use	Conflict laden	Low participation, low use
6. Prior evaluation experience of the development initiative	First time ever	Fair to high level of participation, fair to high use	Considerable experience	Tired with participation, limited use
7. Characteristics of stakeholder groups	Homogeneous groups	Easier to allow for participation and use	Heterogeneous groups	Dealing with diversity is more complex, but adapting methods can encourage participation. Use may be limited unless different findings for different people are produced
8. Location of the development initiative	One site	Easier for participation and use	Multiple sites	Participation and use can be high depending on resources, etc.
9. Resources available for evaluation	Little or no money to speak of	Limited participation and use	Substantial funding	High participation possible
10. Sources of funding for the development initiative	One funding source	Limited to participation of stakeholders within scope of funding source; limited use (unless funding source allows for more)	Multiple funding sources	You may have high and low level of participation of some stakeholders; use may also be mixed
11. Nature and approach of the development initiative	Simple and singular	Often participation of stakeholders can be limited to a few; use can also be limited	Complex and multi-dimensional	High participation required; use may vary

Situational factors:	From one extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use	To the other extreme…	Possible implications for participation and use
12. Decision-making structure	Horizontal, little hierarchy, little stratification	High participation and use	Hierarchical, long chain of command, stratified	Limited participation and use
13. Clarity about evaluation purpose, evaluation questions, use and users	Well-articu-lated, specifically defined	High participation, high use	Ambiguous, broadly defined	Limited participation; poor use
14. Existing data on the development initiative	Operating information system	Lower participation needed; use very focused	No existing data	High participation needed; use can be fair or high
15. Evaluator(s)' relationship to the development initiative	External	If good facilitation skills: fair to high participation and use	Internal	If good relationship: high participation and use
16. Impetus for the evaluation	Voluntary, self-initiated	High participation, high use	Required, forced on the development initiative	Limited participation and use
17. Time available for evaluation	Long timeline, open	High participation and use	Short timeline, fixed deadline	Limited participation and use
18. Prior experience to engagement, participation	Low level of participation ('inform')	Limited participation and use	High level of participation ('empower-ment')	High participation and use (provided they are not tired of participation)
19. Who controls the evaluation process	Researcher	Limited participation; low use	Practitioner	Fair to high participation and use
20. Stakeholder selection for participation	All legitimate groups	Mixed participation; mixed use	Primary intended users	High participation, high use

Source: Adapted from Patton (2008; page 204-205)

In situations where stakeholder participation is low, you may wish to stimulate participation so as to increase the use and usefulness of the evaluation. It is worth looking at which situational factors can be changed. For example, if there is resistance to the evaluation, try finding

out the reasons for this and discuss what can be done about it. One of the reasons for this resistance might be that there is very little or no knowledge about evaluation, so one solution would be to do some awareness-raising training on the importance and different approaches to evaluation.

3.5.1   Determining consequences

What are the consequences for implementing (partner) agencies, for example, when they have not engaged in the evaluation? We could imagine that ideas for the future drawn up by 'outsiders' may be considered less relevant in the eyes of local stakeholders, who may not be motivated to take action on these suggestions. There are many tools, such as Venn diagrams and the influence/importance matrix (DFID, 2003) that can be helpful in terms of making decisions on who to include in the evaluation and who not to include and this can be a good starting point for discussing consequences, see Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Influence Matrix of Stakeholders on an Evaluation
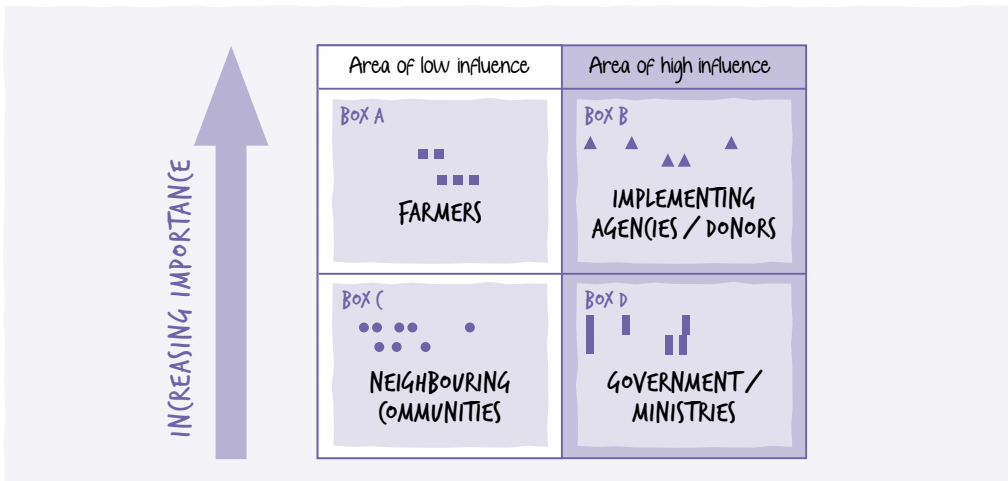
Source: Adapted from DFID (2003)

Figure 3.1 shows the influence that various stakeholders have on an evaluation of an agricultural development initiative. It is useful to look at stakeholders in terms of:

- Their interests in the evaluation and how they can be affected by it

- Their capacity and motivation to bring about change after the evaluation

- Their influence on the evaluation focus and implementation

- Their importance in terms of making the evaluation useful and relevant.

So, for example in Box A, farmers are very important to the initiative and to the evaluation, but have very little influence. These farmers are important to your evaluation given that they are the main beneficiaries of the development initiative. You may find that they will need to be organised into farmers' groups or representatives so as to increase their influence on the evaluation. Stakeholders such as managers, implementing agencies, donors are represented in Box B. This group is very important, having a lot of influence on the development initiative and its evaluation. You will need to develop a good relationship with this group to ensure its active engagement in the evaluation process.

As mentioned from the onset, getting stakeholder engagement right is not easy. It will often be time-consuming and involve a lot of resources that you may not have. In addition to this, you will need to be open to different ideas and opinions. Consider the example in Box 3.4 where stakeholders were hostile towards programme staff.

Box 3.4 Stakeholder Participation in Data Collection and Analysis – Mixed Feelings About Consequences

Centre for Development Innovation (CDI), Wageningen University & Research Centre, and IFPRI/ISNAR under an IFAD-funded programme in Zanzibar, helped set up a participatory M&E system in Zanzibar. During a write shop, staff involved in the initiative, wrote stories about how they viewed change consequent on increased engagement of stakeholders. Some wrote about how farmers were better able to understand and learn from each other, address farming practices and the impact on their lives. Others wrote about how farmers revealed more about themselves such as income and other sensitive issues - giving insight into how to better direct the initiative.

A drawback, however, was the hostility staff faced when stakeholders openly discussed/criticised management on a wide range of issues, some of which were beyond the control of management. This points to the need to change attitude and capacity at all levels, as well as the need to collaborate with stakeholders to address the more complex issues that come to the surface when engaging with stakeholders in a participatory reflection on progress.

3.6 Evaluation roles needed in balancing content and people processes

Special evaluation skills are needed that go beyond methodological and technical expertise to get stakeholders to contribute wholeheartedly to the process. Recognising that different people have different roles to play in evaluation is a good starting point. To better understand what these roles are, you need to know who the key players are:

- The evaluator and other special experts

- Commissioner or manager of the evaluation

- M&E officers

- Implementing agency(ies)

- Other key stakeholders
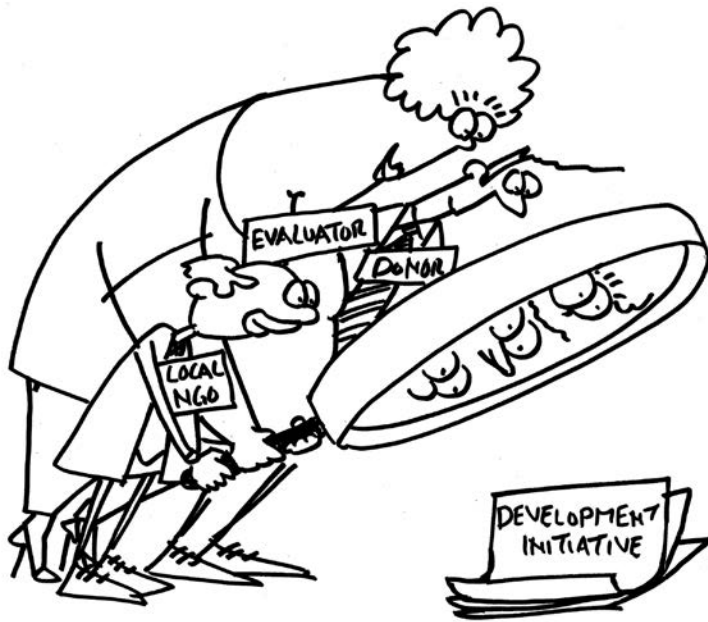
MULTIPLE EVALUATION ROLES

3.6.1 The Evaluator

In an evaluation, the evaluator's tasks are to:

- Facilitate the way in which stakeholders (especially primary intended users of the evaluation) contribute to the process, so that their perspectives and values come out. This will mean investing a lot of time during the initial stages of an evaluation in:

    ○ assessing and agreeing on readiness for an evaluation

    ○ focusing the evaluation

    ○ collaborating with key stakeholders so as to ensure use of the evaluation.

- Determine how to engage stakeholders in a range of activities from providing information, to assisting in data collection, analysis, critical reflection, communication and feedback of the findings as well as thinking through actions for change (a pathway for change) after the evaluation.

Other roles played by the evaluator will depend on the evaluation's purpose, the uniqueness of the conditions of the evaluation, and the evaluator's own personal knowledge and experience, skills, style, values and ethics and the capabilities of other key players involved in the evaluation process. To be successful, however, the evaluator needs to be a kind of external observer, who provides additional points of view and specific

skills for managing the process, intervening actively in order to achieve the aims of the evaluation. These skills need to be complemented by the competencies listed in Box 3.5. Of course, these competencies also need to be complemented by different people in the evaluation.

Box 3.5 Essential Competencies for Programme Evaluators

1) *Professional Practice* - Fundamental norms and values of evaluation practice:
- Applies evaluation standards
- Works ethically
- Conveys evaluation approaches and skills to potential clients
- Respects all stakeholders
- Considers the general and public welfare
- Contributes to knowledge base

2 *Systematic Inquiry* - Technical aspects of evaluation practice:
- Understands knowledge base
- Knows quantitative and qualitative methods
- Knows mixed methods
- Conducts literature reviews
- Specifies programme theory
- Frames evaluation questions
- Designs the evaluation
- Collects and interprets data
- Makes judgements and recommendations
- Provides rationales for decisions
- Reports procedures and results
- Notes evaluation strengths and limitations
- Conducts meta-evaluations

3) *Situational Analysis* - Unique interests, issues, and contextual circumstances of evaluation:
- Describes programme
- Determines programme evaluability
- Identifies stakeholders' interests
- Serves intended users' informational needs
- Addresses conflicts
- Attends to evaluation use
- Examines organisational and political context
- Attends to organisational change
- Respects site and client uniquenesses
- Remains open to input
- Modifies evaluation as needed

4) *Project Management* – 'Nuts and bolts' of evaluation work:
- Negotiates with clients
- Writes formal agreements
- Communicates with stakeholders
- Budgets evaluation
- Justifies cost
- Identifies needed resources
- Uses technology as appropriate
- Supervises and trains others
- Conducts evaluation in non-disruptive manner
- Presents work in timely manner

5) *Reflective Practice* - One's own evaluation expertise and need for growth; evaluative practice:
- Knows self
- Reflects on practice
- Pursues professional development: evaluation and content areas
- Builds professional relationships
- Integrates reflective practice into evaluative practice
- Stimulates learning within the evaluation team and with stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process

6) *Interpersonal Competence* – 'People skills' necessary for evaluation practice:
- Uses written and verbal/listening communication skills
- Uses negotiation skills
- Uses conflict resolution skills
- Facilitates constructive interpersonal interaction
- Demonstrates cross-cultural competence

Sources: Adapted from Stevahn *et al* (2005) and Ghere *et al* (2006)

Where special (other) expertise is required, every effort should be made to acquire the services of an expert, see Table 3.2. If an evaluator is not confident or competent in some or all of these skills, then it is worth bringing on board professional facilitators. For example, one may consider working with a local person who is knowledgeable about local culture and practices, and who may be in a better position to facilitate than an 'outsider' in terms of dealing with culturally sensitive issues or to bring out issues that would otherwise be difficult to draw out.

Table 3.2 Examples of Situations that Pose Special Challenges to Evaluation Use and the Evaluator's Role

Situation in which the evaluation takes place	Challenge	Special evaluator skills needed	Strategy as an evaluator, manager
1. Highly controversial issue	Facilitating different points of view	Conflict resolution skills, good grasp of the issues at hand	Consider including an expert in conflict resolution as part of your team
2. Highly visible initiative	Dealing with publicity about the initiative; reporting findings in a media-circus atmosphere	Public presentation skills; graphic skills; media-handling skills	Be clear at every stage of the evaluation what it is you are trying to achieve, and communicate; a media/public relations specialist should be considered as part of your team
3. Highly volatile initiative	Rapid change in context, issues, and focus	Tolerance for ambiguity; being a 'quick study'; rapid responsiveness; flexibility	Identify key stakeholders and gain their support to help you stay the course and pick up on complex issues
4. Cross-cultural or international	Including different perspectives, values. Being aware of cultural blunders and biases	Cross-cultural sensitivity; skills in understanding and incorporating different perspectives	Although you (external evaluator) may not be fully aware of the cultural norms, you should show a strong willingness to learn; at the same time it would be advisable to include someone knowledgeable in cross-cultural/ international issues as part of the team. Working with a 'local' evaluator/facilitator is advised.
5. Team effort	Managing people	Identifying and using individual skills of team members; team-building skills	Encourage the engagement of all team members; help to mediate conflict; build bridges between diverse groups and individuals
6. Evaluation attacked	Preserving credibility	Being calm; place emphasis on evidence-based findings and conclusions	Be clear at every stage what you are trying to achieve; use mixed-methods to cross-check findings; identify and try to win over key stakeholders
7. Corrupt initiative	Resolving ethical issues/upholding standards	Integrity; clear ethical sense; honesty	Ensure that every step of the evaluation process is transparent and what it is that you are trying to achieve; communicate openly and sensitively

Source: Adapted from Patton (2008, p. 214)

3.6.2 Commissioner of the evaluation

The commissioner's roles include:

- Managing the evaluation on behalf of the implementing or the funding agency

- Being sensitive to staff capabilities and playing a key role in bridging the gap between staff and stakeholders and the evaluator

- Ensuring that the organisation is ready for the evaluation and that staff and stakeholders are comfortable with roles that they may have to play during the evaluation

- Effectively and timely communicating with the evaluator in terms of what it is that the organisation wants from the evaluation (terms of reference, ToR) and what support is needed to make the evaluation process successful

- Facilitating the work of the evaluator internally (within the organisation) and externally (with key stakeholders). This includes timely communicating with them on ToR, evaluation approach, etc.

- Participate in critical reflection moments, making sense of the findings and thinking through the changes that are needed.

To be effective, the manager needs to have a comprehensive knowledge of the development initiative and have a good grasp of the environment and the contextual issues in which the evaluation is taking place and the possible challenges to be faced. Holding workshops prior to the evaluation to sensitise staff and to facilitate discussions between staff, stakeholders and the evaluator are key to managing the process effectively.

The influence of commissioners on the evaluation is demonstrated below (Box 3.6).

Box 3.6 Changing the Focus of an Evaluation Half-Way through the Process

An evaluator was asked to carry out an end of project evaluation. The two main agencies involved in the evaluation indicated that the purpose of the evaluation was primarily learning so as to improve efforts and bring about change in the next phase of the project. Accountability to the funding agency was another purpose of the evaluation, but to a much lesser extent. During the first meeting, the evaluator discovered that only the two organisations had been involved in drawing up the ToR. After discussing the possible consequences of these choices, it was agreed that the input of the government, the main funder of the project, and key partners in the South was vital to the ToR.

At a kick-off workshop (which could be organised only half-way through the process), one of the organisations indicated that the government was primarily interested in the accountability aspect of the evaluation. Consequent on this, the ToR was adapted. If only the commissioners of the evaluation had had these discussions much earlier in the process, it would have saved much time and effort. On the other hand, as an evaluator, you need to be flexible as well as communicate clearly what can and cannot be done within the timeframe given.

3.6.3   M&E officers

Often, the M&E officer may also be the evaluation manager or commissioner. Sometimes project coordinators play this role. Your main tasks include:

- Contributing to the planning process in the lead up to the evaluation

- Providing the necessary background information such as planning documents, quarterly and annual reports, special study reports

- Helping the evaluator to appreciate the context in which the evaluation is taking place

- Facilitating access to the various stakeholders

- Participating in critical reflection moments, making sense of key findings and thinking through changes that are needed.

To effectively contribute to the process, you need to have a clear idea of what the evaluation should achieve and understand who your main stakeholders and primary intended users are, their interests and how you could involve them.

3.6.4   Primary intended users and other stakeholders

Stakeholders can play an important role in an evaluation. As indicated above, the more stakeholders get a chance to actively engage in the evaluation process (from design up to communication of findings), the more likely that the evaluation will be relevant and useful. It is important, however, to consider the following in engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process:

- Their role in the development initiative: for example people at policy/strategic positions may have a more important role to play in focusing the evaluation, while implementers may have a more active role during data collection and processing.

- Their evaluative capacity: what capacity do they have to collect information, analyse, critically reflect on and make sense of the findings?

- Institutional factors: what role do leaders allow people to play in the evaluation? How are stakeholders related to each other (e.g., in terms of power, information, money)? What policies and practices are in place in relation to engaging people in development processes?

- Other factors like availability of people to engage in the process, commitment, understanding of the importance of the evaluation, or how the evaluation can be used (e.g., for deciding for funding the next phase), sense of urgency (e.g., when the findings are to be used in developing the next phase immediately after the evaluation).

Please also see table 3.1

3.7 Engaging stakeholders effectively

Engaging different stakeholders in an evaluation process also means that you need to have adequate knowledge about how stakeholders come together to work as a group. In Figure 3.2, you can see the different phases that a group may pass through before being able to learn from each other and to work effectively together.

Figure 3.2 Life-Cycle: Stages of Group Formation
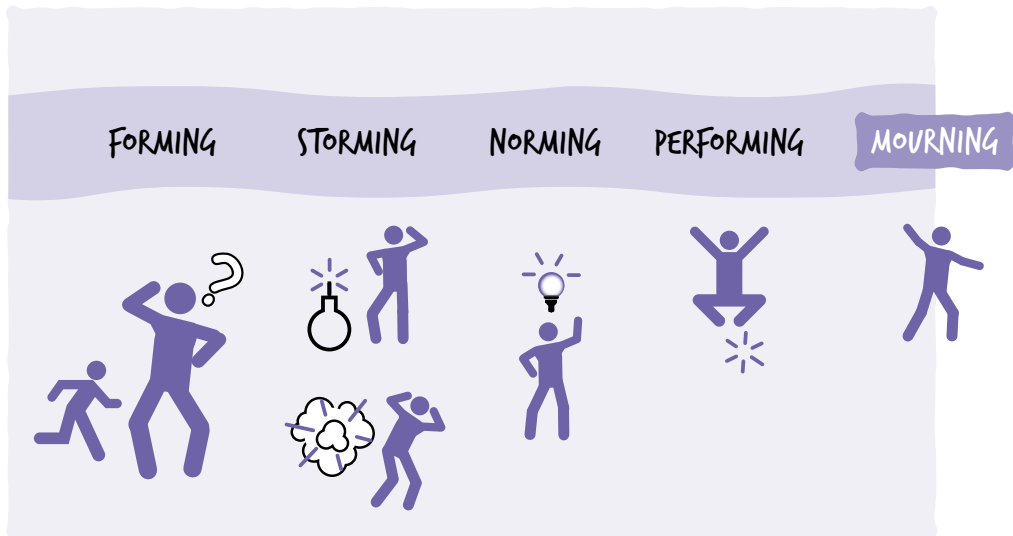
In this chapter and paragraph 1.2 you have seen where people:

- have different paradigms on how to carry out an evaluation

- have different cultures (which can affect the degree of openness during the evaluation)

- bring varied experiences (e.g., of previous evaluations) to the evaluation

- have different personalities (e.g., some are reticent, some are expressive, etc.).

Managing diversity, both in the evaluation team as well as with stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process, is crucial to ensuring that all voices are heard and that a comprehensive picture is obtained during the evaluation. Table 3.3 gives an overview of how you can influence group dynamics and get stakeholders to engage actively within your group/team during the evaluation process. As an evaluator you need to be aware of the various stages of group formation, e.g., have stakeholders already gone through a 'storming phase' or is that about to happen during the course of the evaluation? This will have implications with respect to how you handle this as an evaluator.

GETTING STAKEHOLDERS TO CONTRIBUTE SUCCESSFULLY

Table 3.3 Stages of Group Formation, Group Characteristics and Expectations, and Role of the Evaluator/Manager

Stage of group formation	Characteristics of the group and expectations	Role of the evaluator, manager
Forming	The need to belong to the group is a.o. dependent on the tone set by the evaluator, how members accept each other and what expectations they have	Be sensitive to the motivation (and what's behind this) of stakeholders to get engaged/accepted in the group. Be actively involved in leading the group in discussions, clearly setting goals and shaping expectations
Storming	Members of the group may want to have the same amount of influence that they are used to in their work environment and tend to test each other. There may be dissatisfaction and conflict at times as reality does not live up to expectations. Decisions within the group do not come easily	A lot of coaching or mediation is needed to help the group work past their differences and resolve conflicts quickly. Help the group by focusing on the task at hand, whilst balancing group dynamics. Assist in developing skills required (e.g., data collection)
Norming	There is agreement and consensus among the group as roles and responsibilities are accepted. Everyone in the group needs to have a sense of belonging. Leadership comes mainly from within the group	Be clear about the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group. Play more of a facilitator and enabler role and much less of a leader role
Performing	The group is clear about what it is doing and why it is doing it. There is cohesion in the group and it is achieving the task it needs to do. And although there may be disagreements, these are resolved amicably	Be aware that in multi-cultural groups some members will not be as open as others in the group. If this happens, help the group to settle the issue by setting boundaries with respect to loyalty to the group
Mourning	After the evaluation process is completed the group will break up. There is often a feeling of regret/sadness as group members move on to do other activities or join other groups	Make room for group members to share experiences (positive and negative) that they had during the process; allow members to take distance and hand over responsibilities

3.8 Strategies for addressing group issues

The following are just some of the strategies suggested to address group issues:

- Take time to allow people to understand each others' mindsets and to agree on how different mindsets influence the theories and principles underpinning the suggested evaluation approach, process and its findings.

- Provide favourable conditions for the group to operate, in terms of setting clear goals and expressing expectations, and creating an atmosphere of openness and oneness.

- Recognise the nature of core issues as they arise and stimulate the group or individuals to look at their behaviour, particularly where they can be disruptive.

- Try to model and support relevant processes, for example, if engagement is required of the members of the group, show engagement yourself.

3.9 Some key points on getting stakeholders to contribute successfully

1. Stakeholders are more likely to use the results of evaluations if they feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings. Stakeholders can be any institution, individual or community group having a stake or (in)direct interest in the development initiative or being (in)directly affected by it. To promote the use and influence of the evaluation, you will need to actively engage particularly the intended users of the evaluation.

2. Engaging stakeholders is important to making the evaluation more relevant and providing a more balanced picture of reality of the evaluation. Conducting a stakeholder analysis is useful in determining the stakes of stakeholders. Think through the consequences of (not) engaging different stakeholders in the evaluation process.

3. Situational factors should also be considered when:
   - Agreeing on who to involve
   - Thinking about ways to encourage stakeholder engagement in the evaluation process
   - Determining use, influence and possible consequences of the evaluation.

4. Once you know which stakeholders to involve, you need to engage them in meaningful participation. For the process to be meaningful, however, key roles of the evaluator, experts, commissioner of the evaluation, manager and M&E officer need to be clearly defined and adhered to.

5. Those engaged in facilitating the evaluation process need to be aware of group dynamics. Stages of group formation apply in every group brought together to address a particular task. Conflict and resistance are part of both the change cycle and stages of group formation. A key strategy would be for the evaluator/manager to adapt his or her style to the needs of the group and tasks at each stage of the process.

4   Turning evaluation into a learning process

A workshop report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) described learning as the 'new frontier' (2001, p. 18), the direction "…where development organisations should be heading if they are interested in developing the capacity to respond to the changing needs of their stakeholders" (CTA, 2004). Particularly where social change is to be assessed, evaluation and learning are important. In IDS-supported discussions, assessment of social change is viewed as "…integral to the actual process of inducing change. This means collecting information and different perspectives on the quality of the change process and its impact, critically looking at this and then re-focusing and re-strategising" (Guijt, 2007, p. 18).

If evaluations are to be meaningful, therefore, there has to be a real effort to engage stakeholders through shared learning processes so that they can make sense of the development initiative, its environment, the evaluation process and the consequent need for change.

EVALUATION HAS TO BE A LEARNING PROCESS

There are many conflicting theories on learning. And although many of the familiar learning frameworks such as the Kolb experiential learning cycle and triple loop learning (presented later in the chapter) and concepts (e.g., learning styles) are based on hotly disputed evidence, they are well used and can help you to understand the dynamics of learning during the evaluation process. How learning is used during the process of reviewing a theory of change and critical reflection (key steps in the evaluation process), as well as challenges posed to learning, are also provided.

4.1 Learning in evaluative practice

In an evaluation (be it one-off or ongoing), evaluators and stakeholders are continuously and consciously involved in a collaborative learning dynamic. Creating space where stakeholders are able to share their views, perspectives and ideas, without fear of negative consequences is therefore important.

Traditionally, learning meant acquiring new knowledge, behaviours, skills, values, preferences or understanding, as well as being able to synthesise different types of information. Increasingly, however, learning is not just seen as an increase in knowledge, skills or attitudes, but also as a **sensemaking** process - "…a motivated continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively" (Klein *et al.*, 2006).

There are many other perspectives within the knowledge management and learning field regarding how people learn. Merriam *et al.* (1991) present four orientations to learning:

- Behaviourist (learning is based on observing people's behaviour)

- Cognitivist (learning is based on the internal mind, of knowing, information processing and memory perception)

- Humanist (learning is based on the needs of the individual, and is more of a personal act to fulfil one's potential)

- Social and situational (learning is based on interaction with and observation of people in social contexts).

The social and situational way of learning is more appropriate to making evaluations matter as it promotes the active participation of stakeholders in the learning process. This way of learning helps stakeholders to make sense of reality – what is happening and why it happens. Engaging stakeholders in a learning process during the evaluation will help them to:

- Understand development initiatives better and how change is expected to come about

- Think through different ways of contributing to impact.

This is in contrast to being presented with key findings at the end of an evaluation without any idea of the process in terms of how stakeholder engagement and how findings were arrived at.

The Kolb learning cycle and the triple loop learning framework offer valuable insights into how people learn and the type of questions you could ask if you want your evaluation to contribute to and explore underlying causes of problems or challenges during the evaluation process.

> **Social learning** and societal learning are often used interchangeably. Societal learning can be defined as the process by which communities, stakeholder groups or societies learn how to innovate and adapt in response to changing social and environmental conditions.
>
> *Source:* Adapted from Woodhill (2005, p. 2-3)

4.2 Experiential learning cycle

The experiential learning cycle developed by Kolb (1984) brings together three dimensions of social learning and change (individual, organisational and societal/institutional) in a full spiral of action and reflection (see Figure 4.1). Learning involves a four-stage cyclical process. An individual or group must engage in each stage of the cycle in order to effectively learn from their experience. The four stages are:

- Stage 1: learning from concrete experiences ('activists')
- Stage 2: learning from reflective observation ('reflectors')
- Stage 3: learning from abstract conceptualisation ('theorists')
- Stage 4: learning from active experimentation ('pragmatists').

Figure 4.1 Stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle
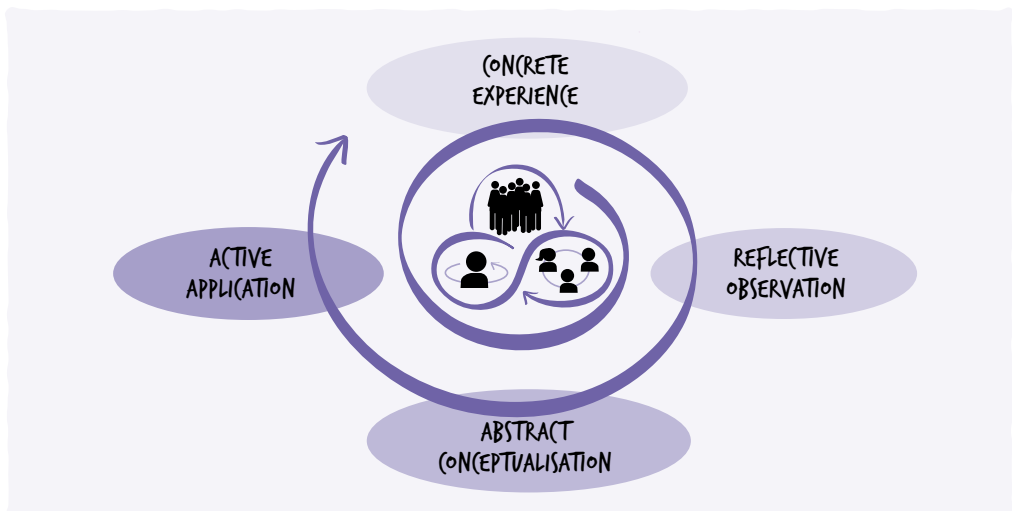
The cycle starts with having experiences, experiencing the 'concrete, tangible, felt qualities of the world' (concrete experience – 'feeling'). The second stage of the cycle involves reviewing these experiences, watching others involved in the experience and reflecting on what happens ('reflective observation' – 'watching'). In the next stage, new information can be gained by thinking, analysing or planning ('abstract conceptualisation' – 'thinking'). Here, one tries to make sense of the information available and make conclusions or develop theories. The fourth stage involves planning and working with these new ideas ('active experimentation' – 'doing'). It also signals that you've completed the learning cycle. And so the cycle continues. Being explicit about moving through each stage of the learning cycle has proven to be a very helpful tool in problem-solving and project management. This learning cycle can also be applied in an evaluation, see the example in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1 An Example of the Experiential Learning Cycle Applied to an Evaluation

In Uganda, there was an evaluation of a food and nutrition security initiative. Initially, the team of evaluators explored issues together with community members in separate groups of men, women, boys and girls **(learning from concrete experiences)**. In the evenings, the evaluation team came together to compare notes and share data generated from the field **(learning from reflection)**. They analysed together what went well and where improvements were needed, concluding that a few changes would need to be made **(abstract conceptualisation)**. They then decided on the next steps for the following day and implemented **(active application)** the new approach for data gathering. And so the learning cycle continues.

As an evaluator, you need to be aware of the fact that people have different learning styles and will be at different phases of the learning cycle. For example, some people:

- are content to explore new ideas and situations without ever moving on to take action

- tend to jump to conclusions without fully exploring or analysing the whole situation

- are happy to do things the same way without any concern about whether or not their efforts will produce results.

During the evaluation, you should try to understand the learning styles of your stakeholders and make every effort to keep the various stakeholders in step with each other (as much as possible) throughout the learning cycle, as this has consequences for how the evaluation is used. Some of the ways of doing this include:

- Making sure that you engage the primary intended users at all stages of the evaluation

- Providing learning opportunities such as face-to-face meetings, field visits, training

- Ensuring that there is dialogue, openness and creativity.

4.3 Single, double and triple loop learning

The single, double and triple loop learning model (Argyris and Schön, 1978) offers another way of looking at social learning within an evaluation setting. It is useful when identifying underlying causes of problems and challenges at hand and provides focused learning opportunities. However, problems are often encountered at the double loop learning stage. Below is a short description of the model:

- Single loop learning is based on following the rules: It is undertaken in line with explicit practices, policies and norms of behaviour. Learning involves detecting and correcting deviations and variances from these standards. In evaluation, the question asked is: *Are we doing things the right way?* Here, we would look especially at how the development initiative is being implemented. This helps to improve practices.

- Double loop learning is associated with social learning, which involves redefining how you go about doing things, i.e., changing the rules. This approach addresses the basic aspects of, e.g., an organisation or development initiative, so that the same things are not done in response to changing contexts. At this level of process analysis, people, communities or stakeholders become observers of themselves and tend to ask themselves questions such as – What is going on here? What are the patterns of thinking? In evaluation, the question we would ask is: *Are we doing the right things?* If not, what and how can we change? In this instance, we would look at whether the policies, practices and norms are appropriate. This helps to reframe our thinking and to learn to do things differently.

- Triple loop learning represents the highest form of organisational self-examination. It involves questioning the entire rationale of an organisation or development initiative, and can lead to radical transformations in internal structure, culture and practices, as well as in the external context. It involves transforming who we are by creating a shift in the way we view ourselves, our organisation, development initiative and communities. In evaluation, questions you would ask are: *What assumptions and beliefs underpin our work?* What do we think about the rules and how things are done? We would therefore look at questioning the rationale behind an organisation and/or development initiative and the communities or stakeholders affected. Underlying paradigms and theories of change are important here. This helps to transform our view of ourselves, our organisation and how we can effect change within the development initiative and our stakeholders.

Figure 4.2 Single, Double and Triple Loop Learning
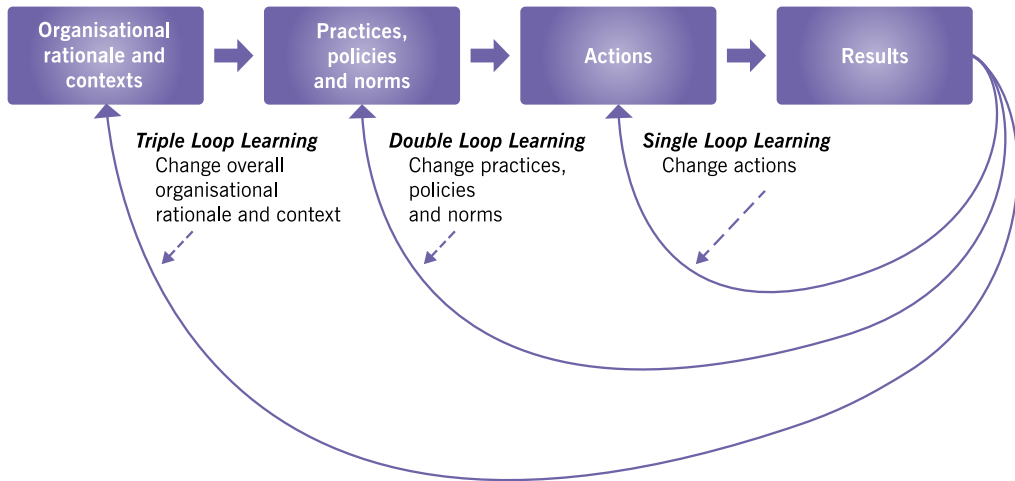
Source: Adapted from Argyris and Schön (1978), in Ramalingam (2010)

It is important to note, however, that despite efforts to promote social learning at the organisational level, based on evidence in the field, many development organisations have not been entirely successful in becoming learning organisations and continue to face challenges. Ramalingam (2010) writes about the findings of research undertaken by Active Learning Network for Accounting and Performance (ALNAP) and ODI, as well as the problems that selected development organisations encounter in applying two learning approaches – the triple loop learning of Argyris and Schön and Senge's learning organisation model. He found that in many aid agencies the single loop learning takes place at the individual and group levels in an *ad hoc* and informal way. In some cases, the results of the review of projects became a standard list of 'lessons learned' and an 'end product' with nothing much done afterwards in terms of follow-up action.

In double loop learning, Ramalingam (2010) found that "emerging cultures of learning and innovation frequently overwhelm existing cultures of compliance". So, for example, if there is a culture where mistakes are made and not admitted to, it makes it difficult for lessons to be learned. Despite the frequency in changes in leadership and organisational strategy, the predictability in the way many of the organisations continue to work indicates that the deep commitment to change that the triple loop advocates does not really take place in many of these organisations.

Based on these experiences, it is therefore important not to lose sight of the reasons for conducting the evaluation and to try as much as possible to ensure that the findings are used. There is also a need to take into consideration the context in which social learning is taking place and adapt your methods accordingly to capture lessons learned.

> **Box 4.2 Selected Barriers to Learning**
>
> **Internal barriers**
> - Lack of recognition of learning as important to:
>   ○ an organisation's development
>   ○ an organisation's ability to respond to the needs of their stakeholders
> - Lack of incentives and rewards within the organisation to learn
> - Blame culture – where accountability is associated with blame
> - Rigid structures with very little room for flexibility and change
> - Weak structure to support access, storage, transfer and dissemination of lessons learned
>
> **External barriers**
> - Donor priorities
> - Unequal nature of the donor relationship which puts the donor in the driving seat, inhibiting the free flow of information and the formation of a true partnership
> - Pressure to demonstrate low overheads
> - Competition for funding resulting in a need for uncomplicated success stories

4.4 Key learning moments during the evaluation process

Reviewing the theory of change (see paragraph 2.2.4) and undertaking critical reflection (see paragraph 2.3.6) offer excellent learning moments within the evaluation process where you can apply insights gained from the two learning frameworks presented earlier. The following sections show how the notion of learning is pivotal to these evaluation steps.

4.4.1 Theory of change review

Engaging stakeholders in a discussion on their theories of change can contribute to improved learning of a development initiative by stakeholders themselves. Often, individuals are focused on the 'doing' and do not take the time or space to think through their own theories or assumptions about how change happens. Thinking through your own theories of change can help you to question assumptions about how you think change happens. This process also ensures that the evaluators develop a shared understanding of the development initiative (not only between themselves and stakeholders, but also among stakeholders), strengthen buy-in into the evaluation process and subsequently, are better able to focus the evaluation. Be aware that the process can also heighten differences as people often have different theories of change. In an evaluation, it is important to learn:

- where the points of commonalities are

- where the thinking is fundamentally different

- what the implications are.

Note that critical reflection can be used as a tool to help articulate the ideas, views and values of stakeholders.

4.4.2 Critical reflection

Through the process of critical reflection, stakeholders are able to interpret and create new knowledge and actions from their ordinary and sometimes extraordinary experiences. Systematically applied in the context of a development initiative, critical reflection can assist in making sense of what is happening, relating it to reality and to existing learning, and coming up with ideas for improving the strategy and the way it is implemented.

It is important to note that critical reflection takes place throughout the evaluation process. Box 4.3 presents some critical reflection questions that can assist you in getting a deeper understanding of any development initiative being evaluated. You can see that these questions force you to engage with the data.

Box 4.3 Critical Reflection Questions

- What happened, to whom and in what circumstances?

- What generalisations do you draw from this; what exceptions are there; how can those exceptions be explained (and not explained away)?

- What contradictions do you observe (i.e., what could be fitted into the phrase 'on the one hand …, on the other hand…')? Assuming these contradictions both to be true, what sense do you make of it?

- Which of these events did you not expect to happen? What does that say about the assumptions you made about the development initiative?

- What did not happen that you expected to see in your data? What does that say about the assumptions you made about the initiative?

- What remains a puzzle? What would you have to do to begin to resolve that puzzle?

Source: Bob Williams (2009)

This kind of critical reflection may be a departure from standard practice in two important ways:

- There is a focus on the unexpected. Surprises are not seen as a nuisance, but as interesting material for learning. After all, if we see what we expect to see, we do not learn anything new.

- There is an interest in problems and failures, to help look for opportunities to improve.

So, it is crucial to stimulate people to share not only their successes, but also their problems. This can be done in critical reflection meetings and events (e.g., a stakeholder workshop at the end of an evaluation process, and quarterly meetings during the year). Different stakeholders should actively participate in these critical reflection events so as to bring out commonalities and differences.
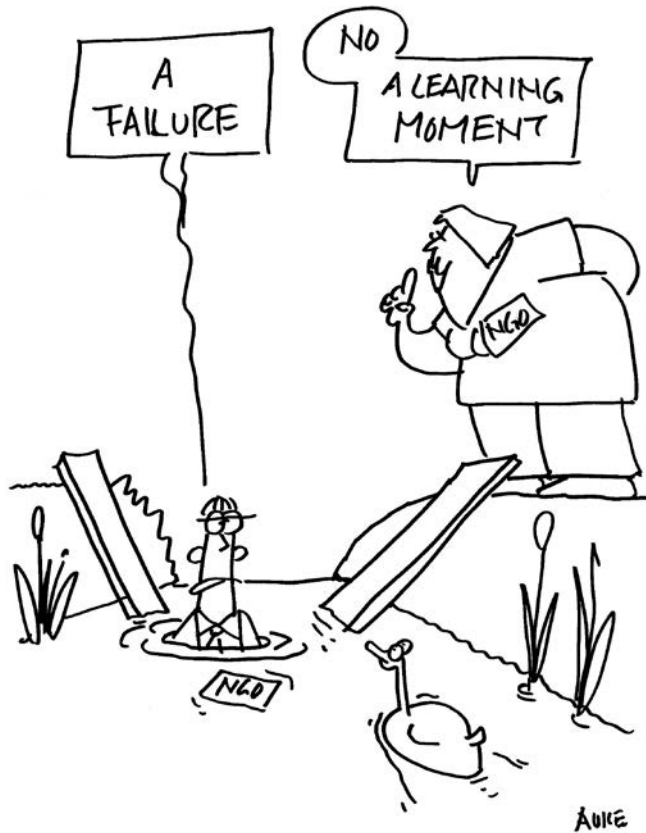
4.5 Enhancing learning

Various factors can affect the way in which stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process learn from their participation. Box 4.4 lists some of the factors affecting learning, and is based to some extent on the work of Preskill (2007). As an evaluator, you will need to assess some of these factors before agreeing on the final design or approach for the evaluation. For example, if people are not used to having regular stakeholder meetings where issues are discussed openly, it may be difficult to do this for the first time when evaluating the development initiative. Formal and informal individual and group discussions and frequent informal events during the evaluation may elicit some of these factors. Some factors are easy to assess, like level and type of communication methods, while others are more difficult to gauge such as attitude, beliefs and evaluation experience. You will find that you may have to use a range of different methods to bring these factors to the table during the evaluation process.

Addressing many of the factors listed in Box 4.4 will help you to promote individual and organisational or societal learning. Some of the factors, however, if not already in place, such as the support of the organisation and degree to which the organisation is a learning organisation, will require much time and the strong commitment of management, staff and stakeholders to contribute to the desired change.

Box 4.4 Factors Affecting Learning from an Evaluation

The following is a list of the factors which can affect how stakeholders will learn from their participation in evaluation:

- *How well evaluation meetings are facilitated* – this involves the extent to which stakeholders feel included in the process and feel free to express their opinions; this also includes helping to create a certain level of trust among the group members and giving time and space to discuss various issues

- *The level of support given by management of organisations and leaders of the community to those involved in the evaluation process* – will management and/or leaders accept their staff sharing their experiences as well as allow them to use what they have learned?

- *Stakeholders' beliefs, attitudes and experiences with the evaluation in the initiative being evaluated.* These include stakes of the stakeholders in the evaluation process, their position, previous training in evaluation, and the belief that evaluation findings will be used

- *The degree to which the organisations involved in the evaluation are learning organisations* – do they reward learning or is there a blame culture associated with accountability? Do their organisational structures facilitate learning?

- *The level and type of communication between and among stakeholders involved in the evaluation process*

- *The amount of space given for stakeholders to explore issues and express their opinions*

Source: Adapted from Preskill (2005 and 2007, p. 328)

4.6 Dealing with diversity in learning processes

Undoubtedly there will be a wide range of opinions, beliefs, experiences, but also values, whenever you have a variety of stakeholders engaging in an evaluation. An evaluation should bring out not only the commonalities but also differences in perspectives.

Methods that encourage dialogue (such as storytelling, Most Significant Change technique, Venn diagram, participatory mapping, participatory matrices or other participatory learning and action techniques) are used frequently in utilization-focused evaluations. These methods search mainly for commonalities, common ground. However, it is also important to use dialectical methods (such as ritual dissent/assent, convergent interviewing, contradiction identification, and Circular Dialogue) that deliberately focus initially on differences in order to resolve deep issues.

After exploring the differences (using one or more of the methods above), try to get a deep understanding of the unresolved issues. Be aware that you do not always have to come to an agreement. As an evaluation unfolds, evaluators and primary intended users and other key stakeholders must work together to identify the evaluation that best fits their specific interests, and the context and situation of the development initiative.

4.7 Some key points on turning evaluation into a learning process

1. Learning means not only acquiring new knowledge, skills and attitudes, it also involves sensemaking.

2. Engaging stakeholders in learning during an evaluation can enhance evaluation use and influence and can make stakeholders aware of the role they can play in contributing to change.

3. Although there are conflicting theories on learning, learning frameworks such as Kolb's learning cycle and the Triple loop learning theory offer valuable insights into learning. There are also many other relevant frameworks and theories to draw on in the literature. Understanding learning processes will help you to better understand the development initiative, its context, challenges, what you should be evaluating and how change happens.

4. Reviewing theories of change and facilitating critical reflection are key steps in the evaluation process where learning takes place.

5. There are barriers to learning that you should be mindful of such as donor priorities and weak structures to support learning within an organisation. The support of management is critical to becoming a learning organisation. Evaluation is one way of enhancing learning within an organisation. Some of the factors affecting learning among stakeholders during an evaluation include: how well evaluation meetings are facilitated; the level of support of management; stakeholder attitude, beliefs and experience during the evaluation; the level of communication; and time and space given to stakeholders to discuss issues.

6. Invariably, during the learning process in an evaluation, there are differences of opinion. Dialectical methods are particularly useful in resolving these differences.

5 Thinking through the possible influences and consequences of evaluation on change processes

Managing the findings of the evaluation is just as important as managing the evaluation process itself. The evaluation process and findings can have many influences and consequences, some expected and explicit, but many unknown and inexplicit. These influences or changes can be at the individual, interpersonal or collective level. Some of these influences and changes can be managed, but change processes are, in general, complex and most of the change is uncontrolled, influenced by the interaction of many different factors and actors.

To ensure that the findings of an evaluation matter, it is important to think through pathways of change after the evaluation, in collaboration with the implementing organisation, intended users and other key stakeholders. This can help maximise the benefits of evaluation. Understanding how change happens and how to manage it will also help. And although the guide does not address change processes in detail, it provides a few guidelines on how to manage for change.

CONSEQUENCE - AWARENESS

From the previous chapters, we have seen that to bring about real change in the lives of people, we need to integrate evaluations into existing learning processes within organisations. Primary intended users and other stakeholders need to actively engage in the evaluation processes. As evaluators, commissioners of evaluations, M&E officers, we should be ready to accept the different stakeholder viewpoints and to act on them where appropriate. This is not easy. It requires:

- openness to learning

- critical questioning and feedback

- reviewing our mindsets.

After the evaluation, the role of the external evaluator is normally reduced considerably. It is important, however, for the evaluator to present and discuss key findings of the evaluation during an end-of-evaluation workshop(s) where recommendations can be developed and outstanding issues discussed with different stakeholder groups and a communication strategy developed. It is then often up to management, the commissioner of the evaluation, the M&E officer, selected stakeholders and perhaps an external consultant (with expertise in change management) to lead the change process.

Box 5.1 An Evaluation Process that Influenced Change Processes

During an evaluation of the collaboration between two Dutch organisations, an initial workshop was organised to help identify the theory of change behind the initiative. It became clear that there was no explicit theory of change which affected the focus of their initiative. They realised the importance of this and started developing a more explicit theory of change in the proposal for the next phase of the initiative, which was due right after the evaluation.

Evaluations can confirm that certain processes work well, and they can also identify the need for change. Any action plan developed to address the need for change will have to take into consideration the different stakeholder points of view and although you may have had considerable buy-in of stakeholders during the evaluation process, you may find that there are some pockets of resistance to change (see Box 5.2). Whatever the situation you may find yourself in, it is important to be clear and open about the facts and the key messages that you want to convey and invite a response from selected stakeholders to help better place the findings in their particular context. Encourage those who are directly involved in carrying out the action plan to communicate face-to-face with those stakeholders who are key to the change process. Email and written notices are poor tools for conveying and developing understanding. For fairly complex changes, it might be worthwhile to consider using an external consultant to assist in the change process.

5.1 How change happens

Change is a part of life and is always taking place. According to Green, "a change process, whether at the national or local level, typically involves a combination of four components: context; institutions; agents; events" (2008). Change management therefore has to do with the process, tools and techniques to manage the people-side of change processes, to achieve the required outcomes, and to realise the change effectively within the individual change agent, the development initiative, organisation, and wider system. See Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Matrix Showing Factors Promoting Transformation at the Individual, Relationship, Cultural and Systems Levels

Individual	Relationships
• ***Personal transformation***	• ***Transforming relationships***
• Help individuals grow and develop greater self-awareness	• Reconciliation / Conflict transformation
• Education to broaden knowledge base	• Building trust
• Training to broaden competency base	• Promoting respect and recognition
• Attention to mental and spiritual health and growth	• Increasing knowledge and awareness of interdependence
• Make explicit and examine assumptions, mindsets, mental models	• Changing patterns of dysfunctional relations
• Transformations not only in 'what' one knows, but 'how' one knows (epistomology)	
Culture	**Structures / Systems**
• ***Transforming collective patterns of thinking and acting***	• ***Transforming structures, processes, mechanisms***
• Changing the 'rules' and values that sustain patterns of exclusion	• Lobbying for more just policies, greater transparency and accountability, institutional rearrangements
• Exploring and transforming taken-for-granted collective habits of thinking and behavior	• Just and equitable allocation of resources and services
• Promoting more inclusive, participatory culture of 'civic engagement'	• Reforming processes
• Transforming patterns of overly simplistic and distorted discourse	

Source: Thomas (2007), drawing on Wilber (2006)

From Figure 5.1, you can see that change is not a single event, but more of a way of working towards a goal where learning is central to the change process. Critical to this, is the need for management of organisations to create an environment which promotes creativity, knowledge sharing and learning, see Box 5.3.

Kotter (2002) provides eight key steps to successfully introduce change consequent on the findings of the evaluation:

1. ***Create urgency*** – For change to take place, it helps if you have the support of most of your stakeholders. Develop a sense of urgency and inspire people to act. Make objectives real and relevant.

2. ***Build the guiding team*** – Get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels to help lead the change process.

3. ***Get the vision right*** – Identify the values that are central to the change. Get the team to establish a simple vision and clear strategy based on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Focus on the emotional and creative elements necessary to drive service and efficiency.

4. ***Communicate for buy-in*** – Involve as many people as you possibly can and communicate your vision and strategies often and in a simple way. Appeal and respond to people's needs. Have a clear message – make technology work for you.

5. ***Empower action*** – Put in place a structure to facilitate change. Try to identify pockets of resistance to change and help these people to see what is needed and why. Remove barriers quickly and allow for constructive feedback and support from leaders. Recognise and reward those who make change happen.

6. ***Create short-term wins*** – Set short-term objectives that are easy to achieve, with little room for failure. Complete current stages before starting new ones. Reward those who help you to meet your objectives.

7. ***Don't let up*** – Foster and encourage determination and persistence – encourage ongoing progress reporting and highlight achieved and future milestones. Analyse every achievement and ask yourself what went right and what needs improving.

8. ***Make change stick*** – Tell success stories of change within your organisation. Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion, and new change leaders. Weave change into the culture of the organisation.

5.2 Some key points on thinking through the possible influences and consequences of evaluation on the change process

1. Learning is key to contributing to change in the lives of people.

2. For evaluations to matter, you should not only think through the evaluation process, but also think through how the key findings could influence a change process at individual, interpersonal or collective level; and think through a pathway of change. Before embarking on a pathway of change you need to ask yourself: What is it that you want to achieve with this change? Why? How do you know that change has been achieved? Who is affected by this change? How much can you achieve without any external help? Which aspects of the change do you need help with?

3. To ensure that the process is consultative, engage your primary intended users and other key stakeholders at every step of the process.

4. Where change is complex, consider using an expert to facilitate the process.

5. Be clear and open about the facts. Have face-to-face meetings as much as possible.

6. Kotter suggests eight key steps to facilitate change at the individual, group and organisational level.

Conclusion: Evaluations matter

Evaluation is a rapidly growing field, fraught with challenges given the continually changing and complex environment in which development initiatives take place. This guide is but a stepping stone, providing some insight into the current issues faced by evaluators, commissioners, M&E officers and key stakeholders within the international development sector and how they tackle them.

We have not been too concerned with explaining in detail about the various evaluation models, frameworks and theories and how to conduct in-depth evaluations. What the guide has attempted to do instead, is to offer key principles and approaches on how to make evaluations matter. In addition to suggesting steps for designing evaluations, chapters have covered the role of stakeholders, how to get them engaged in the evaluation process, and the importance of the learning process in getting stakeholders on board for action and thinking through the possible influences and consequences of evaluation. The emphasis has also been on the sharing of experiences – successes and failures.

In the end, it is how we think through our evaluation process that makes the difference in the outcome of the evaluation and how this is utilised. The following are key points that we should bear in mind in making evaluations matter:

- take into consideration the needs of stakeholders, especially intended primary users, and how they wish to use the evaluation findings

- engage stakeholders in the evaluation process to make the evaluation more relevant and get a more comprehensive picture of the evaluation

- stakeholders are more likely to use results of the evaluation if they feel ownership of the process

- recognise that stakeholders have different stakes and that some stakeholders can have a tremendous influence or power that can affect the process and outcome of the evaluation

- be aware that choices made for the evaluation process and its outcomes can have a range of consequences and this knowledge can assist in using evaluation as an instrument for shared learning and to bring about change

- learning is part of the sensemaking process – engaging stakeholders in the learning process can enhance evaluation use and contribute to change

- think through the multiple evaluation roles adopted by the evaluator and other key stakeholders

- take into consideration the circumstances and context in which the evaluation will take place.

Not too much time has been spent on how to implement evaluation findings and manage change as this is not what the guide is about. An important lesson that you need to draw, however, is that managing change can be a complex process which needs to be implemented carefully – and that the learning-based change model advocated in Chapter 5 can also be useful in reinforcing and encouraging organisational learning.

Evaluations do matter, they can contribute to the general understanding of complex environments in which many of our development initiatives take place and help us to be innovative in the way we adapt our programmes to address the needs of intended primary users and to improve the welfare of primary stakeholders.

Annexes

Annex A: Examples of (Learning) Purposes, Assessment Questions, Users and Uses of an Evaluation for a Food Security Initiative

Purposes of the evaluation	Key evaluation/ learning/assessment questions	Users and use ('ownership')
Accountability – performance and financial accountability (upward, downward, sideward) Particularly in a more participatory evaluation, accountability should not only be upward (e.g., to funders), but also downward (to primary stakeholders) and sideward (to key stakeholders). Sensemaking by stakeholders should be part of this process so that decisions for use and usefulness (and influence) can be made.	Is the money being spent as we had agreed? Was implementation in compliance with funding mandates? Have assigned responsibilities being performed as agreed?	Funders: to make a decision on whether or not to continue funding the next phase Primary stakeholders: to decide whether or not to continue investing time and effort in participating on project activities; communicating to other communities the successes of the project Key stakeholders: to review and adapt collaboration agreements for food security interventions
Strategic management – adjust overall intervention strategy in relation to internal and external contexts Assess to what extent the overall intervention logic, chosen strategies, approaches and targeting have contributed to change e.g., in food security, and how they related to other interventions and situations that affect people's lives.	Does the overall project goal still reflect the initiative's dream? Were the project objectives the best means to contribute to the project purpose? Are strategies leading to expected changes in people's lives? Are the groups influenced and supported by the initiative contributing towards the project goal & purpose? Are we working with the right stakeholders? How is the context changing? What are the implications for our work?	Programme managers, policy-makers, funders: i) to make strategic decisions on how to proceed in the next phase, for example, in terms of strategies (e.g., agricultural production, income generation or more?), approach (participatory) or targeting (women and children? Men? Poor?) ii) to be able to see the whole picture as far as people's lives are concerned and what role food security interventions can play in this iii) to be able to make linkages with other important interventions or address situations that have not been addressed before but which have an important influence on people's food security situation iv) to adapt policies and strategies to a changing environment

Purposes of the evaluation	Key evaluation/ learning/assessment questions	Users and use ('ownership')
Operational management – improve implementation Assess, for example: • To what extent scheduled activities are on track • To what extent resources have been used as planned	Which strategies need to be implemented better and how? Is the project implementation on time and on budget?	Managers: to decide on adaptations in order to speed up progress Key stakeholders: to understand and adapt their operations Primary stakeholders (e.g., women and children): to see whether there are some intermediate changes, whether these changes are positive or negative and what they can do themselves to enhance implementation; to develop trust in project implementation and investment
New (versus old?) knowledge generation Deepen understanding Assess, for example, how the innovative approaches and projects are working out	What do we and our collaborative partners or primary stakeholders want to understand better? (i.e., how does a specific innovation work out?)	Like-minded organisations: to learn from the innovations so they can also adapt and apply success factors and approaches. Primary stakeholders: to learn lessons about how they can adapt their lives in their particular context for a better future.
Lobby and advocacy/ policy influencing Generate information, for example, on the existing food security situation in a country to influence existing policies, e.g., in food security and to influence existing informal institutions that positively or negatively affect food and nutrition security	Who needs what data to lobby for (policy) change? What are the citizens' views on current policies related to food security? What are the particular issues and needs of the poor in relation to food security? What are the contextual factors (e.g., politics) that influence the policy-making process?	Policy-makers: to develop new or adapt existing food security policies. Primary stakeholders (e.g., citizens): to influence policy-makers in developing or adapting their policies (lobby and advocacy). To address informal institutions that positively or negatively influence their food and nutrition security.
Strengthen capacity	Are we doing everything we can to maintain and enhance our capacity to support our primary and other key stakeholders?	Implementing agency: to think through and adapt, if necessary, strategies to encourage capacity building
Sensitise for action (using persuasive means)	What problem/issue do we need to monitor to sensitise others and induce behavioural changes?	Implementing agency and key stakeholders: to stimulate behavioural change
Partnerships – build and maintain trust (supportive)	Do we have trustworthy and supportive relationships with the project clients and collaborative partners?	Implementing agency, clients and collaborative partners: to build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones

Annex B: Contrasts between Traditional Evaluation and Complexity-Sensitive Developmental Evaluation

	Traditional programme evaluation tendencies	Complexity-sensitive developmental evaluation
1. Purpose and situation		
1.1. Evaluation purposes	Formative–summative distinction dominant: formative improves; summative tests, proves and validates programme models; accountability	Support development of innovations and adaptation of interventions in dynamic environments
1.2. Situation where it is appropriate	Manageable and stable situation; root cause of the problem being addressed is known and bounded; intervention reasonably well conceptualized; goals known; the key variables expected to affect outcomes are controllable, measurable, and predictable	Complex, dynamic environment; no known solution to priority problems; no certain way forward and multiple pathways possible; need for innovation, exploration, and social experimentation
1.3 Dominant niche and mindset	Finding out if a programme model works: focus on effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and scalability	Exploring possibilities; generating ideas and trying them out; preformal model, so preformative; nonsummative in that ongoing innovation and development is expected, never arriving at a fixed intervention
2. Focus and target of evaluation		
2.1. Target of change	Identified outcomes for intended programme beneficiaries and participants; change individual behaviours and performance indicators	Systems change along a continuum from small local systems to disruptive social innovations aimed at major, cross-scale impacts on big problems
2.2. Driving force of the intervention	Outcomes-driven; systems viewed as context	Systems-change-driven; specific outcomes emergent, dynamic
2.3. Evaluation results focus	Formative: improve and fine-tune the model; prepare for summative Summative: render overall judgments of merit and worth, success or failure	Development: provide timely feedback for development; generate learning and support action in the development process
2.4. Evaluation locus	Evaluation is top-down (theory-driven) or bottom-up (participatory)	Evaluation helps innovators navigate the muddled middle where top-down and bottom-up forces intersect and often collide

	Traditional programme evaluation tendencies	Complexity-sensitive developmental evaluation
3. Modelling and methods		
3.1. Modelling approach	Design the evaluation based on a linear cause-effect logic model: specify inputs to activities/ processes, then outputs to outcomes to impacts. Causality is modelled, hypothesized, and predicted, then tested	Design the evaluation using systems thinking to capture and map complex systems dynamics and interdependencies, and track emergent interconnections. Causality is based on pattern detection (inference to the best explanation), retrospectively constructed from observations
3.2 Counterfactuals	Counterfactuals a dominant concern to deal with attribution	Counterfactual formulations meaningless because of complexity: far too many variables and possibilities emerging and interacting dynamically to conceptualize simple counterfactuals
3.3. Measurement approach	Measure performance and success against predetermined goals and SMART outcomes: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound	Develops measures and tracking mechanisms quickly as outcomes emerge; measures can change during the evaluation as the process unfolds. Tracking the forks in the road and implications of key decisions as innovation evolves
3.4. Attention to unexpected consequences	Typically token attention, if any at all, to unanticipated consequences and side effects	Expect the unexpected. Serious attention to the unanticipated and emergent as a fundamental evaluation function
3.5. Evaluation design responsibility	Evaluator determines the design based on the evaluator's perspective about what is rigorous. The evaluator has responsibility for and controls the evaluation even if stakeholder is solicited	Evaluator collaborates with those engaged in the change effort to co-create an evaluation that is useful and matches the innovation process philosophically and organizationally
3.6. Methods approach and philosophy	Rigorously methods-focused: an evaluation is judged by validity and methodological criteria first and foremost; utility is viewed as methods-dependent. Traditional research and disciplinary standards of quality dominate	Utilization-focused: methods are chosen in service to developmental use; methods derive from utility and pragmatic considerations; judgments about methodological quality are context-and-intended-use dependent

	Traditional programme evaluation tendencies	**Complexity-sensitive developmental evaluation**
3.7. Interpretation and reasoning processes	Deduction first and foremost; some induction some of the time if qualitative methods used. Attribution analysis	Abduction (inference to the best explanation) and pragmatism. Contribution analysis.
4. Roles and relationships		
4.1. Ideal evaluator stance	Evaluator is independent, whether located internally or externally. Credibility depends on independence	Evaluator is part of the innovation team, a facilitator and learning coach, bringing evaluative thinking to the group, supportive of the innovators' values and vision. Credibility depends on a mutually respectful relationship
4.2. Locus and focus of accountability	Accountability focused on and directed to external authorities and funders based on explicit preordinate criteria	Accountability centered on the innovators' deep sense of fundamental values and commitment to make a difference; funders must buy into what gets developed and learned as the focus of accountability
4.3. Organizational locus of evaluation	Evaluation often a compliance function delegated down in the organization and/or outside to an external evaluator	Evaluation a leadership function nurturing reality-testing, results focused, learning-oriented leadership
5. Evaluation results and impacts		
5.1. Desired and ideal evaluation findings	Validated best practices, generalizable across time and space	Effective principles that can inform practice and minimum specifications that can be adapted to local context
5.2. Evaluation approach to a going-to-scale initiative or model dissemination	In evaluating dissemination of models and taking "best practices" to scale, the focus is on high fidelity replication	In evaluating dissemination and going to scale, the focus is on applying principles and adaptation to local context
5.3. Reporting mode	Often ponderous, detailed formal reports; scholarly voice (third person, passive)	Rapid, real time feedback. Engaged, present voice (first person, active)
5.4. Impact of evaluation on organizational culture	Evaluation often engenders fear of failure	Evaluation aims to nurture hunger for learning

	Traditional programme evaluation tendencies	**Complexity-sensitive developmental evaluation**
5.5. Evaluation capacity built through the evaluation process	Usually not an objective; the focus is on getting credible evaluation results based on rigorous methods	Building ongoing and long-term capacity to think and engage evaluatively is built into the process
6. Approaches to complexity		
6.1. Approach to uncertainty	Aims for as much certainty and predictability as possible	Expects uncertainty and unpredictability as given in complex and dynamic situations
6.2. Approach to control	Evaluator attempts to control design implementation and the evaluation process	Learning to respond to lack of control; staying in touch with what's unfolding and responding accordingly – and agilely
7. Professional qualities		
7.1. Key evaluator attributes	Methodological competence and commitment to rigor; independence; credibility with external authorities and funders; analytical and critical thinking	Methodological flexibility, eclecticism, and adaptability; systems thinking: creative and critical thinking balanced; high tolerance for ambiguity; open and agile. Team work and people skills: able to facilitate rigorous evidence-based reflection to inform action
7.2. Evaluation standards and ethics	Knowledgeable about and committed to evaluation's professional standards	Knowledgeable about and committed to evaluation's professional standards

Source: Patton (2011: p. 23-26).

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Glossary

Accountability: Obligation, e.g. of an organisation, funding agency, or development programme, to demonstrate to stakeholders that work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards or to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans.

Adaptive management: A process that integrates the design, management and monitoring of a development initiative to provide a framework for testing assumptions, adaptation and learning.

Appreciative Inquiry (often known as AI): An approach, developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, which is based on the premise that 'organisations change in the direction in which they inquire.' So an organisation which inquires into problems will keep finding problems, but an organisation which attempts to appreciate what is best in itself will discover more and more that is good. It can then use these discoveries to build a new future where the best becomes more common. (Source: http://www.new-paradigm.co.uk/Appreciative.htm)

Citizens' jury: A participatory technique based on the rationale that given adequate information and opportunity to discuss an issue, a selected group of stakeholders can be trusted to make a decision on behalf of their community.

Constructivism: A theory of knowledge (epistemology) which argues that humans generate knowledge and meaning from their experiences.

Development initiative: An initiative focused on empowerment and eliminating poverty. This can be a project, a programme, a network, or any other initiative.

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which a project attains its objectives at the goal or purpose level, i.e., the extent to which it has attained, or is expected to attain, its relevant objectives efficiently and in a sustainable way.

Efficacy: The extent to which a development initiative's objectives were achieved or expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Efficiency: A measure of how economically inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs.

Empowerment-focused evaluation: Evaluation conducted to affirm participants' self-determination and agenda.

Evaluation: An assessment of ongoing and completed development projects in terms of their design, implementation and results.

Evaluation/performance question: A question that helps guide the information seeking and analysis process, to help understand whether or not a project is performing as planned.

Impact: The changes in the lives of people, as perceived by them and their partners at the time of evaluation, including sustainability-enhancing change in their environment to which the project has contributed. Change can be positive or negative, intended or unintended.

Indicator: A quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing/indicating achievement, change or performance.

Iterative process: Involves going back and revising steps in an evaluation process.

Knowledge Management (KM): A range of practices used in organisations to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable adoption of insights and experiences which comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organisational processes or practice.

Logical framework approach (LFA): An analytical, presentational and management tool that involves problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, developing a hierarchy of objectives and selecting a preferred implementation strategy. It helps to identify strategic elements (inputs, outputs, purpose, goal) and their causal relationships, as well as the external assumptions (risks) that may influence success and failure of a development initiative.

Logical framework matrix (or logframe): A table, usually consisting of four rows and four columns, that summarises what the project intends to do and how (necessary inputs, outputs, purpose, objectives), what the key assumptions are, and how outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.

M&E: See Monitoring and Evaluation.

Managing for Development Results (MfDR): An approach that centres on gearing all human, financial, technological and natural resources - domestic and external - to achieve desired development results. It shifts the focus from inputs (e.g., money) to measurable results (e.g., what can be achieved with the money) at all phases of the development process.

Managing for Impact (M4I): A holistic approach to management, with the aim of increasing the impact of development work by focusing on strategic thinking and planning, ensuring effective operations and establishing a monitoring and evaluation system that provides information to all stakeholders engaged in making both strategic and operational decisions.

Meaningful participation: Stakeholder engagement in an evaluation to such an extent that it is relevant to them and that they are prepared to take action, leading to change.

Monitoring: A continuous process of data collection and analysis for performance indicators in order to compare a development project's progress with its intended results.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E): A process through which stakeholders at various levels engage in monitoring or evaluating a particular project, programme or policy, and share control over the content, the process and the results of the M&E activity and engage in taking or identifying corrective actions. PM&E focuses on the active engagement of primary stakeholders.

Positioning: A technique that is used for communicating and making sense of evaluation findings, and is suitable for experimenting with different options and finding new solutions. It involves representing social systems through the spatial distribution of people in a room, in order to examine crucial aspects such as proximity, distance or exclusion.

Primary intended users: People who are responsible for applying the evaluation findings and implementing the evaluation recommendations.

Purpose: The reasons for carrying out an evaluation e.g., accountability, strategic or operational management, policy-making, knowledge development.

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a project are consistent with the target group's priorities or needs and, where applicable, the donor's policies.

Results-Based Management (RBM): An approach to management relating mainly to internal organisational practices. It is a strategy by which an organisation ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated results.

Self-evaluation: Evaluation aimed at promoting learning through the sharing of experiences and reflection so as to bring change within the individual or organisation.

Sensemaking: The ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sensemaking is the process of creating awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty for the purpose of decision-making.

Situational factors: Factors that are linked to the specific context and use of an evaluation.

Stakeholder: An agency, organisation, group or individual with a direct or indirect interest (stake) in a development initiative, or one who affects or is affected, positively or negatively, by the implementation and outcome of a development initiative.

Sustainability: The likelihood that the positive effects of a project (such as assets, skills, facilities or improved services) will persist for an extended period after the external assistance ends.

Terms of reference (ToR): Define the tasks and parameters that the evaluation should adhere to, indicating the objectives, planned activities, expected outputs, budget, timetable and responsibilities.

Theory of change: A theory of change is an explanation of how organisations or stakeholders think (societal) change can be brought about in the context within which they work.

Triangulation: Using a mix of approaches (e.g., mixed methods, team members or information sources) to cross-check data for validity and reliability.

Utilization-focused evaluation: Evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ALNAP:	Active Learning Network for Accounting and Performance
CDI:	Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research centre
CTA:	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
DAC:	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DFID:	UK Department for International Development
FFS:	farmer field school
HIV-AIDS:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IDS:	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD:	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IHMC:	Institute for Human and Machine Cognition
IUCN:	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
KM:	knowledge management
M&E:	monitoring and evaluation
MSC:	most significant change
MSP:	multi-stakeholder processes
ODI:	Overseas Development Institute
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLA:	participatory learning and action
PPME:	participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation
RBM:	Results-Based Management
SMART:	specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound
SPSS:	statistical package for the social sciences
ToC:	theory of change
ToR:	terms of reference

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Too often evaluations are shelved, with very little done to bring about change within organisations. This guide will explain how you can make your evaluations more useful. It will help you to better understand some conceptual issues and appreciate how evaluations contribute to empowering stakeholders.

This practical guide brings together evaluation concepts, methods and tools that work well in the field and

- Presents core principles for guiding evaluations that matter
- Provides a framework for designing and facilitating evaluations
- Shows you how to get your primary intended users and other key stakeholders to contribute effectively to the evaluation process
- Offers ideas for turning evaluations into learning processes.

Making evaluations matter to the primary intended users of development programmes is at the heart of this book – a must-read for evaluators, commissioners, monitoring and evaluation officers and key stakeholders within the international development sector.

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