Evaluation questions and different types of M&E instruments

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Slides prepared by Kevin Hempel
• Be able to identify questions for evaluation
• Be able to recognize different types of evaluation questions and understand their significance for later evaluation activities
• Ability to choose among different M&E tools
Agenda

• Learning objectives and evaluation questions

• Types of evaluation
Defining the purpose of the evaluation

Descriptive Questions

What is going on in our project?
- Describe processes, conditions, stakeholder views, etc.
- Journalist questions: What, when, where, how much, etc.

Normative Questions

Is the project performing as expected?
- Compare current situation with objectives and targets
- Is implementation and performance satisfactory?

Cause and Effect Questions

What is the impact of the project on outcomes of interest?
- Ask whether objectives have been achieved as a result of our project
- Can change be attributed to project?

How many participants benefited?
Did we reach as many participants as planned?
Has participants’ income increased as a result of the project?
Evaluation questions and learning objectives can be organized along the results chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Higher-level Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs of our program?</td>
<td>Do beneficiaries know the program?</td>
<td>How many people are served?</td>
<td>Are participants satisfied?</td>
<td>Are household incomes evolving?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Qualifications of service providers?</td>
<td>What services are provided?</td>
<td>Who drops out?</td>
<td>Are there changes in attitudes, knowledge, skills, etc.?</td>
<td>Is unemployment falling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other donors’ activities?</td>
<td>Differences in implementation?</td>
<td>What services are used the most?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation Results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Are we under or over budget?</td>
<td>• Is selection process fair &amp; appropriate?</td>
<td>• Is the job placement rate on par with similar interventions?</td>
<td>• Is food-security improving as expected?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are resources adequate?</td>
<td>• Are operational plans followed?</td>
<td>• Do we achieve gender balance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are partnerships of good quality?</td>
<td>• Is implementation delayed?</td>
<td>• Are we reaching 5000 participants?</td>
<td>• Is the attendance rate satisfactory?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are there unintended effects?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• n/a</td>
<td>• n/a</td>
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<td>• Do people have better jobs thanks to our program?</td>
<td>• Does the project help reduce poverty in the community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Do internships enhance training effectiveness?</td>
<td>• How big are spillover effects?</td>
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</table>
M&E must provide useful information for all stakeholders
Considerations in defining evaluation questions / learning objectives

- **Consult relevant stakeholders.** Different people will be interested in different aspects of the program. E.g. donors, project management team, senior management, partners, etc.

- **Prioritize.** Which questions are the most important ones to be answered? Needs to be agreed upon. You cannot do it all...

- **How will results be used?** Understand what the evaluation is really for. Also, who may benefit/loose from the findings?

- **Questions will influence your data collection.** Different types of information have to be collected from different stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries, project staff, experts, etc.)

- **Questions will influence the choice of the M&E tool.** Different types of M&E tools allow answering different kinds of questions.
Agenda

• Learning objectives and evaluation questions

• Types of evaluation
Your learning objectives will determine the appropriate evaluation tool

Type of evaluation questions to be answered?

- Descriptive (only)
- Normative
- Cause-and-effect

What is going on in our project?
- No evaluation (Monitoring only)
- Performance evaluation
- Process evaluation

Has our project been implemented as intended / performed as expected?
- Impact evaluation

What is the impact of our program on outcomes of interest?
- Cost-effectiveness / Cost-benefit analysis
Monitoring

• **What does it seek to answer:**
  – Who benefits? What is the breakdown of beneficiaries?
  – What is the progress of implementation? (activities carried out, etc.)
  – Is the project on track of meeting its targets?
  – Are there any issues that affect implementation and outcomes? Any adjustments needed?

• **How is data collected:**
  – Project administrative documents (e.g. registration forms, attendance logs, etc.)
  – Selected quantitative and/or qualitative tools (e.g. follow-up survey, focus groups, etc.)

• **When:** Throughout project implementation
Performance Evaluation

• **What does it seek to answer:**
  - Relevance: Are objectives and project design appropriate?
  - Effectiveness: Have objectives been achieved?
  - Efficiency: Is the use of resources adequate?
  - Sustainability: Will the results endure?
  - Impact: Improvements for beneficiaries?
  - Quality of project design, implementation, and M&E
  - Lessons learned

• **How is data collected:**
  - Always: Desk research of project documents, stakeholder interviews
  - May include: Beneficiary surveys, various qualitative tools

• **When:** Usually at mid-term and end-of-project, sometimes several years after project ended (ex-post evaluation)

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Does not provide certainty about whether changes observed occurred because of particular intervention
Process Evaluation

• **What does it seek to answer:**
  – Is project implemented as planned? Gaps between planned and realized activities?
  – What are reasons behind these gaps?
  – How can quality of services be improved?

• **How is data collected:**
  – Mix of quantitative and qualitative tools
  – E.g. stakeholder interviews, user satisfaction surveys, observation, etc.

• **When:** Specific milestones (as early warning system) or when problems are detected
Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis

• **What does it seek to answer:**
  – What are the monetary and non-monetary costs of the intervention?
  – How do costs compare to similar interventions?
  – How do costs compare to the benefits of the intervention?

• **How is data collected:**
  – Desk research (project documents, comparable programs, relevant studies)
  – Key stakeholder interviews

• **When:**
  – Before the project (ex-ante): Should the project be done? (based on estimates)
  – After the project (ex-post): Did the project provide value for money? (compared to what was expected)
Impact Evaluation

• **What does it seek to answer:**
  – Did changes occur because the program was implemented? (focus on causality and “attribution”)
  – What would have happened in the absence of the program?
  – Who benefits the most/least? (e.g. by age, gender, region)
  – Are some project design or implementation alternatives more effective than others?

• **How is data collected:**
  – Extensive surveys (participants and non-participants)

• **When:**
  – Before the project: Baseline
  – After the end of the intervention: Follow-up survey(s), several months to several years after participants benefited

Only type of evaluation that really provides estimate of impact!!
The choice of the evaluation also depends on the operational context

- **Timing**
  - When is demand for evaluation identified? (often late)
  - When is the information needed?
  - How long does the evaluation take?
- **Skills available**
- **Costs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Evaluation</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Factors Influencing Cost</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Evaluation</td>
<td>$10,000–$30,000</td>
<td>Scope of the evaluation and salary of the evaluator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Evaluation</td>
<td>$10,000–$60,000</td>
<td>Same as performance evaluation, but often uses more data collection tools so evaluation can take longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Evaluation</td>
<td>$15,000–$1 million+</td>
<td>Cost varies widely depending on methodology used: the more data collected, the more expensive the evaluation becomes (see notes 6 and 7 for more details)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analyses</td>
<td>$10,000–$30,000</td>
<td>Depends on whether benefits have previously been measured and whether data are readily available</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

• The foundation for any evaluation is to define and prioritize the learning objectives
• No single type of evaluation is best. The best type of evaluation is the one that is best suited for the questions to be answered in the given context
• Performance evaluations are the most common type of evaluation
• Impact evaluations are the only type of evaluation that answer cause-and-effect questions (attribution)