



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

How to Perform Evaluations

Participatory Evaluations

Canadian International Development Agency
200 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0G4
Tel: (819) 997-5006
Toll free: 1-800-230-6349
Fax: (819) 953-6088
(For the hearing and speech impaired only (TDD/TTY): (819) 953-5023
Toll free for the hearing and speech impaired only: 1-800-331-5018)
E-mail: info@acdi-cida.gc.ca

Canada 

HOW TO PERFORM EVALUATIONS

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATIONS

PERFORMANCE REVIEW BRANCH

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About this Series...

These guides are prepared by Performance Review Branch to help improve performance measurement and reporting.

Key evaluation elements are described to set standards and identify CIDA's expectations for delivery.

Bringing a Focus to...

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USING THIS GUIDE

Engaging stakeholders in actively reflecting on and assessing results

A quick read of this Guide will acquaint you with the value of participatory evaluations and what can be achieved through meaningful stakeholder involvement. A focus is brought to what the Agency has learned about implementing participatory activities, and what practices have proven to work well.

Over the past ten years, the value of engaging key stakeholders has become critically linked to the achievement of downstream performance results. Experience has shown that if stakeholders have participated in the development of results, they are more likely to contribute to their implementation. However, it should be recognized that additional effort (and costs) are typically associated with expanded stakeholder involvement.

There is no definitive approach to participatory evaluations. Rather, each evaluation requires a unique response that addresses CIDA/stakeholder expectations, local context, the capacities/availability of key stakeholders, and limiting constraints (e.g. financial).

This Guide explores a balanced approach for greater stakeholder involvement in CIDA evaluations. It sets out a pragmatic approach for producing quality results, while respecting governing limitations.

Note: This guide was developed as a companion piece to the CIDA Evaluation Guide.

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STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- ☑ Who are the key stakeholders? Are they interested in getting involved?
- ☑ How could stakeholders maximize their contribution?
- ☑ What are the additional costs?
- ☑ What is the potential for any unintended consequences or results?
- ☑ What is the best strategy for achieving value within the budget allocation?

This Guide may be of value for a range of CIDA development initiatives.

Stakeholder participation can be extended to the design, planning and execution of:

- Programmes
- Projects
- Monitoring, and
- Operational reviews.

Building accountability
within communities
through local participation

CIDA's adoption of results-based management (RBM) has been instrumental in integrating direct stakeholder involvement in the building of sustainable results. RBM stresses the importance of meaningful stakeholder participation, starting with the design stage and continuing through implementation.

Traditionally, evaluation tended to be managed with an outsider perspective, often giving little recognition to local expectations and the potential for stakeholder contributions. In effect, stakeholders were the objects of evaluations – rather than key participants. Beneficiaries, local organizations and governments in recipient countries were left without substantive roles.

With participatory evaluations, key stakeholders can become integrally involved in:

- ☑ Setting up frameworks for measuring and reporting on results:
 - What will be evaluated?
 - Who will be involved?
 - When activities will take place?
 - What methods will be used?
 - How findings will be consolidated and results shared?
- ☑ Reflecting on progress, proposing solutions/directions to respond to issues/challenges, and
- ☑ Helping with the implementation and sharing of evaluation results.

BUILDING A WINNING ADVANTAGE

CIDA's evaluations can gain from:

- Resident knowledge and understanding of local context
- The integration of gender equality
- An improved strategic outlook
- Cooperation in the field
- More effective results implementation
- Increased potential for success

Programme and project stakeholders are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of findings, recommendations and lessons learned that can improve results for local beneficiaries.

Recipient countries and locally engaged staff:

- Learn and benefit from the working experience
- Experience professional empowerment
- Enhance collective and individual capacities

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

Q: What is expected of CIDA's Evaluation Managers?

A: Typically, CIDA's evaluation managers are expected to: 1) have overall responsibility and accountability for an evaluation, 2) maintain control over the process, and 3) guide assessment activities through all phases of implementation. In this capacity, she/he should describe broad parameters that tie stakeholder participation to the development of evaluation results, offering key stakeholders the opportunity to play meaningful and productive roles (appropriate to budget levels).

Terms of Reference (prepared by the evaluation manager) set the stage for stakeholder involvement: 1) identifying key stakeholders (individuals and/or organizations), 2) setting out their roles, and 3) providing an indication of the extent of their participation (e.g. helping to identify issues to be evaluated, methodologies, etc.). The internal cost projection should include a cost estimate for stakeholder participation.

The CIDA evaluation manager should endeavour to promote awareness about stakeholder involvement with the recipient country's government and during field operations.

(see next page for expectations of evaluators and stakeholders)

Q: What expectations are placed on evaluators?

A: Evaluators are responsible for: 1) establishing a facilitating framework for stakeholder involvement, and 2) managing participatory activities. Evaluators' workplans elaborate on the terms of reference, mapping out key and secondary stakeholders, and providing a strategy for their involvement. During implementation, evaluators are expected to engage and work with stakeholders to maximize their contribution to the development of evaluation results and to further the goals of the evaluation.

Q: What are stakeholders expected to do?

A: Key stakeholders must be prepared to commit the time and energy necessary to play an integral role in the evaluation. They are expected to: 1) reflect on the issues, developments and results, and 2) bring their individual/organization's insights into local realities, knowledge, and expertise to advance improvements.

The role of secondary stakeholders can vary (e.g. attendance at group information meetings).

STAKEHOLDERS AT WORK

From the perspective of the CIDA officer responsible for the Maternal and Child Health Project in China, participatory monitoring and evaluations (PM&E) is a critical part of RBM as stakeholders participate in the creation of results to be achieved and then remain involved in measuring and monitoring these results. PM&E broadens accountability by involving project stakeholders in co-creating a relevant monitoring and evaluation strategy.

Donor accountability is only "part of the equation. Ultimately, local accountability leads to sustainability." Involving project stakeholders in decision-making around the collection and analysis of information is more likely to generate "local ownership and lead to change since people are more likely to act on recommendations generated when people do it themselves".

In the China project, we have seen that with the introduction of PM&E how participatory methods can complement existing M&E which relies heavily on more quantitative data collection. PM&E has created openings, in a very hierarchical system among the different stakeholder levels, by creating the space for dialogue among the different levels and for reinforcing the work and views of the village doctors.

For example, PM&E work undertaken in Lijiang county revealed the importance of regular physical check-ups for high risk pregnant women, a greater involvement of townships in the referral system and strengthening the network of village doctors particular in remote and isolated regions of the county.

Interview with Julia Robinson
CIDA Development Officer
Maternal and Child Health Project
Report on PM&E, May 2000

HOW TO IMPLEMENT PARTICIPATORY EVALUATIONS

Without participation by local stakeholders, RBM is only "Canadian-driven RBM"

An evaluation is measured by not only what it recommends, but also by:

- ☑ How the results were arrived at, and by
- ☑ What benefits were realized with implementation.

The propensity for significant outcomes and impacts is increased when stakeholders are actively involved with the determination and application of evaluation results.

CIDA evaluation managers and evaluators alike should take the initiative to research what has been written and learned about participatory evaluations. Formal training may also be of value.

Ideally, participatory methods are incorporated into the investment at the onset (e.g. needs identification, implementation, monitoring, etc.). This facilitates working with key stakeholders when carrying out the evaluation. If this was not done, then it falls to the evaluators to engage stakeholders in the evaluation process.

CIDA evaluation managers make critical decisions around how an evaluation will be carried out. By focusing on the advantages of participatory evaluations and creating space for implementation during field visits, the first step is taken towards greater participation and the "ownership" of results.

Below, we describe key steps in extending the evaluation process to include stakeholder participation.

Planning and Design

- ☑ Determine how best to incorporate stakeholder involvement as an integral element in the evaluation
- ☑ Identify key stakeholders (women and men), and familiarize them with the merits/workings of participatory evaluations
- ☑ Assess the information needs of stakeholder groups/individuals. Gauge their potential/level of commitment
- ☑ Formulate a framework/strategy for stakeholders' participation that clearly sets out expectations, priorities, activities, extent of involvement, responsibilities, etc.
- ☑ Determine the cost associated with stakeholder involvement (specifying training, data collection/analysis, fieldwork, transportation)
- ☑ Decide how to monitor/document stakeholder participation activities
- ☑ Reflect on, revise and refine evaluation strategies to ensure they incorporate methods and practices that have proven to be effective.

Implementation

- ☑ Organize logistics with communities and organizations beforehand, ensure that timing/purpose/expectations are clear and acceptable
- ☑ Collect and analyse the information with stakeholders using participatory methods
- ☑ Brainstorm solutions/actions with participating communities/organizations/individuals
- ☑ Make decisions with the community about the implications of the analysed information for the project and the stakeholders
- ☑ Agree on the recommendations for decision-making
- ☑ Build on strengths and meet challenges together

Reporting/Results Sharing

- ☑ Provide feedback on findings to stakeholders through pre-departure debriefings
- ☑ Determine how findings will be presented (i.e. theatre, presentations, skits, video, written report)
- ☑ Circulate and distribute reports and other information to meet needs of the stakeholders
- ☑ Always ensure that stakeholders have copies of the information "down to the grassroots level" (translations may be required)
- ☑ Follow-up to determine if decision-making is being informed by evaluation results
- ☑ Celebrate what you have achieved

Lessons Learned

While we learn from every evaluation, the extent of that benefit is a function of how well the lessons learned are documented and ultimately shared. Participatory evaluations, being a relatively new phenomena, offer opportunities for shaping an inclusive approach to a wide range of developmental activities.

The increased costs of participatory activities are generally offset by the returns that can be realized over the longer term. Because they are a collaborative effort, participatory evaluations enhance the potential for sustainable results that will directly benefit programme/project beneficiaries.

WHAT WORKS?

Learn about the methods, get out there,
build on what works and
celebrate what you achieve.

Below, we describe key steps for
addressing stakeholder participation:

Changing Your Mind-Set

- ☑ Let go of your own preconceived ideas/viewpoints, build towards the participatory creation of useful, accurate results
- ☑ Accept the importance of "handing over the stick" and developing a partnership with stakeholders that is mutually respectful and conducive to their participation
- ☑ Believe in the contribution that marginalized and/or illiterate people (who often best understand their environment) can make
- ☑ Remain open to whatever participants put forward. Don't set out "knowing all the answers already"
- ☑ Learn to trust - and work with - the wisdom of your stakeholder group

Setting the Foundations

- ☑ The framework for stakeholder participation should be simple, affordable and sustainable given the human and financial resources available
- ☑ Focus on how stakeholders can best contribute to the production of useful, meaningful evaluation results

- ☑ Set out to remain aware of how the evaluation is progressing in order to meet deadlines
- ☑ Rely on local resources, focus on training to build local capacities
- ☑ All initiatives should complement ongoing monitoring/assessments (e.g. relationships)

Building Towards Success

- ☑ While iterative strategies contribute to responsiveness and flexibility, innovation and experimentation in the field may enhance risk. Contingencies should respect such outcomes
- ☑ Provide stakeholders with a guided journey of discovery, that emphasizes the learning process
- ☑ Participatory activities should not become "an end unto themselves" but valuable opportunities for reflection, analysis, problem-solving and action
- ☑ Encourage friendly, open and frank discussions, while respecting differing opinions and individual sensitivities
- ☑ Manage differences, "move on" from individual agendas and sidestep conflicts to maintain a focus on evaluation results

This guide was adapted from a text on
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These guides are prepared
for internal application.

They should, in no way, be viewed as
defining or modifying CIDA Policy.

We welcome any suggestions to improve our work.

Please e-mail us at: dger_prb@acdi-cida.gc.ca

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