Sowing & Harvesting

Participatory Evaluation Handbook

Esteban Tapella - Pablo Rodríguez Bilella - Juan Carlos Sanz
Jorge Chavez-Tafur - Julia Espinosa Fajardo

DEval

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SOWING & HARVESTING. PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION HANDBOOK

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Tell me and I forget,
teach me and I may remember,
involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin

RECOMMENDATIONS

Foreword

By the end of 2018, the current members of the EvalParticipativa coordination team had facilitated several evaluation processes involving a broad range of public and private bodies from several Latin American countries. We had also organised a significant number of capacity building sessions, published articles on the topic in academic journals and supported young evaluators, in particular by making methodologies and tools for conducting participatory evaluations available to them. We were pleased with what we had achieved by this date, but also felt that we had a great deal left to learn.

Thus, in early 2019, we launched EvalParticipativa, a community of practice and learning for participatory evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Energised by our shared efforts and collaboration, EvalParticipativa brought together two initiatives: the Research Program on Employment, Environment and Society (PETAS) based at the Social and Economic Research Institute, Faculty of Social Sciences, National University of San Juan (Argentina) and the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval)'s Focelac+ project "Strengthening a Culture of Evaluation and Learning in Latin America with a Global Outlook".

Confident of the potential of peer to peer collaboration as a mechanism for deepening knowledge and experience, we set out with the key aim of reinforcing the inclusive involvement of civil society in evaluation processes. To do this, we decided to create a space for both virtual and face-to-face interaction that would enable those interested in participatory evaluation to reflect on and improve their practice, support each other's efforts, and create products - such as methodologies and tools - that would help professionalise practice in this kind of evaluation.

Two years have passed since EvalParticipativa opened its doors to what we believe to be a growing interest in -and development of- participatory evaluation experiences in the region. The initiative has also provided an opportunity to make connections, highlight the importance of the approach, and to keep learning. Today, various like-minded organisations have joined us in this endeavour, and there has been a continual increase in the number of people participating in our forum, following our posts and exchanging views on the subject on our social networks.

We completed this book towards the end of 2020, a year that nobody could possibly have wished for, marked by a global health crisis never before experienced, which had economic and

social impacts that are still difficult to estimate. It is a year that will be remembered for the collective efforts we made to find ways and reasons to keep moving forwards. We isolated ourselves to protect our elders, redoubled our solidarity with others, searched for new work-life balances and made ourselves available even when we could not meet face to face. At the same time, COVID-19 made us stronger, obliging us to recover a sense of community. Despite the challenging circumstances, EvalParticipativa has consolidated itself as a space for practice and learning, and even exceeded our most optimistic expectations.

This handbook is just one of the outcomes of these collaborative efforts. With its illustrations and multimedia format, we have attempted to bring together the thoughts, feelings and collective learning of a large and diverse group of associates working in the field. Special recognition goes to our colleagues who participated in the First Latin American and Caribbean Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences, held in Quito (Ecuador) in late 2019. Their valuable contributions enriched our reflections, and some of their thoughts have been recorded in the videos that accompany this handbook. They are:

Andrés Nicolás Peregalli
Magnus Kossman
Dagny Karin Skarwan
Matthias Edouart Casasco
Ana Tumi Guzmán
David Olmos
Joaquín Navas
Olga Niremberg
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Karla María Salazar Sánchez
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Morella Miraballes Baz
Valerie Fragnaud Mallorquín
Fernanda Massiel Arriaza López
Carmen Luz Sánchez Bretón
Daniela Beatriz Miranda Prado

While developing the contents of this handbook, we benefitted greatly from the collaboration of our colleagues Jorge Chavez-Tafur and Julia Espinosa Fajardo. We would like to thank them once again for their contributions and their enthusiasm.

We trust that this handbook will serve as a useful tool that will help ensure the development of high-quality participatory evaluations in the region.

Esteban Tapella
Pablo Rodríguez Bilella
Juan Carlos Sanz

For the EvalParticipativa Coordination Team.

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How to use this handbook

CHAPTER COLOURS

Each chapter has its own colour, to help readers navigate the handbook. They will be found in each section, where they are used to indicate page numbers, highlighted phrases and "spotlights".

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SPOTLIGHTS

By the side of the main text in the handbook, you will find the following:

Information that complements the main text, such as additional reading or practice-based suggestions.

Examples from real life and experiences to illustrate core concepts.

LINK TO VIDEO TESTIMONIALS ABOUT PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

Chapter 1

The meaning and purpose of participatory evaluation today... and of this handbook too

This handbook is a product of the EvalParticipativa initiative, promoted and coordinated by a team comprised of members of PETAS and DEval members. EvalParticipativa is a community of practice and learning for participatory evaluation that seeks to cultivate specialised knowledge gleaned from the experience of its members, and to examine in-depth examples of capacity building that use the approach.

The momentum behind EvalParticipativa has enabled us to share and build on numerous rich examples of participatory evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean. In November 2019, we had the opportunity to meet a large number of members of our community of learning in Ecuador, at the First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The handbook is intended to reflect and explore the intense debates that emerged during the five days of the event. Some of the questions that sparked discussion there were:

- how can we ensure that the different social actors play an active and leading role in the evaluation of programmes or projects that affect them directly?;
- what conditions and mechanisms are required to facilitate the effective participation of the population in evaluation processes?; and
- what factors enable participation in evaluations of public policy and ensure stakeholder capacity to do so?

The proposals presented in this handbook build directly on the experiences of the members of this EvalParticipativa community of practice and learning. Thus, it refers

to the conclusions of the gathering in Ecuador and the debates held on our community's online platform. The first section of this chapter describes recent trends in evaluations of public policy and the role played in them by participation. This leads onto the second section, which describes the role played by participation in evaluation as the point at which the possibility and opportunity to participate coincide with the capacity to actually do so. The third section identifies clearly the capacity-building role played by EvalParticipativa in the sphere of participatory evaluation, reflecting the principal actions developed to date and outlining the content of the handbook's subsequent chapters. The fourth section offers tips and suggestions on how to understand and use the handbook to maximum advantage, alongside some clarifications concerning its style. The fifth section closes the chapter by reflecting on the specific context of the pandemic, during which it was written and the challenges, both old and new, that participatory evaluation will face in the future.

The arguments presented in this handbook build directly on the experiences of the members of the EvalParticipativa community of practice and learning.

I. RECENT TRENDS IN PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION

Around the world, interest in and concern about the evaluation of public policy have grown during the first two decades of the 21st century. This is reflected in various ways:

- a wealth of new theoretical writings, contributing to methodological development in the field of evaluation; and
- an increase in evaluation practices and national evaluation policies in countries around the world, reflected in the increased institutionalisation of evaluation and the emergence of different initiatives focused on professionalising practice (Stockman and Meyer, 2016).

Reflecting these trends, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 to be the International Year of Evaluation. This highlighted an emerging alliance or consensus concerning the importance of the topic, explained by the convergence of the interests and actions of different national state institutions, the principal international development bodies, non-governmental organisations, academia, and evaluation practice networks, associations and communities (the so-called "Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation", VOPEs). These institutional actors share an interest in developing evaluation as an instrument for improving public policies.

In effect, evaluation constitutes a tool for developing new forms of governance. Increasingly, good governments are not only those that respect democratic norms and rules, but also those that are committed to improving the services they provide to their citizens. Civil society today is increasingly critical and demanding; it wants to be informed about what is happening in the public sphere and therefore demands spaces for participation.

Also in 2015, the UN approved the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an action plan that sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focused on improving social development, the economy and the environment as well as promoting peace and access to justice. The SDGs include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms intended to ensure they are monitored and reviewed systematically. Thus, civil society is located at the centre of the process, helping countries implement the agenda (Bamberger *et al.*, 2017).

It is in this context that global evaluation priorities have been adapted to focus on reducing the gap between the community of evaluators (supply) and their policy-maker counterparts (demand). This recognises the central

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role of civil society as a way to ensure not only that evaluations respond to the needs of the users, but also that quality standards are evidence-based, credible and are used effectively in the development and implementation of public policies (Nilsson *et al.*, 2017). The principles enshrined in the 2030 Agenda are of critical importance to those of us who are working hard to adapt existing evaluation systems. Thus, a coherent and useful evaluation capable of helping advance sustainable development should:

- pay attention to the specific contexts in which interventions take place;
- focus on individuals, and ensure that no one is left behind;
- look beyond the context of just the one sector when assessing specific interventions. This can be achieved by exploring the interconnections between different multisectoral initiatives that come together to achieve the sustainable development goals; and
- make participation spaces available to diverse actors that are responsible for ensuring the 2030 Agenda commitments are fulfilled.

Thus, in a context of theoretical and methodological innovation in the field of evaluation, approaches that assign a more central role to civil society have grown in importance. These approaches reflect a new awareness in the field of evaluation: concepts such as participation, accompaniment and the focus on perspectives of actors are increasingly prevalent in practice, and their importance is recognised when it comes to assessing the effects and results of a specific intervention or attributing causes. Participation is now recognised as a central, valid, tangible and indispensable aspect of evaluation practice (Jacob and Ouvrard, 2009).

However, much still needs to be done to ensure that evaluations respond to the demands of today's global development context. In our area of interest, if we go beyond discourse and good intentions, evaluation practice has not always

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reflected this participatory "vocation". Often, programmes and projects intended to "stimulate" participation ignore the fact that attempts to integrate this aspect run the risk of reducing it to merely symbolic simulacra if they lack awareness that encouraging a truly participatory process implies a redistribution of power (Chambers, 2003). Consequently, participation in evaluations tends to be limited to consultation (passive participation) without offering local actors the chance to influence decisions affecting the evaluation agenda. These recurring practices reveal a lack of adequate tools and theoretical clarity in a large proportion of participatory evaluations (Pastor Seller, 2004), and yet the reasons for this have not been clearly identified.

In the context of theoretical and methodological innovation in the field of evaluation, approaches that assign a more central role to civil society have grown in importance.

2. PARTICIPATION IN EVALUATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CAPACITIES

When we think about the nature of a participatory evaluation and its implications for civil society, an endless number of possible definitions come to mind. Some are more ambitious than others in terms of the involvement of multiple civil society actors. At EvalParticipativa, we like to think that an evaluation is *participatory* when those involved in the project define what will be evaluated, who will participate, when the evaluation will be carried out, what data collection and analytical methods will be used and how the results will be communicated. This approach helps reinforce the idea that participatory evaluations should actively and consciously involve the members of the organisation in question in the evaluation process.

It goes without saying that, as in any evaluation, a participatory approach should provide learning opportunities, allow corrective measures and action in order to obtain better results; it should add or remove activities or (simply) alter the organisation's strategy. In other words, the evaluation should provide new and different knowledge that can be used for elaborating policies and programmes. However, it is just as important that a participatory evaluation should strengthen the organisations being evaluated, enabling them to exercise greater control over their own development. In doing so, this type of evaluation acts as a capacity-building tool for a broad range of civil society actors, helping them reflect on, analyse and propose solutions that emerge from the multiple viewpoints they represent.

For us, therefore, the notion of participation emerges from the convergence of two distinct dynamics: *the opportunity to participate and the capacity to participate*.

The first of these depends on the institutional and political will of the parties who design and carry out the evaluation to create spaces for real participation. The second is determined principally by the attitudes and abilities civil society actors have developed previously. It is only possible to talk about true participation when these two dynamics converge: when local stakeholder capacities are aligned with the opportunities that the institution, programme or project makes available.

Not all institutions that embark on a participatory evaluation are truly willing to facilitate and support a process such as this. Some of the most common challenges to the *opportunity to participate* include the following:

• representatives from all levels of the programme under evaluation must be truly willing to support this type of evaluation. They need to be aware of the implications that a multi-stakeholder grassroots evaluation may have and, therefore, demonstrate that they are open to listening and adopting the recommendations that might arise from an evaluation. A decision to embark on a participatory evaluation means that the groups that are normally in control of evaluation processes must give up power: the most important decisions in the evaluation process are now made by a broader group of civil society actors linked to the intervention

In a participatory evaluation, the parties involved in the project decide what will be evaluated, with what objectives, when the evaluation will be conducted, what data collection and analysis methods will be used, and how the results will be communicated.

that is being evaluated. Doubtless this group will include individuals with opposing views, both about the project and the evaluation itself;

• the institution/programme should have access to appropriate resources that are required to carry out a participatory evaluation. Designing spaces where civil society is given the leading role usually implies slower processes that will often differ drastically from the usual management practices: something that not all institutions are prepared to accept;

• the groups taking part in participatory evaluations will not necessarily have prior knowledge of evaluations, with the consequence that, a priori, many will question the methodological rigour of the approach, comparing it with evaluations led by professional teams; and

• it is vitally important for the evaluation team to include representatives of all the parties involved. It may be very hard to identify representatives of all groups, especially in the case of community-based organisations.

Overcoming these *challenges to the opportunity to participate* favours and facilitates evaluation experiences that involve social participation. This in turn operates as a key motivating factor for civil society actors involved in the process. But, in order to ensure this actually happens, training is required to make sure they truly have the *capacity to participate.* This guarantees the quality and methodological rigour of the evaluation process.

Some of the principal challenges that must be faced when developing the capacity to participate are as follows:

• efforts must be made to adjust the scenarios of participation to the circumstances of different actors. This may be achieved by identifying common interests that are within the grasp of all participants and by supporting them to face any challenges they are willing to take on board;

• facilitators should be aware of the range of different participatory evaluation tools that are available today and adjust or redesign them so they may be used in the participatory processes required by the evaluation;

• they should also recognise that the tools "cannot do everything", and that it is therefore important to develop a participatory spirit that helps them to accept mistakes, readily repeat explanations, show themselves to be open to reviewing agreements and redesigning work plans, etcetera;

• there should be a clear understanding of the role of the person leading the process. They should: motivate without pushing, facilitate reflection within the group without influencing its conclusions, contribute ideas without imposing them and ask questions without suggesting answers;

• the lack of experience among the participating groups should be compensated for by providing advice and capacity building and by adapting tools to ensure that the participatory evaluation meets quality standards and displays the methodological rigour required of any evaluation; and

• maximum advantage should be made of knowledge about the intervention being evaluated and about its context that is held by members of the participatory evaluation teams by facilitating discussions that include the full range of perspectives. Only in this way is it possible to develop shared proposals.

The notion of participation arises when two dynamics converge: *the opportunity to participate* and the *capacity to participate.*

It is possible to talk of participation only when these two dynamics coincide.

3. EVALPARTICIPATIVA: A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND LEARNING... AND THE HANDBOOK

As indicated in the first section, the EvalParticipativa initiative emerged in the context of past and current practice in the evaluation of public policy. It was also a response to the challenges associated with both the opportunity and the capacity to participate (highlighted in the previous section) that arise when truly participatory evaluations are implemented. Explicitly committed to creating and strengthening capacity to take part in participatory evaluations, EvalParticipativa is a community of practice and learning whose aim is to learn from and enhance the scope of successful participatory evaluation experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean by sharing methods and tools.

It was launched by PETAS and DEval in collaboration with important civil society organisations such as TECHO and Servicio País. It has been promoting and supporting innovative evaluation experiences for several years. These actions have been guided by the key objective of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of this evaluation approach, and developing tools that might strengthen the former and reduce the limitations caused by the latter. We have therefore had the opportunity to review in minute detail both the literature and the rich participatory evaluation practice that has been developed in Latin America.

For this purpose, EvalParticipativa started out by extending an open invitation to join its community of practice and learning, with the double objective of: (1) developing specialised knowledge based on the experiences of its members (the community of practice); and (2) producing a capacity-building proposal for participatory evaluation that includes content development, methodologies and educational tools (the community of learning). At the end of EvalParticipativa's first period of operation, in March 2021, the initiative had more than 300 members who regularly post in both Spanish and English on the EvalParticipativa portal.

The community also boasts a sizeable repository of guides, tools, experiences and significant lessons about participatory evaluation that is being progressively nourished by contributions from its growing number of members. Debates on specific

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topics are regularly initiated and are collected and shared in the news section of the portal. In November 2019, a group of 21 community members, drawn from a total of 15 organisations, met in Quito, Ecuador, in the First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean. Coordinated and facilitated by the EvalParticipativa coordination team, these experiences were reviewed during the five days of the event, and time was set aside to reflect on the ideal content of a training programme for participatory evaluation in the region.

It is within this context that we present this handbook for participatory evaluation, whose content owes much to contributions from EvalParticipativa community members.

This handbook is intended to:
• develop basic conceptual and methodological considerations concerning participatory evaluation. These emphasise the "what" and the "how" of the process, the role of facilitation, and the choice and use of appropriate tools for this approach; and
• review the theory and practice of participatory evaluation in Latin America, with the aim of contributing ideas, recommendations and guidelines on how to conduct a high-quality participatory evaluation.

In this vein, Chapter 2 explores the development of the relationship between evaluation and participation, providing examples of different proposals that have emerged in different parts of the globe. We pay particular attention to connections between this style of practice and other participatory initiatives with deep roots in Latin America. Against this background, we discuss the conceptual framework of participatory evaluation, outlining its key principles in a process that allows us to reflect on its potential to promote rights, inclusion and equity.

Chapter 3 goes on to provide a step-by-step description of the participatory evaluation process. It discusses in general terms how this kind of evaluation is carried out as well as outlining the specific contents of each step. The chapter also highlights a range of tools and instruments that can help

ensure that a participatory evaluation is conducted in line with the quality standards and methodological rigour expected of any process of this kind.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the role of the facilitator, starting with the idea that their role differs from their counterparts working on conventional evaluation processes. The chapter provides a general overview of the facilitation process, before looking at what this means in the specific case of a participatory evaluation, during which the facilitator acts as guide to the different stages and phases of the process, the importance of contributing to the development of specific capacities and the need to monitor progress and show results.

EvalParticipativa is a community of practice and learning, focused on learning from, and enhancing the scope of, successful participatory evaluation experiences in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Finally, Chapter 5 focuses on the tools used in participatory evaluation. In it, we present some key conceptual considerations concerning questions of methodology as well as evaluation tools – and we explore the advantages and some limitations of the latter. Next, these tools are classified according to the modality used to implement them and the different purposes they can be put to. Using examples and practical recommendations, we propose a list of seven criteria that should be considered when selecting tools and using them.

4. HOW TO READ THIS HANDBOOK

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, this handbook had its origins in the First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito (Ecuador) towards the end of 2019. During five intense days of discussion, around twenty participants shared lessons-learned and new ideas that emerged from their practice. The structure of the gathering has been replicated to a certain extent in this handbook, which is organised around the content highlighted in the previous section. We do not consider there to be a single way to access and make use of this material. If reading each chapter in sequence, your route will start with a general overview of the roots, connections and principles of participatory evaluation (Chapter 2).

Next, you will discover the processes used to develop this kind of evaluation and its distinctive characteristics (Chapter 3), reflect on the key role played by the facilitator in participatory evaluation (Chapter 4) and -finally- learn about different participatory tools and how they should be used (Chapter 5).

The chapters may also be read separately, according to the particular aims and interests of the reader. Each chapter follows on from, and is connected to, the others, yet they are also complete in themselves and can be read separately. In addition to its principal content, each chapter also includes text boxes that provide practical examples, suggestions for further reading to help deepen understanding, and links to tools and practical experiences. In addition, when appropriate, we have included links to testimonies from members of the EvalParticipativa community, in the form of short audio-visual presentations on specific concepts or that highlight personal or organisational experiences.

An additional note is merited on the use of non-sexist language in this handbook. Language emerges in contested spaces and arenas, in which tensions are expressed between institutional regulations and processes of change and transformation. In producing this handbook, we have sought to use language that helps us describe the world as it is, and we have therefore tried to use language in a way that does not discriminate against anyone. It has been our

There is no single way to read this handbook. The chapters may be read in sequence or separately, according to the particular aims and interests of the reader.

priority to be clear and inclusive in our communication without doing damage to any grammatical rules. We use generic, collective or impersonal terms when possible and avoid gender-exclusive pronouns.

5. OUR EXPECTATIONS

While this handbook was being developed, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an unprecedented global emergency that seriously compromised the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Now, more than ever, public and private actors should join forces to develop and implement policies capable of ensuring the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved. Evaluation should also respond to this enormous challenge and be made available to agents of development as a vital instrument of good governance. As with other approaches, participatory evaluation has the key function of providing evidence that may be used to guide decisions on programme continuity and improvement. It offers added value in that it is consistent with the 2030 Agenda and fosters cohesion among the stakeholder groups involved in development processes.

Members of the EvalParticipativa community are aware of the gravity of the global situation and we believe that presenting this approach to evaluation and making it available to others might make a significant contribution to improving things. We believe that EvalParticipativa has the potential to:

- build capacity in these areas, exchange experiences and document good practice, permitting lessons to be shared and new initiatives to be promoted;
- develop skills in the public sector and civil society organisations, as well as in in the community of participatory evaluation practitioners;
- support and work alongside projects, programmes and interventions that follow a participatory methodology of any kind;
- construct and share theoretical and practical knowledge based on experiences developed in different countries, by placing value on the

As with other evaluation approaches, participatory evaluation has the key function of providing evidence that may be used to guide decisions on programme continuity and improvement.

wide range of existing material and by generating new material;

• strengthen alliances both within and between regions, institutions, organisations and sectors, including academia and evaluation training programmes; and

• promote the creation of conditions necessary to ensure participatory evaluation processes become a regular practice in the region.

These conditions include raising awareness among the principal civil society actors, encouraging participants and demonstrating the benefits of the approach and the need to institutionalise it.

We trust that this handbook will make it possible to analyse these ideas, refashion them and advance towards the consolidation of a new evaluation paradigm, with social participation at its core.

Chapter 2

Participatory evaluation. The "what" and the "who"

This chapter explores the origins, development and principles of participatory evaluation and the groups involved in these processes. In the first section, we describe the roots and connections of this approach to evaluation. We start by examining the early relations between evaluation and participation, before then going on to look at different versions of the approach developed in different parts of the world and highlighting the connections between this kind of practice and other participatory initiatives with deep roots in Latin America. After situating participatory evaluation within this broad context, the second section of the chapter defines its conceptual boundaries and key principles. In the third section, we reflect on the wide range of interpretations and practices linked to the concept of "participation", and the potential of participatory evaluation to promote rights, inclusion and equity. In the conclusion, we return to the chapter's central aspects and frame participatory evaluation as an instrument that helps ensure that *no one is left behind.*

I. THE ROOTS AND CONNECTIONS OF PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

The ever-increasing visibility of participatory evaluations and of the reflections, training sessions and conceptual approaches they entail, might suggest that a new phenomenon, if not a fad, had emerged. However, the connection between evaluation and participation has a long history. It is rooted in a variety of different contexts and scenarios, which may have emerged explicitly from the field of evaluation or more implicitly, when a participatory focus is included in an initiative that has some connection with the field.

Evaluation and participation: a long-term relationship

The relationship between evaluation and participation began to develop in the 1970s, in response to criticisms of classic evaluation models, characterised by rational technical approaches, positivist and quantitative in nature, and clear *top-down* perspectives (Cousins, Whitmore and Shulha, 2013; Plottu and Plottu, 2011; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Everitt and Hardiker, 1996). Up to that point, evaluation had been considered purely technical in nature, resting on measurement tools and the external eye of an expert evaluation team. It was believed to be capable of extracting objective conclusions about the performance and results of programmes or projects.

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However, recent contributions to the field recognise the political nature of evaluation processes as well as the centrality of reflexivity and intersubjectivity (Chelimsky, 1998)[1]. Influenced by interpretivism and constructivism[2], approaches drawn from the social sciences, evaluation understands the importance of including qualitative assessments to better understand the complexity of social programmes and social change processes. Thus, the idea that evaluation is free from value judgements has been questioned and there is now a recognition of the need to negotiate between different values. Thus, the discipline of evaluation has, for the first time, come to see the diversity of social actors involved, and their different perspectives and priorities, as fundamental elements that should be taken into account in research into, or evaluation of, any public policy programme.

1 Intersubjectivity considers that personal experience emerges and transforms in relational contexts, while reflexivity has to do - in this case - with acknowledging the evaluator´s role in the evaluation process.
2 Interpretivism and constructivism are social theories that stand in opposition to the positivist view, arguing that social entities are not merely objects of experience but are made up by social interactions and culture.

Since the mid-1990s, many evaluation approaches have identified the involvement of civil society actors as a key component of their practice.

However, it was not until midway through the 1990s, in an international context focused on promoting "human development", that a flourish of reflection and theoretical and methodological debate on participation and evaluation occurred. Since the mid-1990s numerous articles, books and handbooks have been published, discussing - albeit under different names - evaluation practices that involve key civil society actors in a dynamic and ongoing manner (King, Cousins and Whitmore, 2007). Many of these versions of evaluation emerged in the field of development cooperation and have gained in popularity as awareness has grown of the complexity of the evaluation context, programmes, policies, and of organisations themselves (Cousins and Chouinard, 2012).

Since then, many evaluation approaches have identified the involvement of civil society actors as a key component, displaying a particular sensitivity to their needs and perspectives, as well as a clear interest in ensuring they are involved in the evaluation process (Chouinard and Milley, 2018). However, as we will go on to discuss, the term "participation" itself has been stretched somewhat and participatory evaluation practices vary greatly.

Various ways evaluation and participation have been linked

Since the start of the 1990s, several evaluation approaches have recognised the importance of involving a broad range of civil society actors in the evaluation process. In fact, the inclusion of voices from civil society is now considered a key element, important not only in response to evaluation needs, but also to ensure high quality, credible, viable and evidence-based evaluations (Tapella and Sanz, 2019).

In contrast to conventional evaluation practice (which emphasises the need to use scientific methods, controlled experiments and modelling), these approaches place social actors at the centre, view evaluation as a pluralist process of negotiation (Weiss, 1998; Monnier, 1995) and focus on how the outcomes will be used. More specifically, they look at context and argue for greater involvement of the community in the evaluation process in the belief that the evaluation team should play a more active and differentiated role (Patton, 2010; Shulha *et al.*, 2016).

A number of other approaches share the general focus of participatory evaluation to a significant degree. However, they also differ considerably with regard to the purpose of the evaluation, the type of social actor involved and the role of the evaluation team. The following section introduces four of these approaches that we consider particularly significant: transformative evaluation, empowerment evaluation, the collaborative approach in evaluation, and developmental evaluation.

Transformative evaluation

Transformative evaluation stresses that the process is not only technical in nature, but also highly political. Its aim is to recognise situations of discrimination and social exclusion (associated with different forms of diversity) and to contribute to achieving social justice. For Mertens (2009), an important aspect of the transformative paradigm is the conscious inclusion of a wide range of people who are usually excluded from society. According to this approach, knowledge (including knowledge generated by evaluations)

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TRANSFORMATIVE EVALUATION

Mertens, D. M. 2009. *Transformative research and evaluation: the intersection of applied social research and program evaluation.* New York: Guilford Press.

Nirenberg, O. 2013. *Formulación y evaluación de intervenciones sociales.* Buenos Aires: Noveduc.

is influenced by the different interests and power relationships at play. In this sense, the evaluation process enables the least powerful voices to be heard, builds their capacity and advances towards the creation of fairer, more egalitarian societies. Inasmuch as the evaluation process itself implies transformation (Nirenberg, 2013), it should provide an opportunity to rethink programmes and inspire transformative action.

Similarly, the members of the evaluation team should not be considered simply as experts in methodology, analysts or facilitators, but also - and more importantly - as agents of change, who take on an activist role that seeks to contribute to social justice (Ligero Lasa *et al.*, 2014).

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EMPOWERMENT EVALUATION

Go to the Better Evaluation page: Empowerment Evaluation

Empowerment Evaluation

The ultimate goal of Empowerment Evaluation is the promotion of self-determination, as a way of contributing to improving programmes and making it more likely they will achieve their goals. Self-determination is linked to mechanisms and behaviours that help people take control of their lives and resources in the areas in which they live. In this sense, this type of evaluation stresses helping communities assess their own activities and results by implementing participatory processes focused on strengthening stakeholder capacities to plan, implement and evaluate their own activities.

In this type of evaluation, the evaluation team works alongside the different key civil society actors (organisation staff, programme participants and the community as a whole) to develop the evaluation. It becomes a "critical friend" or "coach" capable of helping develop a rigorous and appropriate process (Fetterman 1994; Fetterman *et al.*, 2014).

This approach involves a distinction between two varieties of empowerment evaluation: the practical and the transformative. The former more closely resembles formative evaluation and aims to improve programmes by encouraging the participation of a range of civil society actors. The latter encourages people to take control of their own lives and available resources in order to change predefined roles and structures (Fetterman, 2015).

The Collaborative Approach to Evaluation

The Collaborative Approach to Evaluation (CAE) aims to foster learning and improve programmes and policies that are run by organisations and institutions. It focuses on understanding how processes of change work, making it possible to improve the ways social interventions are guided, always responding with the specific context in mind. It is used to improve organisational capacities for the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes. To this end, the diverse interests of the different actors, and context-specific characteristics, are taken as starting points. In addition, in this approach the evaluation team facilitates the process of negotiation and reflection that the evaluation process implies (Shulha *et al.*, 2016).

Moreover, CAE identifies eight principles that facilitate this type of practice, namely: (1) clarify motivation for collaboration; (2) foster meaningful relationships; (3) develop a shared understanding of the programme; (4) promote appropriate participatory processes; (5) monitor and respond to the resource availability; (6) monitor evaluation progress and quality; (7) promote evaluative thinking; and (8) follow-up to assess the use of the evaluation (Shulha *et al.*, 2016).

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH IN EVALUATION

Shulha, L. M. *et al.* 2016. "Introducing Evidence-Based Principles to Guide Collaborative Approaches to Evaluation", *American Journal of Evaluation*, 37(2), pp. 193-215.

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental Evaluation focuses on informing and supporting one or more agents of change involved in implementing innovative approaches in complex situations (Wilson-Grau and Britt, 2013). The evaluation process begins in the usual way, by deciding on evaluation questions and, as in all evaluations, gathers and analyses information throughout the entire process.

The approach helps develop innovative actions intended to enable it to adapt to emerging, dynamic realities in complex situations (Patton 2010, 2012). Innovation and adaptation are integral to the model and are incorporated into the design and information-gathering phases, allowing support to be given to the programme and/or process of organisational development under evaluation, allowing timely, swift, feedback to be provided (ideally, in real time). The evaluation team works closely with social innovation professionals to envision, design and test new approaches, in a continuous process of adaptation, intentional change and long-term development. The principal functions of the team in this approach are to clarify the innovation and adaptation processes, tracking their implications and results in order to facilitate a continuous process of decision-making in real time, based on data that emerges from the development process (Patton, 2012). One example of an innovatory evaluative experience that reflects this approach is *Outcome Harvesting*, developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau (2019), who argues that a highly participatory process is indispensable if the process followed by an evaluation, and its products, are to be successful.

The versions briefly described here coincide in considering evaluation as an exercise which can, and should,

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

Patton, M. Q. 2010. *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use.* New York: Guilford Press.

give voice to different actors and their varied interests, in order to understand a multiple, complex and intangible reality. The goal is to increase understanding of the processes and/or their results, as an indispensable platform from which to apply changes.

It is worth mentioning at this point that these evaluation perspectives have been created in the English-speaking world, in the Global North. Their theoretical and methodological roots may be found in the action-research approach of Kurt Lewin (1946) or, more recently, in methods drawn from Participatory Rural Appraisal / Participatory Learning and Action (Chambers, 1992). While these influences have had some influence in Latin America, it was the significant prior knowledge and praxis in the region that provided a platform for participatory evaluation. The following section goes into this idea in more depth.

Latin American connections with participatory evaluation

In the Latin American context, particularly in the field of social action, participatory evaluation is direct heir to a rich tradition that has strongly and explicitly emphasised the participatory dimension inherent to a vision of reality that is both liberating and transformative. Because of their history and development in the region, the three most influential disciplinary approaches in the region are Popular Education, Participatory Action Research and the Systematisation of Experiences. These all come under the umbrella of the "participatory family"[3] as all these methods and initiatives emanate from the same intellectual family, characterised by "the same epistemology and immanent critique methodology" (Fals Borda, 2009, p.321). Aside from their particularities and nuances, the same strong foundations sustain and legitimise these approaches in their original form and ensure maximum impact when they are implemented.

3 Fals Borda (2009) uses the term "participatory family" to encompass a set of approaches that, in addition to Participatory Action Research, include self-inquiry methods, participant social science, participatory and consciousness-raising surveys, activist research, popular (or proletarian) science, soft systems methodology, etcetera.

Popular Education

Popular Education emerged during the mid-1970s, becoming a trend or movement that sought to respond both theoretically and methodologically to the region's enormous socio-economic inequalities. Contributions from the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire were key to its origins and exerted a powerful influence over students, young activists, intellectuals and members of the clergy, who threw themselves into multiple grassroots social and political projects. Within this movement, popular education was seen as the tool of choice to equip the least advantaged and most excluded groups to understand their adverse situations and organise to transform them.

Following an initial focus on literacy and adult education, popular education went on to be developed principally by NGOs, its scope broadening over the next two decades to include training for leaders of social movements and community organisations, community health care projects, alternative communication and the solidarity economy. The impetus it provided to capacity building and training for individuals, groups and social organisations was felt in multiple workshops, courses and campaigns and a wealth of educational and communication materials that came to represent the movement. In the early 1990s, Popular Education retreated somewhat until a significant, multifarious, (re) emergence of experiences, groups, networks and training activities occurred in the early 21st Century, reaffirming its importance, and reaching a new generation of civil society actors and producing new content and practices (Torres Carrillo, 2014)[4]. This reinvention process focuses on the changing realities of society, and in doing so has recently come to address topics including food sovereignty, agroecology, youth,

4 This new impetus of Popular Education may be appreciated in the journey followed by CEAAL (the Latin American and Caribbean Council for Popular Education). CEAAL is a continent-wide network comprising more than a hundred centres inspired by Popular Education. It's assemblies have given it the mandate to establish a movement dedicated to Popular Education and to form more intentional links with other social movements in the region.

In the Latin American context, participatory evaluation is direct heir to a rich tradition in the field of social action that has strongly and explicitly emphasised the participatory dimension inherent in a way of perceiving reality that is both liberating and transformative.

interculturalism, LGBTQIA+ issues and community justice (Núñez, 1986).

Over time, the Popular Education approach has established itself as a broad movement that brings together different currents of thought and action drawn from the social sciences (in particular, pedagogy – or the ways of teaching, here how a learning process influences, and is influenced by, the social, political and psychological development of learners). Popular Education has adopted a dialectical epistemology that emphasises participatory methodologies, dialogue and the complementarity of knowledge drawn from different sources (Núñez, 1986). In other words, by using different dialectical methods it seeks to enable that actors inquire into their and others' view of reality, how they reason according to their own logical and scientific analysis, memory and intuition. This emphasis on dialogue between different forms of knowledge implies the development of horizontal relationships between educator and student, without removing the need for the educator, who, in many ways, takes on the role of facilitator during the whole of the educational process. Historically, Popular Education has been underpinned by its ethical and political commitment to transforming

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT POPULAR EDUCATION'S HISTORY AND ITS CURRENT ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA AND BEYOND:

Burns, D., Howard, J. & Ospina, S.M. (eds) 2021. *The SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry.* Los Angeles/London: SAGE Publications Ltd. See here the Table of Content.

Arnold, R. & B. Burke. 1983. *A Popular Education Handbook. An educational experience taken from Central America and adapted to the Canadian context.* Ontario: CUSO.

Further resources are to be found in:

Teaching Democracy. A popular Education Sharing Space:
Popular Education Tools

Popular Education Consultants:
Popular Education methodology

Intergroup Resources:
Popular Education

society by focusing on the interests of vulnerable and excluded groups.

Participatory Action Research

PAR (Participatory Action Research) is a social science research method with a rich history in Latin America. It became known in the mid-1970s through the work of the Colombian Orlando Fals Borda. What makes it unique and original compared to other methods is its focus on producing knowledge with the explicit intention of transforming the reality that is being researched. To do this, it seeks to find ways of empowering local civil society actors as part of the research process, enabling them to develop effective, participatory actions intended to improve their living conditions (Park, 2011).

PAR is a cyclical process characterised by building, refining and improving the research. Thus, epistemologically, its central components (Action followed by Reflection followed again by Action), are founded on a distinction between 'subjects' (who carry out the research) and 'objects' (about whom the research is carried out). This break with the central claim of positivism is what fosters horizontal relationships between the different participants in the social research process (García Sánchez and Guerrero Barón, 2012).

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH'S HISTORY IN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT AND BEYOND:

Burns, D., Howard, J. & Ospina, S.M. (eds) 2021. *The SAGE Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry*. Los Angeles/London: SAGE Publications Ltd. See here the Table of Content.

Cruz, E.. 2012. "Subversión, investigación-acción participativa y socialismo raizal: vigencia de la utopía en el pensamiento de Orlando Fals Borda". *Izquierdas 14.*

Leal, E. 2009. La investigación acción participación, un aporte conocimiento y a la transformación de Latinoamérica, en permanente movimiento. *Revista de investigación*, 33(67), 13–34.

Paré, L. 2010. Retos de la investigación-acción ante los paradigmas del desarrollo sustentable y las políticas públicas.

While PAR is not a monolithic methodological movement, its different versions do share common core features (Leal, 2009). One of these, which is key, is its political intent, an aspect that is explicit in the way that it pursues structural change, however small the process at hand may be. Thus, its epistemological posture favours the production of knowledge that is directed at achieving social transformation, with subjects taking a critical stance towards the situation under investigation. Research and action, theory and practice, should not be considered to be dichotomous, as the research is itself a form of action. In the context of PAR, the role of external professionals (in this case, researchers or academics) becomes that of facilitator, who contribute their expertise to enable local civil society actors to take centre stage in the research process.

Its methodological originality is clearly apparent in the space it provides for community participatory action, expressed in data collection tools that favour dialogue and exploration of the data at hand. Examples of this include the interviews, the semi-structured questionnaires and focus groups that are given new meaning by these horizontal, participatory interactions. To this may be added the use of other tools (such as photo language and sociodramas, etcetera) that encourage the sharing of feelings and experiences and help recuperate popular knowledge. The PAR methodology emerged from the classic worldview of action-research practice (Lewin), was influenced by the committed sociology approach (Moncayo, 2009), and over time came to integrate elements of critical theory, hermeneutics and systemics (Torres, 1987) [5].

Systematisation of Experiences

The 1970s also saw the emergence of the Systematisation of Experiences methodology in Latin America, which has strong connections and convergences with both PAR and

5 Cohen and Franco (1988) consider that many participatory evaluation experiences are rooted theoretically and methodologically in the action research approach.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SYSTEMATISATION OF EXPERIENCES HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION IN LATIN AMERICA:

Jara Holliday, O. 2020. Systematisation of Experiences: New paths to academic work in universities, *IJAR International Journal of Action Research*, 1-2020, pp. 62-74

Popular Education initiatives in the region (Eizaguirre *et al.*, 2004, p.19)[6]. At that time, social development organisations working at grassroots level became interested in using these initiatives as opportunities for learning. A methodology was consolidated which focused on recovering these experiences and analysing them critically. Their participation in these experiences became indispensable to the process. In its early days, Martinic (1984) stated that the Systematisation of Experiences methodology constituted an alternative to conventional evaluations then used in social and educational projects. He understood it to be a response to the fact that prevailing social research approaches lacked ways of analysing the issues uncovered by efforts to achieve social change.

Alforja, a network of popular education practitioners in Central America, is an example of the strong link developed, and maintained, between the Systematisation of Experiences and Popular Education methodologies in the region, where the main emphasis is placed on learning from practices associated with specific contexts (rather than on merely generating knowledge). This approach affords local civil society actors a central role in developing the systematisation process (Jara Holliday, 2010). The momentum and impact of this approach in the region is largely a result of two factors: (1) the need to learn from an accumulation of experiences in the field of Popular Education and social development projects, and (2) a deep dissatisfaction with current evaluation practices and their exclusive focus

6 The authors also highlight initial connections with university social work departments. The profession has worked on the approach since the mid-1950s with the aim of recuperating, ordering and clarifying knowledge to ensure its scientific application in the discipline.

on quantitative outcomes (González Gómez, 2005; Chavez-Tafur, 2006).

Later, other approaches came to the forefront, focused to varying degrees on exchanging experiences, improving the understanding that organisations have of their own work in order to improve practice, or even deriving theoretical knowledge from practice. More recently, the Systematisation of Experiences methodology in social organisations has developed in close contact with evaluation processes and experience-based social research (Eizaguirre *et al.*, 2004). Although it shares features with PAR, the Systematisation of Experiences methodology (as a form of critical qualitative research) has its own identity and has become established as an emerging independent field in the area of popular education and alternative social practices (Cendales and Torres, 2014).

The three traditions reviewed here take as their starting points a co-construction of the problem at hand (the issue that has provoked the inquiry or research, etcetera), with the focus or problem always being defined and decided upon by the affected group or community. The relationships between external practitioners and local civil society actors (researchers and the researched, educators and students, etcetera) embody the epistemological challenge of overcoming the separation of subject and object in the research. This explains how the relationships can be horizontal and at the same time, differentiated. The role of the external actors becomes that of process facilitators (knowledge generators etcetera). The key interest in learning from reality / practice / experience is focused on praxis. In other words, the action or intervention is intended to bring about social change.

A participatory component is a cross-cutting feature of all these currents, as participatory postures and interpretative (hermeneutic) emphases have recently been incorporated[7]. While arguments remain as to whether or not these approaches have entered the academic and public planning mainstream, their presence over time in the region has

7 For more on this, see the methodological proposals from the Popular Education Research Group at the Universidad del Valle in Cali (Colombia), which has been developing accounts or stories *(relatos)* of these experiences and seeking to interpret them, in order to construct a "consensual macro account" *(macro relato consensual)*.

come to constitute an ethical and political challenge to the ways in which practice is conceived and informed. It has, furthermore, contributed significantly to how educational, research and social action initiatives are perceived and put into practice.

All three of these Latin American currents or approaches recognise the theoretical and conceptual influence of the Brazilian Paulo Freire (1972). Tellingly, his close association with the field of evaluation has become increasingly clear to a global audience in recent years[8].

2. PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION PRINCIPLES IN LATIN AMERICA

In the field of evaluation, many projects claim that their practice incorporates social participation. This emphasis is revealed through expressions such as "the stakeholder as protagonist", "citizen participation" and "recovering the stakeholder perspective" (Daigneault and Jacob, 2009; Jacob and Ouvrard, 2009). The many definitions and conceptualisations of participatory evaluation differ widely. In this handbook, ideal versions have been described in order to make comparisons with other evaluation approaches easier. The EvalParticipativa project has created a repository of handbooks and a range of other materials on this approach, which include references to these multiple definitions[9].

In order to present a preliminary understanding of participatory evaluation in the Latin American and Caribbean context, it is useful to highlight the two different ways in which the approach has developed (Patton, 2017): *practical participatory evaluation and its counterpart, transformative participatory evaluation.* These constitute two parallel traditions, which share the same approach and key characteristics, but whose emphases are clearly differentiated, because of the sociocultural contexts in which

8 One example of this occurred in 2017, when No. 155 of the prestigious journal *New Directions for Evaluation,* coordinated by Michael Patton, was dedicated to Paulo Freire and the pedagogy of evaluation.

9 EvalParticipativa offers resources in English and Spanish: evalparticipativa.net. Other key resources centres are: Better Evaluation: Participatory Evaluation; IDS's participatory methods resource centre: Plan, Monitor and Evaluate

Principles of participatory evaluation

1. The relevant stakeholders of the intervention or situation under evaluation are **active in and conscious** of their incorporation in the evaluation process as full subjects.
2. **Local knowledge** is recognised as valid and indispensable for evaluation.
3. **Institutional representatives work with local stakeholders** in the design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation findings.
4. The use of **didactic tools and materials** facilitates dialogue by generating information.
5. **The participants or stakeholders take ownership of the evaluation process and results.**
6. The evaluation process **strengthens local skill sets** in planning and participatory decision making.
7. The external evaluators act as **facilitators** in the evaluation process.

they emerged. Practical participatory evaluation emerged and saw its principal development in the developed English-speaking world, whose approach to stakeholder involvement emphasises the inclusion of donors, evaluation and programme managers and decision-makers. Transformative participatory evaluation is encountered in Latin America, India and Africa (Patton, 2017, p.56), and is interested in involving all relevant parties, including those affected by the evaluation process. In particular, this includes the least powerful and seeks to help them acquire and strengthen capacities as part of the evaluation process itself.

Before providing a definition of participatory evaluation, which we will use to structure and formalise the concept, we first present seven key principles that are specific to the Latin American context and that also make its transformative nature explicit. These principles were constructed collaboratively during the First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito in November 2019 and are based on the experiences of a dozen participatory evaluations carried out previously in the region. The advantage to this procedure is that the principles have emerged from analyses of real situations. They are also explained and developed with reference to the specialised bibliography.

1. The actors associated with the intervention or situation being evaluated are actively and consciously involved in the evaluation process, as subjects of rights

Firstly, the Latin American perspective emphasises social transformation and the potential of programmes to advance development. In this respect, participation means giving voice to all relevant actors and in particular to excluded sectors of the population. According to Chouinard and Milley (2018), participatory practice includes a normative component, focused on democratising the research process, the joint production of knowledge and to responding

more effectively to the needs and demands of each specific context.

Historically, however, project, programme and policy participants have only been incorporated into evaluation processes as informants. An evaluation framework that treats participants as full subjects differs from one that views them simply as objects in need of protection or as mere beneficiaries. The transformative approach to the theory and practice of participatory evaluation trusts people to be able to speak and think critically, to make decisions and act independently. It also recognises that they have their own interests, expectations and priorities. This concept of participation fosters the active involvement of different actors throughout the evaluation process, from the design stage to its final results. This active involvement means that those who make the decision to carry out a participatory evaluation have to accept that it means sharing decision-making, especially with regard to the evaluation process. In other words, it involves giving up power. At the same time, viewing participants as subjects with full rights also implies recognising their responsibilities.

To read more about these different definitions, see Viñas and Ocampo (2002); Clark and Sartorius (2004); and Coupal (2000).

2. Local knowledge is recognised as both valid and indispensable to the evaluation process

The central role afforded to knowledge produced by those living in poverty (including indigenous peoples) has been a focus of reflection in Latin America since the 1970s (Kushner and Rotondo, 2012). This illustrates how local knowledge can be recognised and valued as the first step in a process of emancipation and liberation (Gadotti, 2017). A key aspect of incorporating local actors in transformative participatory evaluations is recognising and valuing the knowledge that emerges as they analyse their own lived realities.

3. Institutional representatives work with local civil society actors in the design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation findings

In participatory evaluation, evaluators work alongside social actors or stakeholders involved in the intervention (be it a policy, a programme or a project) in order to generate evaluative knowledge of the intervention. These social actors include the individuals who are responsible for implementing the programme, as well as local actors: grassroots organisations, user groups and local programme staff.

Within the framework of participatory evaluation, it is these people who define what will be evaluated, who will participate, when the evaluation will be carried out, what data collection and analytical methods will be used and how the results will be communicated (Coupal, 2000). All stages in the process are important, but it is the scope and characteristics of the evaluation, negotiated between the different actors involved, that set the tone for all other activities. This leads to participation experiences that are effective both for defining the desired participation objective clearly and structuring and channelling participation during the entire process (Aubel, 2000).

Valuing the perspective of multiple stakeholders implies recognising their knowledge, constructed from social, cultural and historical practice.

4. The use of didactic tools and materials facilitates dialogue by generating spaces and procedures for gathering, analysing and using information

There are challenges involved in developing effective participation in diverse and culturally complex contexts. These are related to real inequalities of power, voice and capacity that exist between the different civil society actors. Participatory evaluation has tackled this challenge by suggesting and creating innovative participatory didactic materials and tools that recuperate the perspectives of everyone involved in the evaluation process and maintain their visibility, independently of their location, power, gender, etcetera (Chouinard and Milley, 2018).

When the tools are used, rational and emotive dimensions converge, favouring an increased sense of real ownership of the reflections and findings. In addition, evaluation becomes a way of fostering the development of critical thinking in participants in the process. The tools, workshops and games prompt exchanges that deepen individual and collective knowledge; return civil society actors to the centre stage; facilitate debates, trust and innovative forms of learning and reflection; and influence the direction of the transformation sought.

5. The participants or stakeholders take ownership of the evaluation process and results

The notion of "participation" is used in multiple ways and, as a result, its meaning may become vague and unclear, diluting its ability to democratise and transform (Cornwall, 2008). While in the field of evaluation, social participation may be understood and interpreted in different ways (Chouinard and Milley, 2018), in Latin America, multiple efforts have been made to overcome its instrumentalist use, in a bid to counter the tendency to use local actors as mere informants, useful only for the purpose of legitimising an evaluation process that has actually been defined by outsiders and imposed vertically, "top down". This alternative approach is made possible by ensuring horizontality in the decision-making processes required by the evaluation process.

6. The evaluation process strengthens local participatory planning and decision-making skills

The empowerment perspective of participatory evaluation reflects Freire's contributions regarding the empowerment of people and the central role this plays in their organisation and mobilisation for the purpose

(Torres, 1987). Participation requires the involvement of local actors to ensure the specificities of the place are captured and guarantee that their points of view are included.

Thus, in addition to incorporating other points of view and helping form a shared interpretation of the programme being evaluated, participatory evaluation also produces a process by which local actors increase the decision-making capacities they can use in their own lives and communities. As a result, they are able to use tools that can help them improve their position in society.

7. The evaluation teams act as facilitators in the evaluation process

Participation in evaluation can both empower and contribute to learning, and to improving the democratic culture of organisations and social groups. However, as we have shown above, it can also be employed purely symbolically and may end up reproducing the same asymmetries of power found in the real world if efforts are not made

> Participatory evaluation creates a process in which local stake-holders grow in their capacity to make decisions regarding their own lives and surroundings.

to ensure that participation is not limited to people with more discursive ability, skills and power. Similarly, if participation is not managed properly, frustrations may be generated among those involved. Motivation may be eroded and with it the ability of the evaluation to achieve empowerment.

Given the above, the role of evaluation teams as facilitators of the process becomes increasingly important, as they play a central role at every stage of a participatory evaluation. The evaluation team "must be respectful and capable of managing processes for the group to jointly determine what should be evaluated and how this should be done, and to identify the results, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation" (Espinosa Fajardo, 2019).

Levels of participation

Prepared by the authors, based on Arnstein (1969).

3. PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION IN ACTION: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

The principal goal of participatory evaluation is to give voice to different social actors. However, the nature of this participation can look quite different in practice. Furthermore, as we have shown, it may involve activities that are in no way participatory.

Accordingly, the multifaceted and kaleidoscopic nature of the concept of "participation" is nothing new, having been explored decades ago by Sherry Arnstein (1969) in her "ladder" of participation. She argues that different types of participation form a continuum that stretches from the manipulated use of participation at one end, to participation exercised and managed by citizens at the other.

In reality, beyond the discourse of support to participatory processes, "participatory" evaluation is not always truly participatory in spirit (Guijt, 2014), as the notion of participation itself acquires different connotations. In fact, stakeholder participation is frequently limited to the provision of information, reducing this approach to evaluation to moments of mere consultation (passive participation) without offering diverse actors the possibility of influencing the decisions made during an evaluation process (Tapella and Sanz, 2019). This approach reveals practices of exclusion and privilege and sheds light on core issues in evaluation, such as voice, power and politics (Chouinard and Milley, 2018). More specifically, as Chambers (2003) emphasises, there is a risk this kind of evaluation may be reduced to a mere symbolic simulacrum, as it fails to confront the status quo or redistribute power.

The drive behind participatory evaluation has the potential to generate location-specific knowledge by bringing together the experience of local stakeholders and of external actors. This dialogue between different sources of knowledge, which emerges as part of the evaluation process, includes deliberative exchanges between the evaluation team and a host of actors, establishing an atmosphere of democratic debate (House and Howe, 2000), which lies at the heart of participatory evaluation.

Given that participatory evaluation processes are more likely to contribute to flexibility and adaptability to context, and that they are better at addressing the needs and concerns of local actors, ownership by stakeholders of both of the results of the evaluation and its mechanisms and underlying logic (methodological design, fieldwork, data analysis and presentation of findings and recommendations) is more likely. This final point has a direct and positive impact on how effectively evaluations are used, as they allow people to take ownership of the intervention process and establish themselves as rights-bearers.

In a process of this kind, time-bound and developed by different actors in collaborative processes, participatory evaluation has the potential to strengthen local skills that might have benefits beyond the project under evaluation. This may be seen in the different attitudes and behaviours that can be activated by this kind of project and that reflect stakeholder empowerment: flexibility, critical reflection, negotiation, consensus-seeking, creativity, etc.

Participation in the evaluation context builds knowledge among participants involved in these processes and gives them a voice to influence decisions that affect their lives, helping ensure that nobody is left behind. It can also strengthen the internal capacity of organisations, their ability to learn, to understand their interventions and the ways they might be improved. This ability to contextualise evaluations is one of the clearest benefits of combining participation and evaluation.

An analysis of different participatory evaluation experiences in Latin America illustrates its potential for focusing the process on people by increasing the impact felt by different local actors. A framework of collaborative, horizontally organised work allows the different perspectives of a broad range of civil society actors to be appreciated when it comes to assessing the success of programmes.

Participatory evaluation has the advantage of being more adaptable to specific contexts: it focuses on individuals, is consistent with rights-based approaches and enables advances to be made in the field of inclusion and equity.

One particular aim of these Latin American approaches is to separate participatory evaluation from "technicist" visions, which tend to reduce the entire approach and purpose to a focus on technical ways to encourage participation. Indeed, not using participatory tools could even be a positive if they are only being used as alternative, "enjoyable" ways to impose content and direct evaluation efforts, while only pretending to incorporate the perspectives of local actors. However, tools, workshops and games are central and very important parts of the participatory processes. It is thanks to them that learning emerges from the collective task of "doing together" and of participants committing their "whole self" (not just their thoughts) to the process. What is more, this "committing of the whole self" is a strongly Latin American trait, which is seldom valued in evaluation models based on other rationales.

On the other hand, evaluation practice also reveals that it is not always possible or appropriate to insist on maximum levels of participation. Although this may be a long-term goal, the degree of participation it is possible to achieve often depends, among other factors, on the programme in question, the specific context in which it has been implemented and on the evaluation team. In this regard, it is always important to remain aware of who is participating, how they are participating, in what activities, what the real participation potential is in each specific case and how to keep promoting it.

In the balance between desired and potential levels of participation, as argued above, the Latin American experience underlines the importance of ensuring that social actors participate as rights-bearers. In this sense, participatory evaluation views the active role of civil society actors as the natural extension of their rights as citizens. Additionally, it understands evaluation to be an opportunity and an appropriate moment to encourage public institutions to carry out their duties.

This tendency within participatory evaluation in the region overlaps with the general drive in recent

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years to place human rights at the core of evaluation. In the same vein as evaluations that have incorporated a human rights-based approach, several different versions have been developed to help transform evaluation into an instrument to "promote, respect and guarantee the real enjoyment of human rights, with special attention awarded to the most vulnerable groups" (Ligero Lasa *et al.*, 2014, p.19). In this case, the process of inquiry focuses on assessing how the programme contributes to reducing discrimination, developing skills among civil society actors and encouraging them to participate, make demands, and act (Ligero Lasa *et al.* 2014).

In parallel, and with regard to the connection between participation and rights, participatory evaluations carried out in the region also represent an opportunity to make progress in the fields of inclusion and equity. Participatory approaches were originally criticised for being naïve, as they did not always consider the inequalities that existed within the social groups involved in the programme and in the evaluation itself (Guijt and Shah, 1998). In recent years, Latin American practice has started to recognise existing forms of discrimination and the urgency to transform these.

In general terms, the diversity of actors is recognised, as are their different needs, interests, knowledge levels and understanding. Likewise, existing power relationships between participants are increasingly being taken into account, as are the varied situations of discrimination and inequality that might emerge and affect people differently because of the positions they occupy.

There is, thus, not only one type of social actor and it is therefore impossible to explain any given situation or position by looking at just one category, such as their socio-economic status. In each specific evaluation, attention must also be paid to the different social characteristics at play among the civil society actors and how they are interconnected. This requires an approach that understands the ways different systems and power structures are interwoven and may change over time (Hankivsky and Jordan-Zachery, 2019). It is necessary to understand how different forms of inequality, such as socio-economic status, gender, ethnic origin, age, etc., intersect in different circumstances. Furthermore, philosophical, political and practical considerations that mediate and reproduce certain types of discrimination and exclusion not only affect the programmes being evaluated, but also the evaluation process itself (Cousins and Chouinard, 2012). It is, therefore, very important to name and analyse social positions, roles, values and assumptions that exist in the programme under evaluation, in the evaluation itself and in the context in which they are taking place. Thus, evaluation presents an opportunity to highlight and change classist, sexist, racist, homophobic beliefs, etc.

Likewise, participatory evaluation practice in Latin America has initiated dialogue with, and is making an effort to establish connections between, evaluation proposals with a gender and intercultural focus, in order to question the structures of power and discrimination and the logic underpinning them (Faúndez Meléndez and Weinstein, 2013). This approach emphasises giving a voice to people and groups that are often silenced, protecting the rights of everyone who participates in the evaluation and recognising and valuing diversity. It also pinpoints more specifically where others are coming from. For example, it may be found that programmes are not neutral in terms of socially constructed gender ideologies, and if they fail to adopt appropriate measures they will reproduce the same kinds of structural inequalities. Similarly, some of the practices in the region recognise

In finding a balance between the desired participation and possible participation, the experience in Latin America underlines how central it is for social actors to participate as full subjects.

and value the cultural diversity of Latin American societies and promote the rights and voices of indigenous people and afro-descendants. It is therefore important to identify key actors and their diversity properly from the start of the evaluation. It is important to ensure that this approach is present throughout the process by breaking with the vertical or top-down focus that is often the norm.

4. CONCLUSIONS

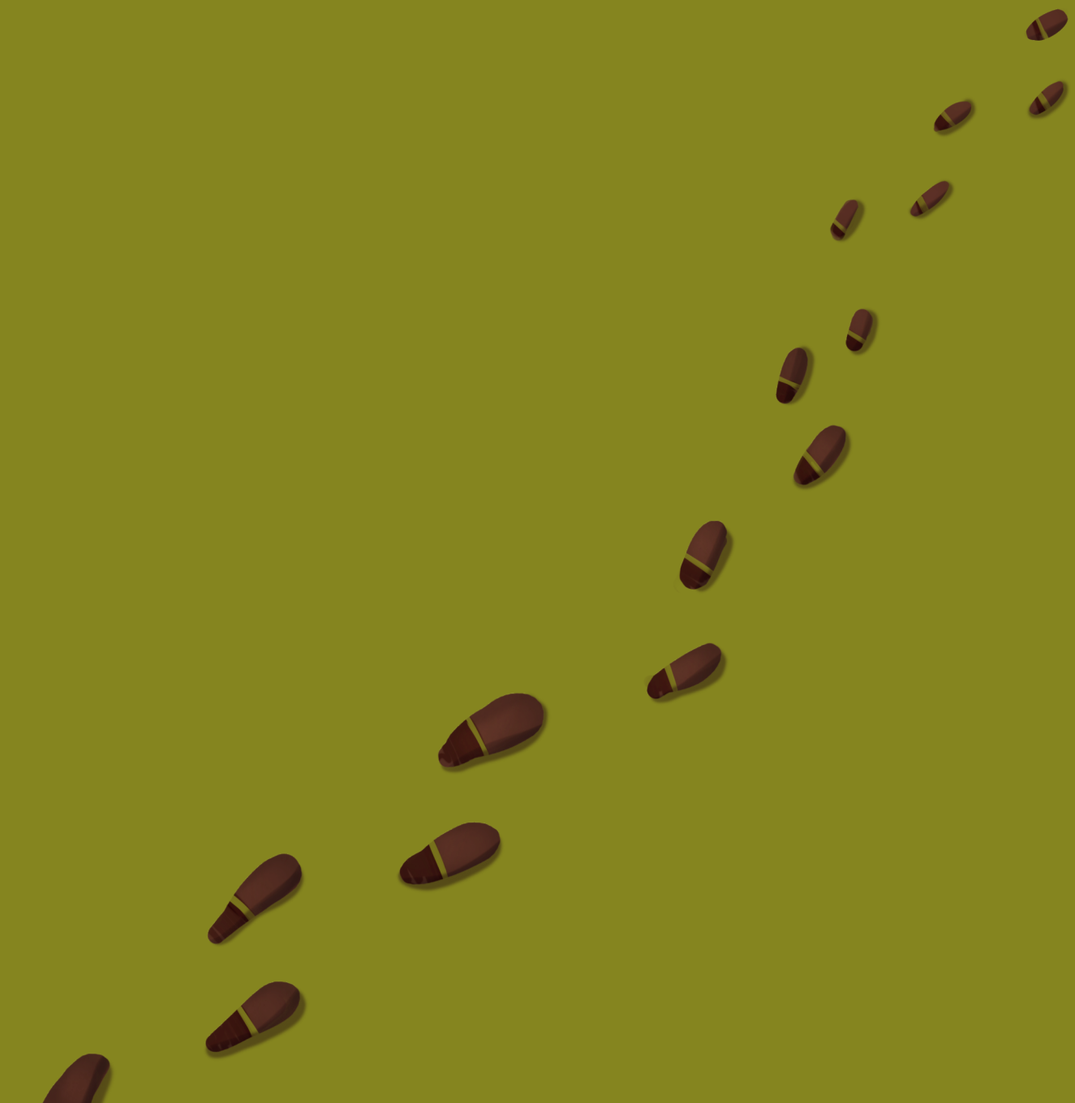
This chapter has highlighted the long-established relationship between evaluation and participation. Several versions seeking to involve diverse social actors in evaluation processes have been described. As we have seen, participatory evaluation is linked to transformative evaluation, empowerment evaluation and the collaborative approach in evaluation, among other approaches. In the Latin American context, its development has shared influences and synergy with experiences such as Popular Education and the Systematisation of Experiences approach.

Furthermore, participatory evaluation in the region shares a set of specific principles that consider civil society actors to be full subjects with rights, recognise and value local knowledge, promote horizontal didactic tools and materials, encourage civil society actors to take ownership of the processes in which they are involved and their results, and strengthen local skills and the facilitating role of the evaluation team.

Yet, participation does not always result in the same type of practice. Even though there are times when participation is used as a "label", and does not fulfil its transformative potential, it can open up spaces that, little-by-little -and according to each context- provide opportunities to advance rights, inclusion and equity. In this regard, participatory evaluation can constitute a tool with wide-ranging potential to help promote participation among diverse civil society actors, actively include their voices, needs, interests and knowledge and, consistent with the 2030 Agenda, not leave anyone behind. In the next section, we will explore how this type of evaluation activity is put into practice, how to facilitate participation in evaluation, and the tools that may be used for the purpose.

Chapter 3

How to conduct a participatory evaluation



In this chapter, we provide a step-by-step guide to carrying out a participatory evaluation. We will pay special attention to the features that differentiate this type of evaluation from others: those that affect the evaluation process in general, and those that are specific to particular steps. We also highlight specific tools and instruments that ensure that participatory evaluations are carried out with the same methodological rigour and quality standards expected of any evaluation.

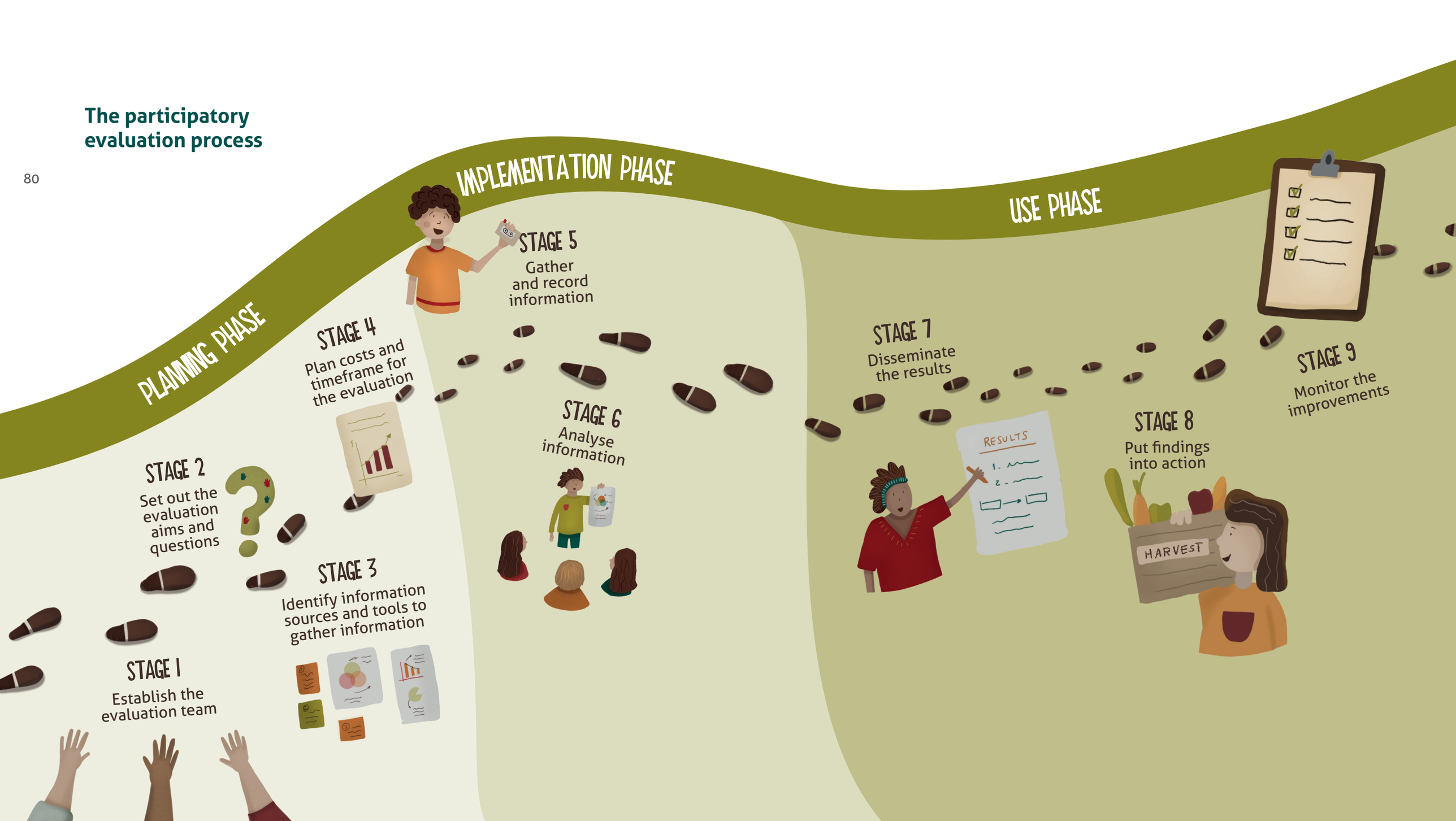
I. INTRODUCTION

The steps taken in participatory evaluations are not too different from those in their conventional counterparts. Certain aspects obviously differ and some steps require special attention when the aim is for more civil society actors to participate.

But all evaluations, participatory or not, follow a very similar pattern.

They begin by formulating questions about the project under evaluation and then search for the information required to answer them. The process ends when these answers translate into improvements in the project and in its impact. This sequence of events is generally known as the "evaluation process", and the three activities described above are referred to respectively as the planning, implementation and use "phases" of evaluation. The steps required within each of these phases are commonly known as "stages". It is at this more detailed level of stages that the features that differentiate participatory evaluation from other evaluation approaches are to be found. For this reason, this chapter explores these stages in detail.

The participatory evaluation process



An itinerary or plan not only provides direction to the group of people that will conduct the participatory evaluation (the evaluation team), but also ensures the evaluation is rigorous methodologically: an essential element if the evaluation results are to be credible.

It is worth pointing out here that there is no requirement that an evaluation has to follow a linear path. Some stages can be carried out simultaneously and it is even possible to change their order or to review decisions made in previous stages if this is considered necessary during the implementation process.

It is possible that, after completing some stages in the evaluation and getting to know the programme on a deeper level, some new groups that have not been involved from the start will be identified as having important implications for the process. To ensure that these new groups are integrated properly into the evaluation process, the evaluation objectives and questions should be reviewed with them.

A little help: capacity building, tool adaptation and process facilitation

Conducting an evaluation process from start to finish is not without its difficulties, especially when the people responsible for the process have no previous evaluation experience. This is often the case for members of participatory evaluation teams. Fortunately, they frequently make up for their lack of experience with a deep understanding of the project under evaluation and the context in which it has been implemented.

One challenge that seems to come up constantly throughout the participatory evaluation process is how to make the most of the local team's contextual knowledge and, at the same time, increase their understanding of evaluation and adapt tools to make them easier for non-professionals to use. This challenge explains three key characteristic elements of participatory evaluation processes: capacity building sessions, tool adaptation and facilitation.

Capacity building is required to ensure that all members of the participatory evaluation team know and understand the logic behind the process and how to use the different tools. The ideal scenario is when the capacity building sessions are organised in parallel to the evaluation, to ensure that participants always understand their tasks, how they should be performed and what they will be used for.

Adapting the evaluation tools so that they can be used by non-experts is the second characteristic element of participatory evaluations. This is because they have been designed by, and for, professionals in the field. People who are not used to expressing themselves in writing, for example, will obviously not feel comfortable with a task requiring them to summarise ideas on cards, review transcripts of interviews or transfer conclusions into a written report. In participatory evaluations, evaluation tools should be adapted so that the people that are going to need them know how they should be used.

If participants understand the logic behind the evaluation and how to apply its tools, there will be a two-fold positive effect: the quality of the evaluation will improve and the knowledge of the evaluation team members will increase. However, the need to adapt instruments and include capacity building sessions into participatory evaluation processes can increase the time it takes to carry out

BY WAY OF EXAMPLE BOX

In the participatory evaluation of the cancer prevention and treatment services in Valle de la Estrella (Limón, Costa Rica, 2016), the evaluation team's weekly work sessions were divided into two parts. During the first half of the session the team worked on the relevant evaluation step. The second half of the session was dedicated to capacity building sessions, during which the team learned about the activity they were going to carry out the following week. In this way, the evaluation team received continual guidance on the steps to follow and its members were able to consolidate their newly-acquired knowledge thanks to the immediate and practical nature of the training provided.

the evaluation excessively. This brings several risks with it: the results may be delayed, reducing the motivation of the participants or increasing evaluation costs. This is where facilitation -the third characteristic feature of participatory evaluation- comes in.

Maintaining the balance between ensuring quality and optimising available resources is a challenge that is also faced by conventional evaluation teams. But these teams have the benefit of their evaluation experience and knowledge. Participatory evaluation requires someone to guide the evaluation team about the steps that need to be followed, present different scenarios to help them make good decisions throughout the process, channel participatory decision making, run capacity building sessions, or propose particular evaluation tools that are appropriate to participatory evaluation teams. This "someone" is the facilitator. Chapter 4 of this handbook is specifically dedicated to the facilitation of participatory evaluation, but we introduce the concept here because facilitation will be referred to repeatedly in the next few pages.

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "THE CHALLENGE IS TO INVOLVE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS" HERE

2. THE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION PROCESS

Once the decision has been made to carry out a participatory evaluation, the process itself starts with the planning phase. The actions in this phase range from making important decisions during the preparation stages of the evaluation to drafting a work plan to put it into practice. During this phase, actors are identified to be invited to participate in the process, and jointly the objectives or questions they would like the evaluation to respond to are decided upon. They also select where and how the information that is required will be collected, and prepare meetings to analyse the data, identify the best formats to communicate the evaluation results and choose

mechanisms to ensure these results are put into use. The work plan also specifies the timescales for the evaluation and estimates the resources that will be required to carry it out.

Participatory evaluation teams are formed at the start of the process so that they are able to participate in important decisions that need to be made during the planning phase. This is a notable difference with other types of evaluations, whose teams are put together later and take on responsibility for evaluations that have already been planned. In other words, while evaluation teams in participatory evaluations take part in the entire evaluation process, the work of a conventional evaluation team is concentrated solely on the intermediary stage, when they carry out an evaluation planned by others.

It is very useful to record the decisions that are made during the evaluation planning phase in a table or matrix known as the "evaluation matrix". In order to summarise the information gathered, these usually include, as a minimum, columns to record the following elements: evaluation objectives / evaluation questions / uses of the evidence produced / information sources / data collection instruments / indicators. An example of an evaluation matrix is provided on the next page.

Evaluation matrices have a double purpose. The rows can be read from right to left, to show, or remind us, how the information being collected or analysed will be used. This provides a simple way of consulting this information at any time. Reading in the opposite direction (from left to right) will contribute an element known in evaluation as "traceability of results", and helps identify the origins of information that has led to a particular response provided by the evaluation.

The evaluation matrix is thus a roadmap for the evaluation. It includes the work plan and, in the case of participatory evaluation, is put together by the members of the evaluation team, as part of the evaluation process.

The following pages describe the principal stages of an evaluation planning phase and we will specify what happens with decisions made in the evaluation matrix.

Example of an evaluation matrix

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	EVALUATION QUESTIONS	HOW THE EVIDENCE WILL BE PUT TO USE	INFORMATION SOURCES	INFORMATION GATHERING TOOLS	INDICATORS
We want to find out about the quality of public services for cancer prevention in Valle de la Estrella.	- Do the preventive actions reach at-risk groups? - Are they interpreted correctly? - What response is there to the prevention actions? - What impact do the preventive actions have on reducing cancer?	It is hoped that the Ministry of Health will use the information provided by the evaluation to: - Adapt prevention campaigns to the needs of each population sector. - Focus the prevention budget on the most effective prevention services.	- Valle de la Estrella residents. - Representatives from the Health Boards. - Cancer sufferers and their family members. - Health centre staff and members of regional oncology teams. - Healthcare statistics. - Material from information campaigns. - Articles in specialised publications.	- Individual interviews. - Focus groups. - Games to inspire reflection: 'Myths and Beliefs' about cancer - Role-plays on topics relevant to the project. - Oral or written life stories. - Review of prevention campaign documents.	- Area covered by the campaigns: rates by geographical area, population group, etc. - Index to measure the correct interpretation of the prevention messages (this can be prepared and calculated using games to inspire reflection). - Statistics on the response of the population to campaigns (for example, medical visits by population sector; participation in prevention campaigns, etc.). - Evolution of incidence data by cancer type (taking into account level of progression of the disease at the time of detection).

OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND USE

The first three elements in the matrix are closely related to each other: the evaluation questions should define the aim, and the answers provided by the evaluation to these questions should lead to changes that contribute to programme improvement.

SOURCES

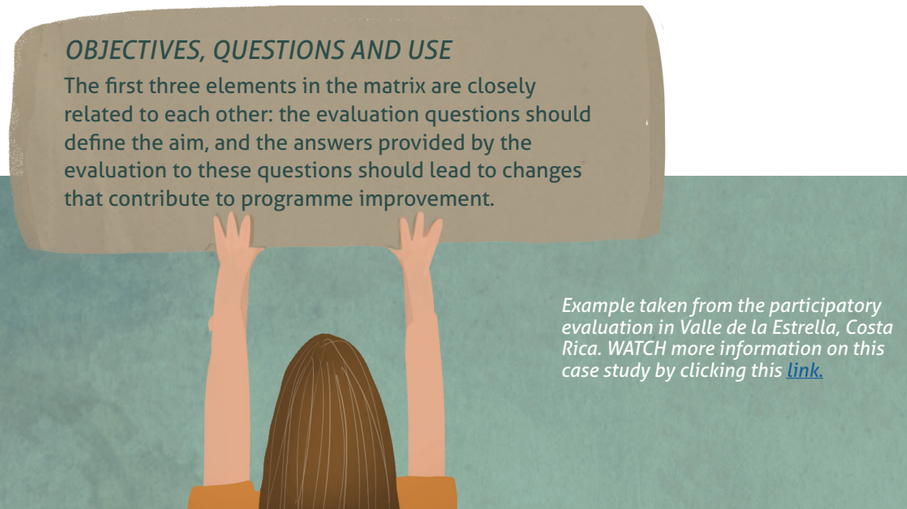
These should include the highest possible number of perspectives in order to ensure a better overall analysis of the problem and its solutions.

TOOLS

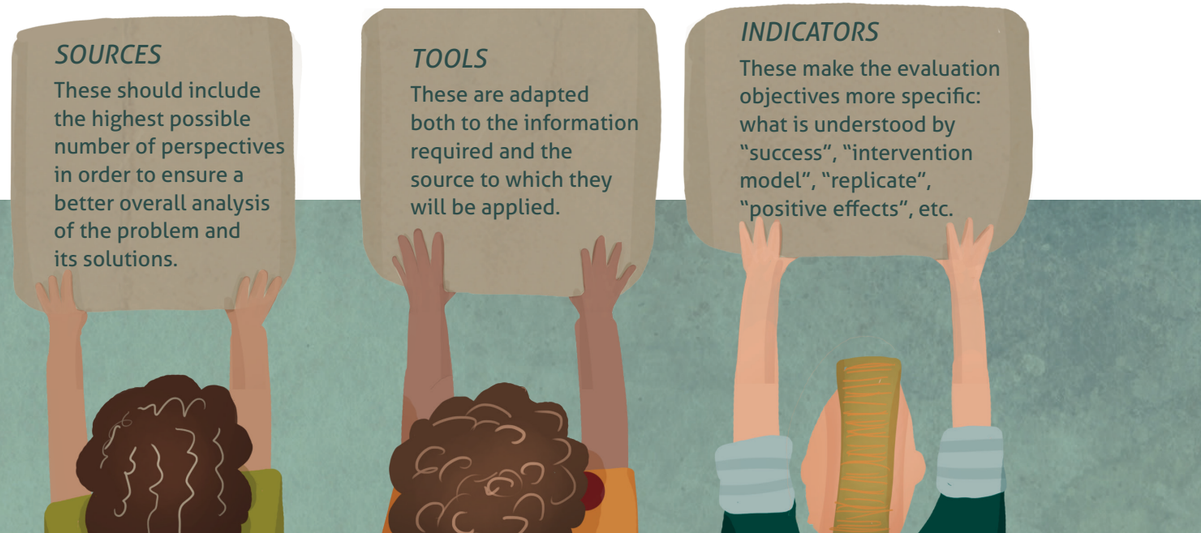
These are adapted both to the information required and the source to which they will be applied.

INDICATORS

These make the evaluation objectives more specific: what is understood by "success", "intervention model", "replicate", "positive effects", etc.



Example taken from the participatory evaluation in Valle de la Estrella, Costa Rica. WATCH more information on this case study by clicking this link.



Stage 1: Establish the evaluation team

The core feature of participatory evaluation is that there is a diverse group of actors who make all the important decisions that comprise an evaluation. Actors either join the evaluation team or are represented in it. This is the group entrusted to plan and implement the evaluation and ensure it is used.

Decisions regarding who participates in an evaluation team, or who is represented in it, should be made collectively. The individual actor or the group that makes the initial decision to carry out an evaluation and that opts for a participatory approach, should be aware that this implies making joint decisions regarding the process. In other words, it means relinquishing control.

It is highly likely that, as the evaluation process advances, the need arises to include new key actors and, likewise, that some of the participants may no longer be required in certain stages. Sufficient flexibility to allow adjustments and changes to be made to the evaluation team is another important characteristic of a participatory evaluation.

> During the planning phase, tasks include identifying relevant actors to participate in the process, deciding on questions or aims to which the evaluation should respond, selecting where and how the information that is required will be gathered, preparing spaces for data reviews and analysis, identifying the best formats for communicating the evaluation results and choosing mechanisms to ensure that they are put to use. The work plan also specifies the evaluation time scales and an estimate of the resources required to carry it out.

Chapter 4, dedicated to facilitation, offers some valuable tips and advice to help guide decisions about forming evaluation teams.

Stage 2: Establish the evaluation objectives and questions

The evaluation objectives help guide the evaluation process and ensure the results are put to best use. This may

be the most important decision made during an evaluation process and the fact it is shared is one of the greatest merits of participatory evaluation. The larger the group that participates in deciding the evaluation objectives, the more likely it is that the results will meet the needs of a broad target group.

Usually, evaluation originates from a problem or a need for information. Identifying exactly who requires the information, and why, is the first step in establishing its objectives. It is important to be aware that evaluation is not always the most appropriate instrument for meeting every information need. It works best when an issue requires an in-depth examination of some aspect related to the project.

For example, evaluators are commonly asked "have the project aims been achieved?" But this is something that any good monitoring system should be able to answer. A more appropriate inquiry might be, "Why haven't all of the project's aims been achieved?".

Once these information needs (or evaluation objectives) have been identified, the evaluation questions can be established. A good evaluation question should: (1) respond to an information need or seek to identify a solution and (2) refer to issues that can only be answered by an evaluation and not, for example, by using the programme's monitoring system or organising an audit.

If a connection is maintained between the evaluation questions, the information needs and the way the information will be used once obtained, it should not be difficult to formulate the evaluation objectives and to establish the way in which they relate to the evaluation questions. Normally, the objectives of an evaluation refer to problems associated with the project that it is hoped will be solved by the evaluation, while the evaluation questions will refer to the information needed to resolve these problems.

From the very start of the process, it should not be forgotten that evaluations are carried out for the purpose of using their findings.

We will insist on this idea when we review the final (use) phase, but it is helpful to mention it here too. The aim of an evaluation should not be limited to answering the questions that have been formulated, but should also resolve the problems that prompted the questions in the first place. This is a key consideration that can clarify the difference between "good evaluations" and "useful evaluations"; an issue that is much discussed in the field.

An evaluation might propose objectives that are not directly related to the evaluation questions (for example, to increase coordination between the participants in the programme, or provide feedback to the organisation that funds the project). On the other hand, if the evaluation matrix includes a question that is not related to any concrete objective, the evaluation team should consider if it is really necessary to it before going ahead with the planning process.

A common problem in evaluation (and also in project planning) is that the objectives and questions that are formulated may be too broad and

Indicators are an expression of what should be achieved or measured and are very useful for detailing clearly exactly what the evaluation is going to examine.

can therefore be interpreted (and answered) in very different ways. The risk in the case of evaluations is that answers produced might not correspond to the evidence that was sought when the questions were formulated. To resolve this problem it is often helpful to use the indicators (sixth column of the evaluation matrix) and to be more precise in formulating the evaluation objectives and questions.

Indicators are an expression of what it is hoped to achieve or measure; they are very useful for providing clear details of the matters the evaluation will analyse. For example, if one of the desired results of the evaluation is to improve the coverage of a child vaccination programme against polio, it would be useful to establish with indicators what we are referring to when we talk of coverage: the number of health centres capable of administering the vaccine, the number of health staff, the number of vaccines per child born at risk of poverty and extreme poverty, etc.

Given that it is the indicators that finally establish the evaluation questions, it is important that all relevant groups in a participatory evaluation are involved in choosing them.

During the entire evaluation process, but especially in this first phase, it is essential not to lose sight of the purpose of the evaluation. Every decision made during these early stages should include a reflection on the uses that the evidence gathered will be put to. Every objective or question will demand time and resources. For this reason, in this first stage, it is important to discern and agree on the essential questions: the ones that will produce useful responses or added value to a project and/or positively affect its impact. The evaluation matrix that we suggest in this handbook includes a third column dedicated to "how the evidence will be put to use." This should be a constant point of reference during every evaluation.

Stage 3: Identify information sources and tools to gather information

During this stage, sources will be identified that can provide the information required to respond to the evaluation questions. The findings of the evaluation contribute significant added value as they are the result of applying social research tools and techniques; they add scientific rigour, producing evidence that is easy to compare with other findings. For this reason, it is usually said that evaluations provide "evidence".

It is advisable to consult several sources of information, and indeed to look at a single topic from more than one angle, or to return to the same source using different tools. For example, a member of the project's technical staff might be asked to complete a questionnaire, which can subsequently be followed up in greater depth in an interview. This is known as "triangulation" and often results in richer information,

removing bias or subjective perceptions. Triangulation adds rigour and credibility to the evaluation.

Sources are classified as primary when the information has been gathered by the evaluation team (for example, in interviews) or secondary, when the information has already been collected by other people (for example, in a project report).

The primary sources of an evaluation are usually people that have been associated with the project either as beneficiaries or as managers, planners or funders. However, there are other groups, including community leaders, local or sectoral authorities, scientific staff or researchers who, though not directly involved in the project, can provide highly valuable information for the evaluation and should also be considered for interview.

An advantage of participatory evaluation teams is that their members are in close contact with the programme, making it easier to identify and access groups that are capable of providing information that is relevant to the evaluation. It is even likely that much of the information needed can be provided by members of the evaluation team themselves.

Classic tools for gathering information from primary sources include surveys, interviews and meetings of the groups involved. These tools have the advantage of flexibility and enable the precise information required for the evaluation to be obtained.

However, it is usually considerably more expensive to gather primary information and, furthermore, the process requires the involvement of representatives of the consulted groups. For this reason, the evaluation team must prepare the tools carefully and plan the sessions during which the actors will be consulted in detail. An additional challenge faced by participatory evaluation teams is that the tools for information-gathering have been designed to be used by evaluation professionals or at the very least, social science practitioners. As the members of participatory evaluation teams do not have this experience, the tools should be

The participatory evaluation teams have the distinct advantage of having as members people who are very close to the programme; this makes it easier to identify and access groups who can provide information relevant for the evaluation.

adapted twice: firstly, to the sources that will be consulted and secondly, to the people who are going to use them.

The procedure for adapting the tools is reviewed in more detail in the pages devoted to describing the implementation phase. In addition, the final chapter deals with tools that are used to gather primary information, providing some useful ideas and describing interesting experiences to illustrate how they can be adapted for use in participatory evaluation.

The most significant secondary source for evaluations is, or should be, the monitoring system used by the project being evaluated. The main function of a monitoring system is to provide ongoing information to guide day-to-day project management. But the monitoring system should also be designed in such a way that it is capable of providing information of significance for an evaluation.

Unfortunately, this ideal situation does not occur in most cases. Monitoring systems are usually designed during the planning phase of a project, or during the first stages of implementation. Unless members of the planning teams have ample experience or knowledge of evaluation, it is difficult to foresee at this point what type of information might be required for a future evaluation. However, allowing these people to take part in the evaluations (especially as members of participatory evaluation teams) provides them with an opportunity to adjust their monitoring systems and to ensure that in the future, they collect information that is also relevant for evaluation purposes.

BY WAY OF RECOMMENDATION

Many evaluation teams (including professional ones) discover that the monitoring reports they receive are incomplete, to the extent not only that they are not useful for the evaluation, but do not satisfy project management requirements either. This state of affairs obliges evaluation teams to gather very basic data during the evaluation: how many people were helped, what activities they carried out, how many kits were distributed, etc. This proves to be necessary because, without this data, the evaluation cannot continue. However, the people responsible for the programme should be clearly informed that it is a mistake to wait for the evaluation to begin before gathering this data, in part because this is not the role of the evaluation, but in particular because regular monitoring of such data is essential to effective project management.

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "THE CHALLENGES OF USING TOOLS THAT INVOLVE A RANGE OF ACTORS" HERE

Other relevant secondary sources for evaluation include official statistics, academic or other publications that share information on matters related to the project, and existing evaluation reports that have been published on similar projects. Unlike the case of primary sources, identifying these secondary sources is generally more complicated for participatory evaluation teams, whose members do not include people with research experience. In this situation, it can be useful if the facilitator provides guidance on the sources and documents that should be consulted. It can also be very helpful if they conduct a preliminary examination of the available information and data to help the evaluation team understand these materials.

Stage 4: Plan the costs and timeframe of the evaluation

Once stage three has been completed, especially if all the interests of the participant groups have been incorporated, it is highly likely that the evaluation matrix will be full of objectives, questions, information sources and proposed data collection instruments.

This is the perfect moment to estimate financial costs and -perhaps even more importantly- the time that will be required to complete the evaluation. It is also the moment when the actors should negotiate which questions are to be prioritised and to concentrate evaluation efforts on the questions that can be answered with the available resources and that are going to be the most useful for the project and/or best elucidate its impacts.

During this stage, it is important to remain aware that the evaluation process does not conclude with the presentation of the evidence. Instead, the evidence should be communicated to different stakeholders, who will then be responsible for taking the decisions required and ensuring they are monitored to make sure that the hoped-for improvements in the project are achieved. Ensuring the availability of the resources that will be required to use the results provides a degree of confidence that this final and most important phase of the evaluation process will be successful. Therefore, given the instrumental nature of the evaluation, this planning phase should also involve the allocation of activities, time and resources to the final phase of the evaluation process, which will be dedicated precisely to the ways in which the evidence will be put to use to bring about improvements in the project.

Cost planning

In conventional evaluations, most of the budget is used to contract professional evaluation teams, whereas members of the participatory evaluation team usually take part because of other roles that they carry out in the project or as part of their voluntary commitment. Therefore, the funds reserved for a participatory evaluation are used for things such as paying the facilitator - if contracted externally - and covering the costs of food, transport and the materials required for the working sessions of the evaluation team.

There are also costs involved in planning meetings for information gathering and the sessions for presenting and monitoring the way the evaluation results will be used. In all cases, these tend to be costs that the organisations are used to calculating, as they are similar to the many other activities they carry out.

Planning timeframes

Calculating the time required to implement a participatory evaluation is usually a greater and more complex limiting factor than calculating the financial costs. Two elements make it essential to carefully plan a participatory evaluation timeframe: the timescale according to which

the evaluation results are required, and the need to set aside time for adapting the tools and providing capacity building for the participants

Timeliness is an important consideration when it comes to planning the timeframes of an evaluation. No matter how good an evaluation and its results may be, they are not worth anything if they arrive late or after decisions have already been made. The only way to avoid this is to define the timeframes within which the results will be useful and keep these in mind during the planning process. It is very possible, for example, that consulting all the actors involved in a project would take up much more time and resources than are available, making it necessary to consult a representative sample.

As explained at the start of this chapter, the need to build capacity among evaluation team members is a characteristic trait of participatory evaluation. The aim is not to turn them into professional evaluators, but to try to communicate the logic of the evaluation process and help them understand the different tools well enough to be able to use them. In this sense, the role of the facilitator is once again very important. Their function is not only to identify capacity building needs at any given time, but also, and in particular, to meet requirements that cannot be covered by capacity building.

If capacity building is to take place as and when participants need it at different points in the evaluation process, the timeframes must take this into account. At times, building capacity so that a specific step of the evaluation can be carried out may take more time than the actual step itself, but it is important that the rhythm of the participatory evaluation is tailored at all times to the learning of the participants and not the other way around. If anyone is left behind at any point, they will not be able to follow the next steps and will no longer be authentic protagonists of the process and the participatory nature of the evaluation will be compromised. If the problems to be solved demand quick results, it is worth considering whether or not the participatory approach is in fact the appropriate option for this particular evaluation.

Once planning is complete, the implementation phase begins. Here, activities prioritised in the previous phase are put into action and information is gathered and analysed in order to respond to the evaluation questions. Moving on to their application, these responses are translated into recommendations for improving the evaluated project. It is also in this phase that formats or "products" are created to communicate evaluation results to those people who will eventually use them.

In conventional evaluations, this phase is carried out by the evaluation teams. In participatory evaluation, things are not quite the same. The evaluation teams having been created at the start of the participatory process, in this phase they dedicate themselves to implementing the work plans that they themselves drafted.

Stage 5: Gather and record information

Participatory evaluation teams are broad and diverse. Furthermore, they know the evaluated project and context intimately. For this reason, the team members themselves can contribute a significant part of the information necessary to carry out the evaluation. However, this does not mean that they should not also consult other sources to broaden or compare their knowledge.

As mentioned in the pages on evaluation planning, in the early stages participatory evaluation teams find it difficult to use the data collection

BY WAY OF RECOMMENDATION

Conducting interviews in an evaluation is not as easy as might be presumed at first sight. Skills, knowledge and practice are required to obtain the information sought without pressuring or conditioning the answers given by the interviewee. In participatory evaluation, it is very important that the evaluation teams practise several times before conducting the definitive interview, especially if they are going to broach controversial or sensitive topics.

tools, as they are not familiar with them. Even a supposedly simple tool, such as carrying out an interview, can become complex if the interviewer has never done it before, if certain results need to be achieved, or if a critical approach is required but a constructive tone must be maintained with the interviewee.

However, the success of any evaluation depends largely on all the necessary information being collected during this stage. For this reason, participatory evaluation relies on three mechanisms that can help less experienced teams:

- adapt the information gathering techniques and tools so that they can be used by people with no evaluation experience, yet still fulfil their function;
- include training on the use of tools in the work plans to be followed in the participatory evaluation; and
- carry out mock interviews that the other participants can observe and comment on, in order to anticipate problems that might arise during the real interview.

The role of the facilitator takes on a special importance during this stage. Not only do they guide the evaluation team in the data collection process, but they also organise these preparatory activities to ensure that they are subsequently used successfully.

In any evaluation it is usual to collect a large quantity of information in a very short period of time. If this data is not organised as it is collected, it can become very difficult to analyse later. In participatory evaluations, it is common for different people to be involved at different stages, making the challenge of keeping the information ordered even greater.

This process of organising the information is known as systematisation, a process that is very important in a good evaluation. An effective systematisation system helps:

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "SELECTING AND USING THE CORRECT TOOLS" HERE

Participatory evaluation processes frequently need to build the capacity of members of the evaluation team. The aim is not to turn them into professional evaluators, but to try to communicate the underlying logic of the evaluation process and help them understand the different tools well enough to be able to use them.

One advantage of participatory evaluation is that the teams are more flexible in their ability to respond to unexpected situations.

- *during the data collection stage:* to know at any given moment if there is enough information to be able to respond to the evaluation questions or if more time is needed;
- *during the information analysis stage:* to review and reflect, in order to convert the information gathered into answers to the evaluation questions; and
- *during the use phase:* to add credibility and methodological rigour to the evaluation results, enabling third parties to understand the origins of the evaluation's conclusions.

Recording or systematising the information gathered can be a complex process. And it normally differs according to the tools used. For example, a personal interview is frequently documented by taking notes or by audio recording, and the main content transferred to a table. For group work, notes might be used, but it is usually much more practical to record the principal ideas on cards that are then ordered on a wall or board and then photographed. Generally speaking, the time is not right to use a data collection tool until a decision has been made about how the data is going to be recorded and ordered.

Chapter 5 of this handbook provides some ideas, adapted to each tool, about how to record and systematise information. But the creativity of the group can also be exploited to put forward new solutions that are tailored to each situation. Once again, the support of the facilitator will be extremely helpful during this stage.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that, no matter how well this step is planned, changes are likely to be needed regarding the exact information sources that should be consulted and the tools that should be used. It is very common to find that the information the team has been looking for is lacking or incomplete, or that it is more difficult to access than initially expected. This also happens in conventional evaluations, which face the additional complication that changes to plans require new agreements between the evaluation team and the organisation that commissioned the evaluation. One advantage of participatory evaluation is that the teams are more flexible in their ability to respond to unexpected situations.

Stage 6: Analyse information

Once the data has been collected (or as it is being collected), it must be analysed, the information reviewed and the answers it contains subjected to reflection. The evaluation questions and objectives should be used as the point of reference during this process and when decisions are being made about the use to which the answers gathered during the process will be put.

We insist again that the aim of an evaluation should not be confined to responding to questions, but rather to turning the responses they receive into actions to improve projects or their impacts. For this reason, the results of the analysis of the information gathered in an evaluation are usually presented in two ways: "conclusions", which should be linked directly to the evaluation questions and demonstrate a direct relationship with the data collected during the evaluation and "recommendations", where the objective here is to contribute to the project by implementing improvement measures drawn from the evaluation's proposals. The recommendations are based on the conclusions of the evaluation, but other factors are also taken into account: for example, whether it is possible to put them into practice or not, and the costs involved.

During this stage, the essence of the evaluation results is distilled. An evaluation that delivers good recommendations is highly likely to be successful and bring many benefits to the project and its stakeholders. The formulation of recommendations is usually the part of the evaluation process that is most questioned. This is not only because of their impact on the project, but also because it is the point where the subjectivity of the evaluation team also comes into play. Preserving the connections between the information

gathered, the conclusions derived from its analysis, and alignment of the recommendations with the evaluation objectives and questions will not diminish the pressure felt at this stage, but it will enable the evaluation teams to respond with scientific rigour to any potential questioning. This is what evaluation professionals refer to as the "traceability" of the recommendations as it allows the path that has led to these recommendations to be tracked, so that they may be understood better, and accepted, by third persons.

Stage 7: Disseminate the results

This stage completes the second phase of the evaluation process and marks the transition between the implementation and use phases. Although the implementation phase ends with the presentation of the results, this does not mean that the evaluation process ends here. On the contrary, this stage leads onto the final use phase, which is what gives purpose to any evaluation.

We offer this clarification because many people get confused and think that the evaluation ends when the report is presented. This is because, from this moment on, the evaluation team takes on a less central role. In the following (use) phase the focus is placed on the teams that are going to use the recommendations to plan and implement improvement measures in the projects that have been under evaluation.

For this reason, it might be said that the aim of sharing the results is to ensure a positive transition between the people who have carried out the evaluation and those who will use its results (the evaluation recommendations) to improve the project.

A big advantage of participatory evaluations is that it is highly likely that the evaluation team included a considerable number of people drawn from the groups the recommendations are directed at. The representative of each group on the evaluation team will need to share the results with their colleagues, but this transmission will be much easier if the proposals come "from within".

In order to ensure a positive transmission of the results of their work, evaluation teams should ensure: (1) that the results are presented in an attractive way in order to engage the interest of each target group; and (2) that the results are correctly interpreted by the groups that are going to use them so that they can be easily turned into improvement measures.

To make the evaluation results attractive, presentation format(s) should be chosen that are most appropriate to each group. Some will respond best to a face-to-face presentation, while others will prefer to receive all the information in report form and read it. For other groups, it will be more useful to have a summary of what is recommended and why. The broad representation of different stakeholder groups in the participatory evaluation teams makes it very much easier to decide on the best format(s) to use to disseminate the evaluation results to each one.

Aside from being attractive, a good presentation of evaluation results should enable the target groups to interpret the proposed recommendations correctly and turn them into improvement measures for their programmes. This will be easier in the case of groups that have been represented in the evaluation team. For the rest of the groups, it is advisable to leave open the option of responding to any questions directly with the evaluation team. For this purpose, results can be shared in writing ahead of time and/or in presentation meetings during which doubts may be clarified.

When the people responsible for making the decisions do not enjoy a direct connection with the evaluation team, it is particularly important that the evaluation recommendations are convincing and well argued. This is when the traceability and technical rigour of the recommendations gains in significance (in reality, this is as simple as illustrating the route the evaluation teams have taken to arrive at each of its conclusions) because this will confer credibility on the conclusions and decisions the evaluation team has made. No matter what format is chosen to present the results, traceability and technical rigour should always be clearly apparent, as to a large extent they will determine whether or not the evaluations result in improvements to the projects and/or positively affect their impact.

A good way of organising results for presentation to various target groups is to use the evaluation matrix as a reference. Reviewing the columns from right to left leads to the questions that led to each evaluation recommendation (result), reveals the individual or group that formulated it in the first place and the intended use to be made of the responses. This list of evaluation target groups helps plan which results will be presented to each and to consider the best method or format to use to do so.

Conventional evaluation recommendations are usually directed at a single entity, which commissioned the evaluation in the first place or, at best, they are differentiated and presented to its different units. In contrast, it is common for participatory evaluation recommendations to be answerable to different entities and/or groups. This is because, as several groups have been involved right from the beginning, the evaluation teams can more legitimately propose recommendations to all stakeholder groups. This opens up vast possibilities for participatory evaluation, as it enables recommendations to be proposed that are based on combined, mutually reinforcing, efforts.

Evaluation reports are the classic way of presenting the results of conventional evaluations. They have the advantage of including a broad description of the evaluation process: background, objectives, methodology used, etc. Furthermore, they have a standardised structure that makes it easier to compare them with other evaluation reports or for other people to consult them, even if they have no connection with the evaluation.

A disadvantage of evaluation reports is that the format in which their results are presented is quite rigid. Unless the people who read them are very familiar with evaluations, they will usually have to make a considerable effort to interpret the recommendations correctly, making their subsequent use notoriously difficult. For this reason, almost all reports include

an executive summary that contains only the most important information, necessary to guide the actions for change proposed by the evaluation. Face-to-face sessions are also becoming increasingly common, in which the evaluation teams present their results and interact with the attendees in order to help them interpret it properly.

Writing an evaluation report is a complex task even for professional evaluation teams. A good report should be simple and concise, so that the recommendations it contains and the research route that informs them can be interpreted easily. The task becomes even more complex if the report has several authors, as it is necessary to ensure that the argument and style is maintained throughout and that there are no repetitions or any incomplete information, etc.

The facilitator of the evaluation can provide useful support to the person responsible for producing the report, who can prepare a draft that can be reviewed and discussed in detail by every member of the evaluation team. If they use the information that has been recorded in the evaluation matrix as a reference, and given that the facilitator has accompanied the evaluation process from the beginning, it is highly probable that the draft report will accurately reflect the shared views of the evaluation team.

> The broad and representative membership of the participatory evaluation teams makes it very much easier to decide on the best format(s) to use to disseminate the evaluation results to each group.

However, reviewing and discussing the proposed content in detail will help the group enrich and/or consolidate the result of each of the stages covered during the evaluation process.

Finally, it should be noted that whichever format or meeting is used to present the results during this stage it will require time and resources, a matter that should have been considered earlier during the evaluation planning (stage 4).

The process includes a final phase which focuses on the use actors will make of

It is common for participatory evaluation recommendations to have various target groups. This means that during this stage various action plans will be designed, one for each group.

the evaluation results to improve the intervention that has been evaluated. As we saw in the previous stage, a significant effort is required early on to ensure that the recommendations are agreed upon for implementation, always according to specific areas of operation. At this point, it will be apparent exactly what these actors are able to do to ensure that the recommendations are (a) progressively incorporated in their practice and (b) produce the desired improvements.

Stage 8: Put the findings into action

The evaluation's recommendations are guidelines for the adoption of improvement measures. While they are initially formulated by the evaluation teams, the final design and planning of the actions is the responsibility of the groups that receive them. During this stage, each group drafts an action plan based on the evaluation recommendations, taking into account their knowledge of the programme, its context and available resources.

The broad membership of the participatory evaluation teams provides yet another advantage during this stage, because when the target groups are involved in the evaluation it is easier for them to understand the reasons behind the recommendations and turn them into actions to produce the desired improvements.

As a minimum, for each recommendation the following aspects should be planned or included in an existing action plan: (1) the activity or activities that derive from each recommendation; (2) the person or people in charge of putting it into practice; (3) the resources necessary for its implementation; and (4) a timeframe.

When the target groups are involved in the evaluation, it is easier for them to understand the reasons behind the recommendations and turn them into actions to produce the desired improvements.

It is common for participatory evaluation recommendations to have various target groups. This opens up vast possibilities, as it enables recommendations to be made that involve joint efforts.

As has already been mentioned, it is common for participatory evaluation recommendations to have various target groups. This means that during this stage, various action plans are created, one for each group. An interesting exercise (and one that is highly recommended for the successful use of evaluation) is to compare the action plans once they have been created. This will help to identify synergies and areas of collaboration, but also (and in particular) actions that may be duplicated, or resources that could be used more efficiently if shared between actions.

Another good practice at this stage is to incorporate these action plans into the existing work plans of each entity or group. Although this means that the evaluation results appear to be diluted in the entity's own work plans, they will be far more likely to be successful if they are not treated as additional responsibilities. In fact, in organisations that work with project cycles, it is common to find evaluations integrated into the cycle by including them in the next planning phase.

Stage 9: Monitor the improvements

In conventional evaluations, few evaluation teams have members who will participate in the activities included in the recommendations, or who know how the recommendations will be turned into action plans during the following phase. Furthermore, unless they research the matter personally, very few evaluation teams will be aware of the results of their work: of how their recommendations are turned into effective improvements. As has been indicated on several occasions by practitioners, it is contradictory that this should be the case in this particular field (Rodríguez-Bilella and Tapella, 2018). There is no doubt that evaluation practice would substantially improve if the teams were able to ascertain which aspects of their recommendations did and did not work, but the reality is that they are usually already involved in other contracts by this stage of the evaluation process.

However, participatory evaluation teams have the advantage of including people who are closely connected to the programme and its development. Therefore, the monitoring of the action plans not only reveals the impact of the evaluation on the projects, but also means it is possible to review the consequences of the measures proposed in the action plans and reorient them where needed, using the same analytical approach employed throughout the entire evaluation process.

The evaluation teams may propose a calendar of scheduled meetings (every six months, yearly, etc.) to review or monitor the progress of the activities that were planned in response to the evaluation recommendations. This will help not only to strengthen the positive effects of the evaluation, but could also evolve into a participatory group that accompanies the programme in a participatory way and which might even detect future difficulties that might be resolved with a new evaluation.

Chapter 4

How to facilitate a participatory evaluation

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the people who facilitate participatory evaluations and we analyse the role they take on (or should take on). As their role is part of a different process it is distinct from the roles of people involved in a conventional evaluation process or of an evaluator. The following pages provide a general overview of what entails and of the implications this has for participatory evaluation: the need to guide the process through the different stages and phases; the importance of contributing to developing specific capacities; the need to monitor the level of progress and to show results.

I. WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT FACILITATION?

On many occasions we have tried to pin down a precise definition of exactly what we mean when we talk about "facilitation". The problem that we encounter is that "facilitate" is one of those words that is used by many different people in different contexts to refer to multifarious activities with broad and varied aims. The problem is exacerbated, because the word is practically the same in other languages, increasing the number of ways it is used.

Often, when someone talks about facilitation, they are referring to a teaching: learning process, involving an expert on a topic and a group of people that are hoping to acquire information or develop some specific skills. "Facilitating" goes together with "capacity building", "promoting an idea" or even "helping" and often we see the facilitator as the person who helps a group of people follow a predetermined programme or the one who directs an event (such as a

master of ceremonies). In the strictest sense of the word, "facilitate" refers only to making a process easier and providing better results. Rather than finding a single definition, the important thing is to ensure that everyone using the term within a given process agrees about what it means.

When we talk of facilitating a process, we are not referring to teaching a course but rather to:

- managing the process, seeing the facilitator as the administrator or manager of the process;
- the necessary coordination of people who have different roles, objectives and activities - a process that implies a continual negotiation among those involved;
- providing support to ensure collaboration and mutual support between the different participants (creating a group that works well as a group, rather than just a collection of people);
- creating the conditions required for participants to assume the leadership of a process (perhaps gradually);
- supporting the development of specific capacities; and
- regularly monitoring the steps, activities and results of the process.

In the specific case of participatory evaluation, the overarching objective is to ensure that the process is, in its entirety, participatory, making it more interesting, efficient and effective, and therefore enabling better results to be achieved. Linked to this, the objective also includes ensuring that the results are used, that they are put into practice and that they thereby help improve the process itself.

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "HOW TO FACILITATE PARTICIPATORY EVALUATIONS" HERE

What do facilitators do?

Sometimes it is easier to say what facilitators do not do, or what should not be expected of them. Though the facilitator might be external and/or an expert on the topic or area

under evaluation (health, housing, work, etc.), they will not take on the same role that they would in a non-participatory evaluation.

The facilitator is not the person responsible for measuring the results or demonstrating how they match the targets sketched in at the start of the process. Nor is it their role to analyse the results or put forward specific recommendations. Thus, the facilitator is better seen as the person who ensures that the evaluation process is completed as a combined effort and that all members of a team participate actively, express their opinions and contribute to the process.

Throughout the entire process, the facilitator is the person who motivates or guides the other participants (as members of a team) and ensures that their participation is effective. They take on the responsibility of ensuring that the process is completed and that the aims set out at the beginning are achieved. In other words, the facilitator of a participatory evaluation process is not a supervisor or leader: they are the person that ensures that it truly is participatory.

The facilitator is the person who draws up the initial plans and prepares the process. Without necessarily being the leader of the team, they ensure that it defines the expected results, decides what activities will be required to achieve them and when they will be carried out. They also ensure that the actions are indeed carried out.

As will be discussed in the following pages, the facilitator is the person who acts as a guide during the process, motivating others, making sure all voices are heard, that everyone plays an active part in the process, and creating space for discussion and learning for everyone involved. It is similar with facilitators of the capacity building sessions, who are not responsible for organising the workshop, but rather, for ensuring that the participatory evaluation is truly an evaluation, and that it is indeed participatory.

WORKING IN A TEAM

Facilitating a participatory evaluation process can be complicated for a single person, especially if the process includes a lot of participants. In many situations, it is better to work in a team, sharing out the responsibility between more than one person, according to their specific skills, geographic location, interest, etc. Thus, one person is responsible for one part of the process while others take on responsibility for other activities, or coordinate them. When a team is formed, a general recommendation is to consider people with a range of personalities, who will relate differently to the various members. It is, of course, important to ensure that everyone agrees with what should or should not be done.

At the same time, it is frequently a good idea to assign specific responsibilities to some team members: this ensures that everyone participates in the process in different ways. They might lead a session, or advise their colleagues when they are looking for information, for example.

Conditions and requirements

A facilitator might be external or could be a member of a specific team (in other words, a colleague to the other process participants).

But facilitating a process is more than "taking part" in it and there are always some people who do it better than others, basically because they have some specific skills, meet some specific requirements, or -thanks to some prior experience- are able to relate to team members better and help everyone work together, etc. Generally speaking a lot can be said to depend on the personality of the individual: some people are more talkative and find it easy to encourage others to speak and to participate, while others are much more able to

INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL?

On the one hand, as team members, internal facilitators have a clear advantage: they know the people who are involved in the evaluation (their colleagues) and know how to run the process to ensure everyone takes part actively. They also know the organisation, its objectives and common difficulties. On the other hand, it can be an advantage to use an external facilitator: they can establish a more neutral relationship with all the participants without being influenced by internal roles or hierarchies.

perceive how certain individuals relate to others and what to do about it.

Thus, despite the fact that the facilitator cannot be expected to fulfil every requirement, in general, it may be said that good facilitators should:

• have social skills: capable of handling a group of people with diverse backgrounds and different interests;

• be organised: able to plan a process that lasts over time, build a logical sequence of activities so that each one is completed and the desired results are achieved;

• be perceptive: be able to identify problems or difficulties, to perceive the doubts that participants can have, and respond to them; and

• have time-management skills: they should design and follow a programme of activities that covers a period of time and meet the proposed deadlines.

As has been said in other chapters of this handbook, facilitators need to know how to carry out an evaluation process, which steps to take, and how to use some of the tools that are appropriate to each step. In addition, they are often

LEARN BY DOING

How can you become a better facilitator? These days it is possible to find many guides or handbooks on the internet with many specific recommendations. However, all facilitators agree that the best way to facilitate a process is by doing it: facilitating a process and seeing how it is done. Monitor it, ask for feedback... and repeat.

required to know about the topic under evaluation, the area where the work is carried out, local customs and the general context in which the project or programme under evaluation is being implemented. But, another two factors may be just as important as these, if not more so. First, facilitators should have a clear interest in the process that is unfolding and in the results it is hoped to achieve and should thus be able to transmit and "infect" all the team members with their enthusiasm.

Second, facilitators should be properly prepared. This implies seeking out information on the potential participants: what do they know?

What do they want to know? What problems do they have? They should also research the tools that might be suitable and take pains to learn about their "co-facilitators" with whom they will share responsibilities, and about the members of the evaluation team too. Above all, they should be interested in learning about themselves, the activities they put into action and the results.

2. GUIDING THE PROCESS

As shown above, facilitators are, to a certain extent, the "managers" of the process. The facilitators plan the process and ensure that the team achieves the objectives that have been established. This means that they:

• set the process in motion: articulating the terms of reference, objectives, timeframes and resources;

• build a team and ensure that different people are part of the process;

• identify a set of activities and manage time to ensure they are implemented;

• share information with the other participants at specific moments, presenting the plans that they have drawn up, the methodology that will be followed or the way that the people or team members should interact with each other;

• ensure that the process follows its course, that the main focus is not lost and that it arrives at the desired conclusions;

• ensure that the team understands how an evaluation process is developed, is aware of the appropriate tools and how to use them correctly; and

• provide the team with the support it requires to access the institutional support that might be required, as well as the right tools for the process.

Within the framework of a participatory evaluation process, the main role of facilitators is to ensure participation for everyone involved in the entire process. Facilitators help incorporate different perspectives by gathering opinions from everyone involved. They also ensure that those who can (or should) contribute most, do so actively, driving the process to achieve better results.

The following section describes each of these points in more detail.

Creating a team

A facilitator's principal responsibility is to ensure that the process is truly participatory. This means that all members participate actively. The first step consists, therefore, of deciding on the participants and in carefully selecting who is going to be invited to join the process.

So, who should be invited to join the team? What can or should be expected of each person?

Clearly, the first thing to consider is that they should be people who are familiar with the activities to be evaluated. They are likely to have been directly involved in the project or programme that is under evaluation, and therefore have information and a clear opinion about what has been done and what has been achieved. But, in addition to this, the participants should show an interest in getting involved in the process. For this reason, it is important to select individuals who are going to want to offer their opinions, and debate with others, and who recognise that this will be beneficial.

Facilitators should bear in mind that not everyone has the same interest in participating in an evaluation process and that nobody should feel obliged to do so. Even when a group of people has been involved in a project to a similar extent, they are likely to be interested in different results. Therefore, the process should start by recognising the different expectations people might have: what do they hope to discover? What would make them participate actively?

In some cases it is worth inviting a large number of people who have shown an interest in the forthcoming process (for example by asking them to respond to a questionnaire) and then invite those that express the most interesting opinions to get involved. The facilitator might also think of incentives to encourage people to get involved. In addition to mentioning everything that they are going to learn in the process, some type of recognition could be considered (for example, awarding a certificate). It might also be important to cover all the costs incurred as a result of participating in different stages of the process.

NON-BENEFICIARIES

It can be advisable to invite people who have not been beneficiaries of the project being evaluated, or who have not been involved in it at all. These people might have an "external" view or be able to point out some of the project's weaker aspects.

The facilitator should also consider how these participants might come together as a team, whether in terms of the distribution of gender, age or other relevant criteria. They should ensure that the group of participants is the most varied possible. It is also important to consider people who have had a different role within the project or programme that is being evaluated: some will have been technical team members, others beneficiaries. With regard to heterogeneity once again, the more diverse the group, the better the results are likely to be.

Putting the process into motion

Even if the facilitator works with all members of the team, it is they who are responsible for planning the process and then checking that everything goes according to plan during its implementation. This begins with a baseline analysis that contrasts *"what we want"* with *"what we can get"*. It is important at this point to check whether this is the right moment for the evaluation or if it would be better to wait until there are more results to analyse; if there is a particular interest in participating and in learning lessons and receiving recommendations; if there is sufficient information to carry out the process; and if the resources required are available (or can be found).

As a starting point for the whole process, the principal planning task is to prepare an action plan. This begins by defining the aims that will guide the evaluation and the key questions. What are we going to look for?

Following on from this, the next task is to determine the data collection, systematisation and analytical activities that are required. Some of these activities can be carried out online, while others will require one, or several, face-to-face meetings.

In this case, it is necessary to:

- decide when these meetings will take place, and where;
- decide how much time will be dedicated to each of the activities mentioned above; and
- decide on the resources that will be required and check if they are actually available and whether they can be used.

It is also necessary to think about the logistical aspects. If one of the programmed meetings is to be held online, it is important to find a platform that everyone can access and that works effectively. On the other hand, if a face-to-face meeting is involved, a place needs to be found that meets all the necessary conditions. Furthermore, tickets for travel will need to be purchased and everybody's accommodation needs be considered. It is often said that this is not the responsibility of the facilitator and that these are tasks that should be taken on by a secretary or administrative support staff. But it could also be argued that it is, in fact, the facilitator's responsibility as these factors are going to affect the participation of the people it is hoped will participate actively.

A SHARED VISION

As we have seen, it is important for facilitators to have a clear idea of their role and to fulfil the expectations participants have of them. But it is just as important that the participants also understand that role, so that nobody is disappointed when facilitators do not present themselves as experts or as the answer to all the team's problems. Everyone needs to know what the facilitator is not going to do and what the team's responsibilities are.

Ultimately, using a platform that does not permit free access impedes participation in the same way that a bad seating layout causes problems in a meeting room.

In both face-to-face and online meetings, an important role for the facilitator is to manage the expectations of all members. What does each person expect? What has motivated them to join the team, and what do they hope to see at the end of the process? It is important to be

A key part of the evaluation process is to define the core features by which it will be guided. The facilitator should ensure that participants agree on the importance of the evaluation and are able to ask specific questions regarding the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the intervention, as well as other aspects that are important to them.

clear about what may realistically be achieved in the time available and what will need to be left for a subsequent session or even a new process.

Creating conditions for collaboration

Different factors influence whether or not team members are willing to work together and how effectively they are able to do so. The starting point is usually a shared interest that they all agree on: the overall objectives of the evaluation process should be aligned with each individual's vision, and vice versa. But it is also important for team members to have the confidence to express themselves, give their opinions and feel listened to. An important aspect of the work of facilitation is to ensure all participants are comfortable and to maintain that feeling throughout the process.

Likewise, it is important to bear in mind that participatory evaluation is a process that takes time: sufficient time is needed to present an idea, analyse it in detail and give an opinion on it (remember: all team members will also be busy with their own day-to-day activities). If the hope is that a considerable number of people will take part, it is logical to think that it will not be possible to bring everyone

A REPOSITORY

Working virtually will require documents to be shared and also stored so that they are available to others. In many cases, they will have to be edited, without creating extra work and without losing previous versions. Consider a platform or system that is easy to use, easy to access quickly and does not require a subscription to be paid.

Facilitators of a participatory evaluation process have the important role of managing the expectations of everyone involved. What does each person expect? What has motivated each of them to join the team, and what do they hope to see at the end of the process?

together at all times. For this reason, it is important to think of tools that enable everyone involved to stay in touch and share information virtually.

The growth of the internet and the development of software has had a very positive effect in this regard. Today, it is possible to communicate with someone practically anywhere in the world with no problem and at no expense, and we do it almost without thinking (just consider the amount of time we dedicate to reading and writing emails). We now have many tools at our disposal that are easy to use, free, and require no additional inputs or equipment. However, at the same time, working virtually is not always easy. Some offices do not have the necessary equipment yet, some people find it difficult to express themselves in front of a camera, and misunderstandings seem to be more frequent. Despite the number of people that use platforms like Facebook or Twitter, many of us find it difficult to give our opinion in public spaces or virtual meetings, for example on Zoom, when we know it will be recorded and around for ever.

Facilitators should use everything available to them to achieve greater participation and minimise difficulties. They should plan these processes with a set of specific criteria in mind.

Composition of the working groups

• The initial suggestion is that, as far as possible, work should be carried out simultaneously by small teams (no more than ten people at a time). Just as in workshops or events, it is better to build teams that are homogenous with regard to interest, and heterogeneous with regard to experience. Specific roles and responsibilities should be assigned, rather than merely talking about final goals or objectives.

Online meetings

• To ensure online meetings are effective, provide clear guidelines for each meeting, setting out the "rules of the game". To do this, facilitators should define how long a meeting will last and what is expected from each participant beforehand.

• Short meetings should be planned and participants should be invited to introduce themselves, allowing enough time for informal conversation.

• It is important to ensure that participants are not distracted or multitasking. Working together virtually requires everyone to be focused. It is also good to take regular breaks for informal conversation.

A medium and long-term plan

• Facilitators should consider implementing online meetings as part of the process (preferably after a face-to-face meeting). Team members will feel more comfortable in a virtual discussion if they already know each other.

• A pre-established plan should be followed, with periodic, planned, meetings.

• A regular monitoring process should be set up to record what has been achieved to date and what still needs to happen in the future.

Technology

• In addition to the "live" discussions, facilitators should also think about the steps that need to be taken

COMMUNICATIONS

As there are many ways to send and receive messages, it is best to use just one or two in order to avoid information being lost along the way or failing to reach many of the participants. What system should you choose? Consider:

• whether the participants mind combining "work" messages with private ones;

• whether everyone has access to it;

• whether passwords are needed to access a platform, which can make it more difficult to use;

• the fear of feeling "bombarded" and, with that, the option of only receiving daily or weekly summaries; and

• the possibility of storing messages and storing them for a period of time.

before and after, and what will be done to ensure the effectiveness of the discussions. Here we are referring, for example, to systems for sharing documents or for working on the same document from different places.

• It is a good idea to consider using good quality tools, equipment and programmes that are not necessarily the most recent (as these will probably not be available everywhere).

• Only one or two methods should be used to communicate with others, but the frequency with which messages are sent should not be abused. Participants may get confused if messages come and go on different programmes or platforms or if they do not know which tool or programme to use for a given situation. Facilitators should be aware that many people connect using their mobile phones, so it is important that compatible programmes or platforms are used.

At the end of every meeting, conduct a small evaluation. What went well? What still needs to be done? It is important to take notes and share them with all the participants as well as with those who were not able to participate this time, but who will take part in the following meeting.

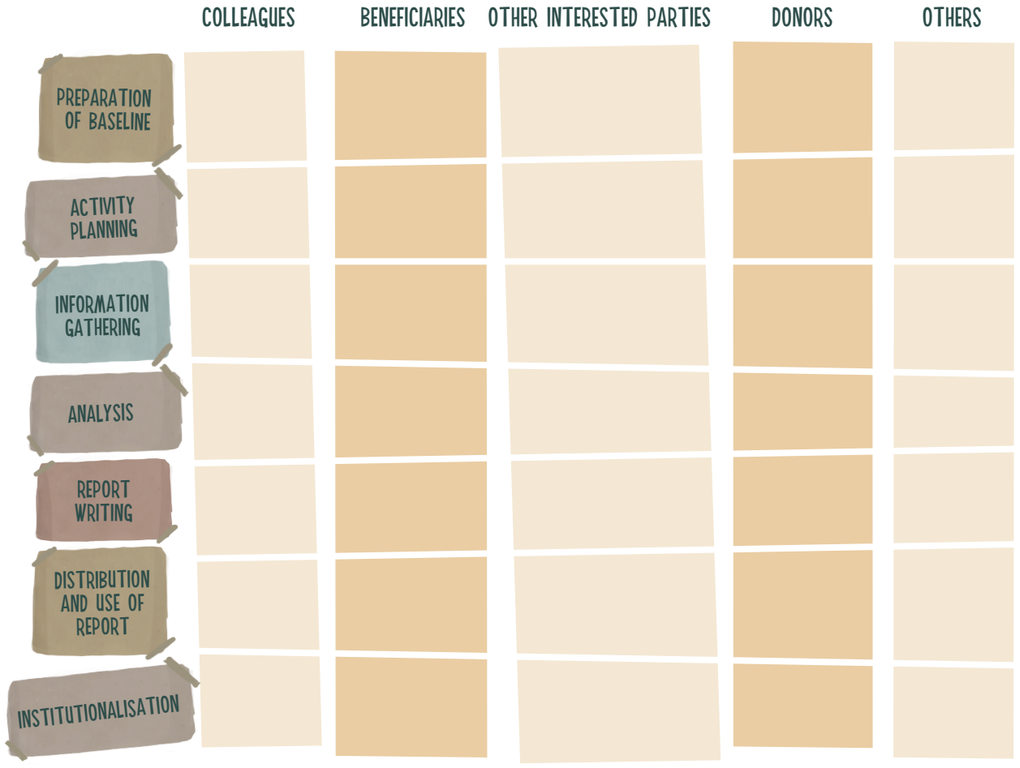
Ensure participation throughout the process

Although we usually associate facilitation with a single event or session, in reality the role of facilitators is to ensure that all participants are involved during the entire process and not only during the meetings. Thus, a participatory evaluation process does not end when a workshop or meeting finishes but continues over a longer period, requiring ongoing discussion and a continuous exchange of opinions. Depending on the size of the group, facilitators might consider forming subgroups, which may be homogeneous or heterogeneous. In some cases people will feel more comfortable talking with their peers, while at other times heterogeneous groups will allow for more interesting results.

It is also necessary to see who is going to participate at any given moment (or who is expected to). The ideal is that everyone participates in all phases, but this may not be possible (or may not interest everyone). We should recognise that there will be moments when participation will be lower, when the facilitator will have a bigger role or when one group/subgroup will be more involved than others. In this case

WATCH THE VIDEO "PARTICIPANTS ARE PROTAGONISTS THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS" HERE

Activities by participant group



it might help to use a table like the one below to keep track of activities and roles during the process. This makes it easier to plan different activities, in order to obtain the best results possible.

Throughout the different phases and stages of the process, the facilitator will seek to create the right conditions to allow participation to continue. If by "participation", we understand an exchange of ideas and opinions, or joint work between different people, it makes sense to hope that this will continue beyond the evaluation process. Creating the necessary conditions means ensuring that:

- participation is not seen as an additional load that distracts people from their work, but a part of their daily responsibilities;
- the necessary resources are available;
- the tools and platforms are available for use (for example, a subscription is not required); and
- there is critical mass, in other words, a sufficient number of participants, enabling enhanced levels of collaboration and exchange.

The most important aspect, as will be seen later, will be to regularly show that participation brings benefits with it, and that it is worth playing an active role in the process.

3. DEVELOPING CAPACITIES

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, facilitators are not the main evaluators, nor will they necessarily lead the evaluation team. However, they fulfil a key and non-delegable function within the participatory evaluation framework: supporting and building capacity in the team that is conducting the evaluation. One of the purposes of a participatory evaluation, in contrast to a conventional evaluation process, is that the participants develop new skills or capacities, and this enables them to participate more and to plan and implement better evaluation processes in the future.

Rather than create a capacity-building process, one of the roles of the facilitator is to generate the conditions that enable participants to "learn by doing". Team members develop skills that will enable them to participate better and enable this and other evaluations to produce better results. And it is their responsibility to ensure that everyone (including themselves) learns.

It makes sense to begin with the objectives of the evaluation process:

- what do you want to do? What do you want to do better? What do we need to learn? and
- what do the participants already know? What comes to their minds when they think about a participatory evaluation process? What experience do they have? How do they respond when they first realise they are evaluators?

While it is not necessary to prepare a guide on developing capacities, it is a good idea to conduct a small diagnosis, as a baseline, and prepare a brief action plan including the different strategies that might be used during the process. Below, we present some additional ideas the facilitator might find it useful to bear in mind.

Different roles and responsibilities

As stated above, one recommendation that is frequently given to facilitators is to build a heterogeneous team with regard to gender, age, background and experience and to distribute roles according to the specific skills of each person (in other words, if someone is good at conducting interviews they should be assigned this task). But, alongside this, the facilitator should invite different people to take on specific roles at different points, according to the "learning by doing" approach. The facilitation role involves creating conditions and enabling team members to try to do what needs to be done in the confidence that they will not be criticised, but supported by others who have more experience and who will be able to make suggestions and recommendations when needed.

Furthermore, and depending on the group in question, the facilitator might suggest that someone with more experience offers guidance to someone else, as a kind of tutor, in an arrangement that might last

some time. Subsequently, the person who has received support can be invited to accompany others, thus multiplying the learning experience.

Organise short practice sessions

Another recommendation is to test out, or rehearse, activities on a one-off basis, tailoring them to the context, areas where the team (or specific team members) lack skills, or to the needs of the process. This should be followed by a review of the session: what was done and achieved, when lessons learnt should also be shared. One of the best times to try this, for example, is at the point when information is being gathered. Learning by doing is easier if new topics are introduced gradually. Even though everyone at an event can give their opinion and present data and information, in many cases additional information will be required. One of the roles of the facilitator is to organise search for these materials and ensure that all team members are able to access the information they need to draw lessons and make recommendations.

PRACTISE WITH THE TOOLS

In order to learn how to use data collection tools, you should practise with them. The evaluation team can test them within the group before carrying out the activities with the key informants. Once the tools (an interview guide or the instructions for a focus group, for example) have been designed, practise using them. This will allow for changes to be made and for the people who are going to use the tools to gain confidence.

How can this be done? Who should be consulted, and where? And then, when the interviews or focus groups are being organised, how is the information going to be recorded? Once the context and amount of information already available is clear, the facilitator might set up some practice sessions and invite the members of a group to see if they work.

Thus, in some cases, a questionnaire might be distributed and a large number of people invited to fill it in.

SPOKEN TEXT

As many people prefer speaking rather than writing, many software programmes enable dictation and are very good at recognising practically everything that we say. This software can be used to produce a first draft, which is then easy to edit, expanding on what has been said and adding new ideas.

This requires ideas to be prioritised and organised before speaking, as in a speech. You should also make sure the system is working (for example, if it recognises the language being spoken). The text should also be edited, adding commas and full stops, ensuring it has narrative logic and makes sense to people who have not listened to the audio.

In other situations, it will be better to organise a set of interviews and ask key people to give their opinions.

It is also possible to form focus groups, involving homogeneous groups of people to engage in discussion and share opinions. The idea is not only to gather information, but to see what method works best.

These days it is very easy to gather testimonies and opinions in the field by recording them on a mobile phone. But, despite technological advances, it is still a challenge to sort out the information that has been gathered so that it can be used easily and shared with others.

This is another example of a moment when discussion of the results of these "short practice sessions" can be useful. The facilitator can invite the team to use worksheets, checklists or tables, and systematise the information (to show what has been found, and especially what has not been found and why it is important to find it). Each one of these options can help prepare a text, which does not necessarily have to be complicated. Testing out different options makes it possible to see what works best in each situation, and why.

Analyse every step

The step after these "practice sessions", and linked with the monitoring and evaluation process described below, is to consider an ongoing review process of the plans for each stage and the results that were observed. A detailed analysis of each stage will consider:

The best evaluation recommendations are those that are taken directly from the analysis. Here, the facilitator should try to centre discussion around areas that will be within the users' remit and present different options, avoiding recipes that should be strictly followed and considering the costs and risks involved for each proposal.

- what was done, and how this compares to what was hoped for;
- the results achieved and how they compare to what was expected; and
- the factors behind the results: which of these had a positive effect? At this point it is important (a) to try not to confuse causes with consequences, and, at the same time, (b) to think in particular about the role of each person: what did this or that team member do?

WATCH THE VIDEO "THE SOCIAL GROUP AS UNIT OF ANALYSIS" HERE

Once enough information has been gathered, perhaps the most interesting part of the process will be the group discussion and the analysis that goes with it. The role of the facilitator is to guide these discussions to ensure specific lessons are learned and recommendations made. For this purpose, various tools are available, such as those identified in Chapter 5 of this handbook.

Organise exchanges

As with the facilitation of capacity building, in this case it will be important to organise a process that enables a group of people to go and see what others are doing and then try to put into practice what they have learned. Exchanges of this kind might be organised between teams from one or more organisations.

However, these exchanges should not be confined to occasions when people travel to or visit another area, nor to meetings between members of different teams. Another option is to organise an exchange system within teams, similar to a peer review, in a process that enables people to see what

others are doing, and share feedback. There are specific times when this is especially useful: for example, when drafting a document. It is practically impossible to teach people how to write a good document during a course, but it remains a very important skill for all evaluations, especially if the hope is to share the results with others in a written report. What should a facilitator do other than draft the evaluation report, or send it to someone else to draft? Their role is to invite the participants to also get involved in this stage:

- try to ensure there is enough time for everyone to write down their views or comment on what others have written;
- provide guides or templates (in the form of a "table of contents") to help with drafting a document;
- invite all participants to respond to questions or fill in tables;
- organise oral sessions that can be recorded and transcribed; and
- offer commentaries and check that the texts include the different points mentioned during the discussions or meetings, presenting this information in a clear and concise way.

As different people will prepare different texts, the facilitator can build a mutual review system and invite everyone to comment on each other's work. To do this, the different texts must be gathered together and distributed (the name of the author can either be shared or kept anonymous). Everyone should be invited to pay attention to:

- the content of the text: is it complete? Is there too much information? Does it present data or information that distracts the reader?;
- the organisation of the text: does it follow a clear logical progression? Are the ideas ordered or would it be preferable to reorder them? Does the text invite readers to keep reading?;
- interpretation and analysis: is what it says correct? Does it present enough evidence?;
- the overall design: is it attractive? Is the language used simple and easy to understand? and
- the final version: are there spelling mistakes? Does it need more illustrations or photographs?

Share resources

The final step is probably the one that is used most frequently: recommend guides, handbooks or articles that might be of interest to all participants; for example, the ones found on the EvalParticipativa website. Basically, this means:

• finding new publications and reviewing their content;

• suggesting that team members read them, depending on the moment or phase in the evaluation process; and

• inviting participants to write short summaries and organise discussions in which the content is explored.

As we have seen, the role of the facilitator involves ensuring that the process is well planned, that it is implemented and completed successfully, and that lessons are learned that can be developed in the future in order to improve practice. It is just as important to generate lessons that will help improve the evaluation process itself, the process the participants are currently involved in, and the ones in which they will be involved in the near future. This is directly related to evaluating the evaluation process.

4. MONITORING THE EVALUATION PROCESS ITSELF

Every evaluation process should be regularly monitored to show whether initial expectations are being met, especially with regard to the evaluation matrix introduced at the start of the process. The monitoring process should demonstrate what was done well, what could be done better in the future and what has been learnt in this process. This is especially important if what is being done is relatively new, or if it differs from regular activities, as is the case with a participatory evaluation: many people will ask if it is really necessary to make the evaluation participatory, or if this is just a passing fad. In this situation, you need to be able to demonstrate that a participatory evaluation is better than a conventional one.

QUESTIONS FOR THE MONITORING

• does every event include aspects to help promote active participation?

• are they built into the design and implementation processes? and

• is it the participants who decide how the process will develop?

Once again, this might be seen as one of the main roles of the facilitator, meaning that they take on the responsibility of:

• planning an internal monitoring system;

• identifying the indicators that are going to be used;

• using these indicators to measure progress and suggest changes in the activities that are being carried out; and

• collecting information and/or sharing it with all members of the team.

Of course, this is not something that should be left until the end of the evaluation but should be a constant throughout the process. The idea is that evaluating the evaluation process will improve practice, in particular given the core interest of this handbook: ensuring that the evaluation is truly participatory, as this will provide better results and make it easier to use.

Indicators

One of the fundamental steps of every evaluation is to identify the indicators that will be used. These are taken from the evaluation questions and themes. In this case, of most interest is whether the process has been truly participatory. One way of doing this is to use a check list, either for every session or each phase.

• Are participants motivated to participate? Have the discussions been enjoyable and interesting?

• Are the roles and responsibilities distributed fairly?

• Have the assigned tasks been completed? Were they prepared beforehand?

• Are there sufficient incentives for people to take part?

- Are there any points when complaints or suggestions were made?
- Are people able to express disagreement or say that they felt uncomfortable?
- Are participants able to assess their own work and contributions?

It is also important to be aware that when we talk about participation, we are usually referring to different levels of participation, in which the highest level is not necessarily the ideal one, nor the one that should be sought on every occasion. Neither does the level of participation need to be the same throughout the entire process. However, we do need to know what level is desirable ("how much participation" is desired), and it is essential to be able to measure at a later date whether this has been achieved or not. The level of participation attained will obviously depend on many factors such as context, institutional support, the levels of interest of the participants, their prior experience (if relevant), or the use of specific tools or methodologies. The different indicators will help measure this, but it must not be forgotten

EVALUATING THE FACILITATION

Whenever a process is being evaluated, the quality of the facilitation is one of the aspects that needs to be evaluated.

that there is one factor that plays a decisive role: the role of facilitation.

Adopting or making use of lessons learned

In addition to being interested in whether or not the evaluation is truly participatory, the facilitator and the evaluation team will be especially concerned to ensure that the results of the process are used and that they prove useful for improving the intervention that is being evaluated. What can be done to increase the "level of use"? Facilitators are not able to change the evaluated project so as to make it more appealing to the broader population in general or for others who are involved in similar projects. Neither can they change the context in which these other people are working so that they can put evaluation

recommendations into practice. Furthermore, facilitators cannot ensure that those responsible actually use the information presented in the evaluation report. But what they can do is help the evaluation team understand the conditions that will determine the way it is used and, thereby, increase the likelihood that it is actually used.

The role of facilitation does not end with the preparation of the report. There is a tendency to think that if this is well written and contains all the process results it will be easy to make it available to the people who should read it. But the vast majority of reports are not read, simply because they do not reach the people who would be interested in reading them. Consequently, they are never used or applied.

Even when this is not generally seen as one of their responsibilities, facilitators can play an important role here, working with the team and participants to create a detailed plan that includes the following aspects:

• What is the intended target group? Who is it hoped will use the results of the process? What do these people already know, and what do they want to know? What opinion do they have of the project that is being evaluated?

• What might be achieved by distributing it? Is the target public expected to react in a particular way?

• What products will make it possible to illustrate the information gathered and the conclusions in the most effective way? This will obviously depend on the way people will access the information. In most cases, written products will be the most suitable, but in others it will be more appropriate to prepare videos or radio programmes. Furthermore, if written products are prepared, some members of the target

VISUALISING THE FUTURE

The first stage in the elaboration of an action plan is to define what you hope to achieve. What do we hope to see in the future? And, with that in mind, how is the process going to help us? For this, we need to review the objective of the evaluation and the initial agreements.

The institutionalisation of evaluation illustrates its political nature and requires permanent mechanisms and bodies to be in place to implement and promote the practice, with a commitment to encourage learning and accountability for the actions that have been taken.

public will prefer academic articles or detailed publications while others will prefer to read brief blog posts.

• Which methods will be the most effective in reaching the target audience? In some cases it will be necessary to organise a meeting to discuss the evaluation results with all attendees, while at other times, it will be enough to use one-way mechanisms that "send out" information without necessarily providing space for an exchange of opinions.

• The resources that will be needed and the time it will take to complete the process.

• The different roles and responsibilities, and the way in which these are going to be distributed among the team members. Who should do what?

• The way the opinions of beneficiaries and the target audience in general will be gathered, and the approach used to disseminate the results.

At this stage, it is important to recall once more that the dissemination of reports and sharing of the results of evaluations have a specific objective in mind: that the results are put to use, and that they help to improve (or expand) the work that was carried out and evaluated. The final objective of every evaluation should be to generate lessons and recommendations that will help improve a specific programme or project. The dissemination of results should therefore prompt this. However, the world is full of reports with recommendations that nobody can follow, just as there are thousands of agricultural extension workers that impart recommendations to millions of farmers that are never followed.

By taking a step back and returning to work with the team, the facilitator should examine a series of aspects:

• the lessons and recommendations themselves: are they clear and easy to understand and follow?;

• external factors or the general context concerning the target public: do the recommendations comply with existing laws and regulations? Do they require external inputs?; and

• internal institutional factors or context: does the organisation have the necessary resources? Are the roles and responsibilities clear?

Once these aspects have been explored, the facilitator will be able to suggest a strategy for future users of the information. This should include aspects such as: how capacity-building programmes are organised, how incentives for increasing participation are used, how recommendations are adopted and how rules or standards are established in the intervention under evaluation.

Institutionalisation

Many processes of participatory evaluation have positive results. However, frequently this is thanks to the efforts of one person or one team, and things can change; these people may leave or no longer have time to continue working on evaluations. We end this chapter by looking at a final role of the facilitator: ensuring that the institution behind the process takes on the work and associated risks, establishing the conditions required to incorporate the participatory evaluation process in their regular activities.

This is particularly important given the number of evaluations that are carried out (and the relatively small number of these that are participatory in nature). Clearly, the number of evaluation processes in which the members of the evaluation team actively participate and contribute is relatively small. If the aim is to ensure that participation becomes a regular, institutionalised practice, it is necessary first to imagine what this this might look like. In general terms, it might be said that this goal will have been achieved once:

SHOW THAT IT WORKS

The best way to ensure that a process is adopted is by convincing members of the team that it works, or that it is better than the processes that they normally use. To do this, the results should be shared, along with advice on the ways they can be used. Different communication methods should be used to reach as many people as possible.

• participatory evaluation has become a regular aspect of all projects and programmes;

• the implementation strategy, methods and activities required are clear;

• roles and responsibilities are defined and distributed across the team;

• a capacity-building programme is in place, allowing new colleagues to become involved quickly;

• team leaders are interested in the process, motivating the whole team to continue; or once

• the results are shared publicly and the advantages of participation are clear.

Facilitators can play an important role helping a project, programme or organisation. This is easier if they are members of the team and if they have a certain degree of decision-making power. In many cases it will be harder for an external person (a consultant) to influence decision-making (although at times the opinion of someone from outside the organisation may appear more convincing). It is very rare for facilitators to be able to force organisation members to work in a certain way, but there is still much they can do to encourage changes of approach. For example, they might:

• involve the organisation's decision-makers in the evaluation process;

• show positive results and rigour to convince others that this is a good method that is worth investing in;

• develop guides and supporting documents for the participatory evaluation process, which all team members can use;

• employ tools that build capacities in the community and demonstrate the methodological robustness of the process;

• plan the process;

• promote participation in evaluation networks and demonstrate the virtues and opportunities provided by participatory evaluation; and

• work with champions: in other words, with motivated individuals who are interested in the process and committed to ensuring its results are shared and the resources and participants required for new processes identified.

Even though it is true that there is no perfect way of ensuring that participatory evaluation approaches

are adopted, it is possible to devise a plan to make it more likely. As with any other action plan, some key elements need to be considered:

• a brief baseline study, or general analysis of the organisation's inner workings, namely: the way roles and responsibilities are distributed, the support that managers offer their teams and the way information is shared and results made visible;

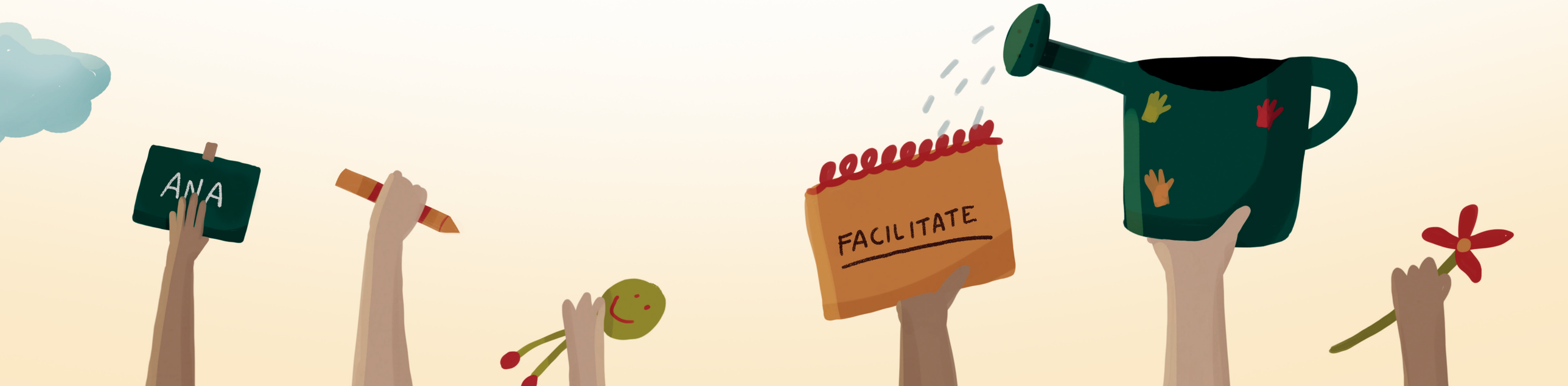
• the activities that will be required, for example, to prove what has been done and what has been achieved;

• the resources that will be required, not only in terms of money, but also time: will these be available? And if not, will it be possible to make sure they are?;

• (future) participants: will people be interested in getting involved?; and

• the potential challenges and risks that a team might face.

To conclude, we highlight a key factor in the task of facilitation: the capacity to communicate. It is very important that the facilitator of a participatory evaluation process is able to communicate openly, clearly and fluently. This is vital if learning conditions are to be created that help people feel comfortable and free, rather than observed or judged. This helps people express themselves naturally and spontaneously, ensuring a creative process of innovation, based on mutual trust.



Chapter 5

Tools for participatory evaluation

Everybody who has ever facilitated a participatory process has at some point wondered what has to be done to ensure the highest possible level of involvement in the planned activities, by the greatest number of people. One of the many challenges that surface when conducting participatory evaluations is how to create spaces for real participation, enabling multiple actors to be true protagonists of the evaluation agenda. We know that this cannot be achieved simply by gaining a deep understanding of participatory evaluation and the methodological steps it involves. It is also necessary to identify, and be able to use, the appropriate tools for whatever social and cultural context the evaluation is intended to explore.

The use of participatory tools is increasingly valued in the field of evaluation, whether to analyse reality, facilitate communication, build shared viewpoints, stimulate creativity, facilitate decision-making or even turn down the volume of some voices in order to allow quieter people to be heard. A simple glance at the tools section of the EvalParticipativa website suffices to illustrate the rich selection of tools and activities available. However, though a valuable set of tools is available, it is not always clear how to get the best out of them. And while there seems to be an instrument for every potential situation or purpose, they need to be constantly recreated or new tools designed that are specifically tailored to novel contexts.

But, what are these participatory tools and how best to understand their use in an evaluation process? What is their potential? What are their limitations? What needs to be taken into account when choosing them? How

A person does not become a mechanic simply because they receive a set of screwdrivers. And yet, even the most experienced of mechanics cannot do their job properly without them. Participatory evaluation tools can only fulfil their function if we have an in-depth understanding of what it means to incorporate social participation.

should they be used? These and other similar questions commonly emerge when evaluators offer to design and guide a participatory evaluation.

This chapter attempts to answer these questions. First, we present some conceptual considerations relevant to participatory methodology and tools, their advantages and limitations. Next, we classify the tools according to 1) the principal modality and meanings that actively influence an activity, and 2) their purpose. The chapter closes with a list of seven criteria that should be considered when choosing and using these instruments. As we develop the topics, we include practical examples and recommendations.

I. PARTICIPATORY TOOLS IN EVALUATION

As we saw in Chapter 2, participatory evaluation in the Latin American region is heir to a rich tradition that includes Popular Education, the Systematisation of Experiences and Participatory Action Research. While these approaches have their respective nuances and differences, they also converge at various points and share the same key core feature: a liberating and transformative perspective on reality.

One of its prime distinguishing feature is the use of tools that facilitate the participation of the social actors associated with the intervention on equal terms.

Frequently, "tool"[10] and "methodology" are treated as synonyms, but we prefer to differentiate between the two. For us, "tool" refers to instruments that make it easier to carry out a specific task, and "methodology" to the way this task is carried out and the underlying assumptions and conceptions of reality that govern the way these tools are used. As Leis (1989) and Jara (1987) stress, this implies a radical break with the tendency to view methodological issues as merely instrumental concerns.

Expressed in other terms, we believe it is important to be clear about the methodological principles that underpin the elaboration, adaptation

10 For this English version –so as to avoid confusion– we decided to only use the terms "tools" and "instrument", not techniques; the latter has a connotation rather of how a tool is used, in a technical sense, than a tool itself.

> Participatory traditions in Latin America adhere to a liberating and transformative perspective on reality, with one of its unique features being the tools it employs to facilitate equal participation among the social actors linked to the interventions.

and use of techniques or instruments. This implies a process of reflection on our evaluation practice and the way we relate to the range of actors during the process. It also implies (de) constructing the role assigned to the evaluator in conventional approaches (see Chapter 4 on facilitation).

Thus, the same instrument (or tool) can be combined with different methodological approaches. For example, a video documentary might be used uncritically, in an authoritarian way, to persuade, convince or condition behaviour. But the same video could also be used to produce a space for discussion and debate, prompting multiple perspectives about the documentary's message, constituting a more open and democratic practice as a result.

Thus, methodology refers to the set of criteria and principles that unify and give coherence to the chosen evaluation approach. Tools are the instruments that we adopt, and their use has to be consistent with these criteria and principles. Facilitators might, then, choose to organise a focus group, bringing together a small number of civil society actors to explore a topic in depth or, alternatively, a simulation game to create a welcoming space where everyone feels free to express themselves. Community transect tools might also be used to produce a collectively-produced visual representation, which can help understand the viewpoints of people who do not know how to write, or are fearful of expressing themselves verbally. Irrespective of the tool that is chosen, it should be appropriate to the chosen methodological approach

WATCH THE VIDEO "PARTICIPATORY TOOLS IN EVALUATION" HERE

The elaboration, adaptation and use of a tool or instrument requires clarity about the methodological principles underpinning our work.

and be consistent with the principles that underpin participatory evaluation and the type of reflexive processes it is intended to foster. Chapter 1 explores these underlying principles of the participatory evaluation methodology in more detail.

It is not the tools that are used that make the difference, but the open and respectful attitude that underpins the evaluation process. This participatory view of evaluation assumes that everyone involved in a programme or project has the right and opportunity to play a leading role in its evaluation. With this methodological conception in mind, participatory tools should be understood as a way to break down the inhibitions and fears of participants, capture the breadth of their opinions as faithfully as possible and build consensus about the success or otherwise of the intervention.

Whatever tools or instruments are used to develop this methodological conception, the evaluation should make it possible to:

• share individual knowledge about the intervention in question, enrich the process, and strengthen collective understanding of it;

• develop opportunities for participants to reflect on shared points of view, enabling everyone to talk about their own experiences, broadening collective experience in the process; and

• enable everyone to take part in the construction of recommendations or proposing solutions to the problems that have been identified.

This means that views can be exchanged on topics of interest that emerge from the intervention, and opinions on its processes, results and impacts can be shared. This methodology also enables people to take ownership of the methods and tools and of the logic behind the process, permitting them to share their experiences in their own groups and communities. Thus, the methodology becomes a process of empowerment for the different social actors involved, and for their organisations.

Tools and instruments for participatory evaluation

Participatory tools are instruments that make each step of the evaluation process viable, guaranteeing the highest levels of involvement possible for those involved.

There are many different definitions and views of tools and instruments. As mentioned in relation to the general methodological criteria and principles, we understand participatory tools to be instruments that make each step of the evaluation process viable, guaranteeing the highest levels of involvement possible for those involved (Slocum, 2003).

The tools may consist of a combination of activities such as group exercises, sociodramas, adaptations of popular games, puppetry, drawings or puzzles, alongside any other method that might help ensure high-quality participation for the many civil society actors involved in the evaluation process. A wide variety of tools may be used, so long as they are adapted to the topic, the characteristics of the group and the objectives of the evaluation. These may include collective interviews, round tables, conferences, illustrated flip charts, simulation games, group challenges or video debates. These tools may be used flexibly and in different ways and can therefore be adapted to the context, characteristics and experiences of the participants, the needs of the evaluation, the moment in time at which it is implemented, and how the work, objectives and expectations of the participants are established.

It is important to recognise that these tools are a "means" and not an "end". They play a fundamental role in ensuring an in-depth and rigorous evaluation process. We are not advocating that facilitators of participatory evaluations should become "tool freaks" or "activity gurus", who forget that they are simply instruments employed to achieve the goals of participation and democracy. Regardless of whether

It is important to recognise that these tools are a "means" and not an "end". They play a fundamental role in ensuring an in-depth and rigorous evaluation process.

they are used to facilitate informative, consultative or decision-making processes, all are tools at the service of evaluation. In different ways, their task is to analyse the practice, synthesis and acceptance of ideas, sharing of individual knowledge and reflectively evaluating different views and feelings about a specific intervention.

The use of these tools is supported by the notion that critical knowledge is built on a set of intellectual processes and drivers, which lead to the formation of associations, relationships, and abstractions, and drawing conclusions, analysing or synthesising, in an active and conscious way (Nuñez, 1986). This set of tools, used at different times and in different situations, makes it possible to treat a topic in a different way, encourage discussions without causing offence, arrive at conclusions that represent the views of the whole group after a democratic debate, communicate the results of a discussion, gather and share significant information, etc.

Advantages and limitations

The use of participatory tools is very advantageous to the evaluation process. As we have said, they allow evaluation processes to be developed that are enriched with the contributions of each and every person involved. This contributes to the collective construction of knowledge about the intervention, its achievements, difficulties, advances and disappointments. These processes also strengthen individual identity and self-esteem and contribute to the consolidation of organisations by helping people feel recognised and valued. The exchange that takes place during a game or group activity stimulates creativity and attempts to find solutions to shared problems, enables the issue itself to be explored objectively and helps members of different organisations meet each other and forge connections. Furthermore,

Participatory tools are very advantageous to the evaluation process, but they also have their risks and limitations.

when recommendations that arise from participatory and inclusive evaluation processes are owned, they are much more likely to be adopted.

On the other hand, participatory tools also have their risks and limitations. Even when a large number of tools and a wide range of activities, games and instruments is available in books, there will not always be a tool or instrument available that exactly meets the needs at hand. In many cases, it may not be possible to use the ideal tool in a given situation due to time constraints or because of resource limitations or if the facilitators of the process lack capacity. In such circumstances there is no alternative but to redesign the tool, adapt it or combine it with others. Furthermore, no matter how well thought-through and designed activities may be, they do not guarantee results and it is possible that some participants will prefer not to be involved in the process. It is also important to note that some activities and tools may lead to conflicts or awaken emotional processes facilitators are not equipped to deal with or handle. It is important to be aware of limitations like this, and to recognise that these tools "can't do everything". The second section of this chapter makes suggestions about how to select and use the tools in order to mitigate these risks and difficulties.

Going beyond games-playing and motivation

As stated above, these tools and games are not, in and of themselves, the heart and soul of participatory evaluation. However, we do consider them to be a key and highly significant part of the participatory process because they enable us to "do things together". While these tools are being employed increasingly in educational processes and also in programme and project management and evaluation, in many cases we have observed that they are only being used to motivate the group, as icebreakers, to introduce people or to encourage moments of relaxation between work sessions, etc.

We believe that the use of participatory tools in evaluation, especially games, should go beyond these recreational, motivational and entertainment purposes, or the idea of "hanging out". Likewise, they should not be used in a way that requires people to take on a role that is unfamiliar to them, removing them from a situation that is familiar to them to enter a world of fantasy. To understand participatory tools in a different way, we must ask ourselves which tool may best be used to evaluate complex issues that require professional experience and knowledge, but also the personal opinions and beliefs of all those involved in the intervention. It is important, also, to consider which tools can do this in a horizontal, participatory manner, without imposition.

Most participatory tools that can be used in evaluations require participants to "throw their whole selves" into the process. In other words, they have to act, discuss, argue and defend a position with respect to an intervention or situation that affects them. To do this, the participatory tools used should try to reproduce the conditions of each situation as faithfully as possible,

Instruments and tools could be used as alternative, "fun", ways to impose content and determine the direction the evaluation will take, while pretending to reflect the views of local actors. This would make it easy to reject the practice on the grounds that it represents an attempt to manipulate participants by introducing content and conclusions in a light-hearted way but with the intention of imposing external ideas: something that is tantamount to a perversion of the profound sense of participation a participatory evaluation implies (Tapella & Rodríguez Bilella. 2019. And what about tools?).

producing exchanges that can deepen personal and collective knowledge and facilitate trust and shared learning. Put another way, the tools that we design should incorporate elements that occur, or have occurred, in the real lives of participants and in the intervention under evaluation. Such tools allow participants to represent themselves, by "living the game" or "playing their lives"; or in other words "playing seriously".

The use of participatory tools should help us develop a sense of ourselves, teach us to think actively and critically, and stimulate collaboration, responsibility, autonomy and creativity. It also allows us to overcome fears, inhibitions and tensions and create an atmosphere in which we are able to express ourselves and construct things together. For this purpose, the tools chosen should facilitate communication and trust, and encourage participation and active cooperation.

Viewed in this way, tools also make it possible to achieve a certain distance from the object of study as they allow different perspectives to surface and to go beyond common sense to recognise the complexity of the situation. Freire (2005) said: *"The best way to get closer is to distance yourself from the theory of knowledge perspective"*. It is possible to go beyond common sense in this way if the tools used provide opportunities for humour, irony, drama, surprise and collective analysis, contributing to the production of knowledge by the evaluation process.

These tools should be capable of creating conditions that encourage communication, the expression of feelings, experiences, knowledge, ideas and expectations and also to learn about things in a non-hierarchical manner. This should make it possible to relive past moments in peoples' lives, work and organisations. Thus, the rules of these games facilitate exchange and generate spaces for conversations about complex topics that would not otherwise be addressed. The dynamics of these games invite players to get "fired up" during the game, helping them deal with difficult topics, and ensuring that everyone's views are heard.

The tools that we use should be capable of creating conditions that encourage communication, the expression of feelings, experiences, knowledge, ideas and expectations and also to learn about things in a non-hierarchical manner.

It is also important to think about mechanisms that can be used to help make a process more dynamic or constitute the "key" to opening the space up for communication and collective construction. We refer here to the tricks or ploys characteristic of games; in other words, tools involve dynamics that are used to achieve a shared aim, ensuring that participants actually engage. This is nothing other than a way of ensuring the tool acts as a participatory and democratic way of dealing with issues that would normally be difficult to broach. Furthermore, many of the games that are invented or adapted for the purpose are "competitive" in spirit (horse races, lottery/bingo, card/dice games, etc.). Competition should be used only as a way to motivate people and should not constitute the end goal. Games should stimulate "cooperation" and the idea that "everyone wins", rather than constitute a competition.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF PARTICIPATORY TOOLS

As mentioned above, there is a wide variety of participatory tools. In the fields of popular education and social development, their use, like that of games and activities, has increased exponentially in programme and project planning and evaluation over the last twenty years. It would be impossible to include all the existing instruments available to be usefully employed in a participatory evaluation in one single handbook. The EvalParticipativa website alone contains dozens of handbooks and guides containing tools that could be of use in an evaluation that seeks to ensure a wide range of civil society actors are placed at the centre of the process.

In order to provide a structured account of the range of available participatory tools, this section classifies them according to 1) the principal modality chosen to achieve the main purpose in different settings and 2) the main purpose for which they are used in different situations and contexts. In the first category, the tools are organised according to the modality and sensory processes that predominate in the proposed activity, and in the second, according to the principal purpose they will be used for in different situations, necessities and contexts. These classifications are not rigid or static, as many of the tools combine the modalities used with a range of human attributes to express and communicate ideas. Additionally, a single tool may be used for different purposes.

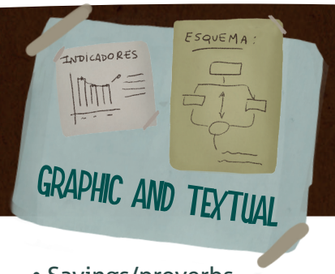
Tools classified by modality

The tools can be classified into four groups according to the modality and the principal senses involved: (1) audio-visual, (2) graphic and textual, (3) narrative and (4) group and experiential.

Classification of participatory tools by modality and purpose

TOOLS BY MODALITY

AUDIOVISUAL



GRAPHIC AND TEXTUAL

NARRATIVE

GROUP AND EXPERIENTIAL

TOOLS BY PRINCIPAL PURPOSE

	AUDIOVISUAL	GRAPHIC AND TEXTUAL	NARRATIVE	GROUP AND EXPERIENTIAL
PRESENTATION AND ICE-BREAKER	• My photo, my story. • The project in five photos.	• Sayings/proverbs. • Jigsaws. • My life journey.	• Presentations in pairs. • A man of principle. • Living stories.	• Spider web diagrams. • Buses. • Streets and Avenues. • Giraffe and elephant.
DATA GATHERING	• Talking photo. • Photographic and/or video record.	• Transects. • Communal map. • Collective drawing.	• In-depth interviews. • Focus groups. • Life histories. • Stories of innovation.	• Brainstorming. • Opposite poles. • Dramatised stories.
ANALYSIS REFLECTION IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION	• Audio forum. • Video debate.	• Venn diagram. • Timeline. • Transect map.	• Group interview(s). • Focus groups. • Most significant change.	• Simulation games. • Sociodrama. • Pantomime.
COMMUNICATION DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS	• Documentary video. • Short testimonies.	• Posters, visual representations. • Leaflets for distribution.	• Public presentations. • Testimonies of protagonists.	• Role play. • Puppetry. • Public testimony .

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on tools drawn from the guides available in the EvalParticipativa repository. This is not an exhaustive list but an (illustrative) example of how to combine tools that have been classified by "modality" and "purpose". These tools and modalities can also be explored link.

Audio-visual tools involve a combination of images (visual representations, photos or video) and sound (audio and music). The most common examples of these tools are audio-visuals (slides or video), song or audio debates or even talks, songs or films that may be used to "spark" a subsequent exchange of ideas. Mind maps (of networks, resources or actors), diagrams, matrices and other kinds of visual representations intended as communication aids, or to facilitate subsequent exchanges of ideas, might also be included in this category.

In general, the facilitator should prepare these kinds of tools prior to their use, as they are not the result of group reflection or analysis. For example, they might involve a documentary video on an aspect of the programme, produced by technical staff to encourage discussion of the results, difficulties or other aspects of the intervention.

In these cases, the material "delivered" by the tool is the result of the research, analysis and classification of the individuals who produced it. Thus, the tool provides participants with novel information and perspectives, requiring new spaces to be created to enable group reflection and analysis.

With this kind of tool, it is very important to differentiate between the "denotative" and "connotative" meaning of the image (photo or video) in question. The first of these terms refers to aspects that are clearly apparent from the image, and the second to value judgements based on them. These will vary according to the group in question and to social and cultural context. Subliminal or hidden messages may emerge, which require debate and interpretation from multiple viewpoints.

When such tools are used, it is important for the facilitator to view the audio-visual content beforehand. This enables them to introduce the topic, plan the debate, think of relevant questions and ensure the material is useful as an instrument for reflection and exchange in the group.

With **textual or graphic tools**, the visual is also important, but their communication is based on writing and symbols rather than on images.

While these are usually combined, graphic tools make use of visual representations and infographics, while the principal element of textual tools is writing. Examples of these tools include collectively-produced visual representations, explanatory tables, transect diagrams, calendars, flipcharts, brainstorming cards or texts analysed in small groups, etc.

These tools express content symbolically and therefore require interpretation. When this kind of tool is used, it is advisable to start by describing the issues the images represent. Subsequently, regardless of whether they were produced by the participants or the facilitator, it is important to interpret them collectively if different viewpoints and perceptions are to be recovered. Used in this way, they facilitate the participation of everyone, as its interpretation and communication require a joint effort.

When tools such as this are used, it is important to ensure that the text is clear and large enough to ensure that everyone can read the material in the specific venue used and the number of participants. Written content should be concise, so that the central ideas are readily apparent. It is also important to ensure that both the style of writing and the imagery used are appropriate to the participant group, and that they will be able to use the materials as an input for collective processes to build and exchange knowledge.

In the category of **narrative tools** we have included some tools in which "speech" and a "listening attitude" prevail. In recent years, interpretative tools of this kind have become increasingly common. Their origins lie in: (a) an interest in understanding the different ways in which the events that occur during an intervention are interpreted, understood and experienced; (b) an interest in flexible data-generation modalities that are sensitive to the social context in which the data is produced; and (c) an attempt to use analytical modalities and explanations in order to understand complexity, detail and context. Accordingly, this kind of approach focuses on responding to questions such as 'How?' and 'Why?', offering the

chance to deepen our understanding of the dynamics behind collective processes, change and social context.

This kind of tool stresses the importance of understanding the meaning that civil society actors give to interventions and to their results, impacts and lessons. Using these tools allows evaluators to immerse themselves in the lives of the people, take their views about the intervention into account and build links between the evaluator and participants (primary sources) on the basis of the latter's words and behaviour during the evaluation process.

The best-known tools in this category are in-depth interviews, life stories, innovation/change stories, testimonies and group diaries, and the most significant change tool. Their successful use requires in-depth preparation and knowledge in order to be able to "handle" situations that may occur. Information analysis (of qualitative data) also brings certain complexities to the surface. For example, understanding the data that is revealed by in-depth interviews or life stories requires a thorough reading of the record, one that makes it possible to uncover "clues" that can help improve understanding of how the interviewees feel about the intervention in question. This task involves detecting and dissecting topics and subtopics, contrasting and linking, and associating and comparing aspects that cannot be separated from the

Audio-visual modalities contribute new elements to participants' perceptions and understanding, and it is therefore important to create spaces for the group to reflect on and analyse their implications after they have been presented.

While graphic and textual tools are generally used together, the former make use of visual representations and infographics, while the principal element of the latter is writing.

Narrative modalities are used to understand the meaning that local actors give to interventions, their results, impacts and lessons.

Group and experiential modalities both create space for participants to get involved in creating or recreating situations that help them live (or re-live) a specific experience.

social and cultural context. Facilitators must therefore be fully trained and experienced in qualitative research.

The final category is **group and experiential tools.** These tools are characterised by the space they create for participants to participate in creating or recreating situations that will help them re-live or re-experience a specific experience. The set of tools included in this category is very varied, ranging from broad-based initiatives such as multi-stakeholder workshops, meetings, community assemblies and public hearings to more narrowly defined activities such as focus groups, simulation games and role play tools (sociodramas, dramatised stories, puppetry, pantomime, etc.). These tools (especially those featuring performance), work better when participants already know each other and there is a certain level of trust between them, as they might otherwise be intimidating for some.

These tools can be used for different purposes, for example, to share information between different actors (in a community assembly, for example) or to deepen analysis of a specific aspect of the intervention in conjunction with experts on the topic (in a focus group). The performance element of these activities may also be exploited to analyse an experience, as it provides symbolic inputs that make it possible to reflect on real life situations or specific practices. The central element in this case is the "telling" by means of movement, used to represent situations experienced by actors, their behaviours, ways of thinking and contexts. At times, these tools are used to encourage, affirm or create a friendly and participatory atmosphere before settling down to a weightier exercise..

Tools classified by purpose

Participatory tools may also be classified according to the objective, or purpose, of an evaluation. Here, they have been grouped into four categories: tools for (1) presentation and motivation, (2) data collection, (3) analysis, reflection and exploration, and (4) for communicating and sharing results.

The **tools for presentation and motivation** are intended to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere to encourage horizontal communication, where everyone feels comfortable and at liberty to work together. Presentation tools are generally used at the start of every session or meeting, so that the participants get to know each other and exchange basic information on their association with the intervention being evaluated. Examples of these tools include the use of proverbs and sayings, the spiderweb, jigsaw puzzles, etc. Motivational tools tend to be used to break the ice and create an atmosphere of trust and safety that help carry out the work as planned. They can also be used between sessions, when the facilitator feels that the group is tired or stuck in the analysis and reflection process. A few examples of this type of energiser include *lanchas* (speedboats), *correo* (the same activity is known by some as "buses" in English), *calles y avenidas* (streets and avenues), *canasta revuelta* (fruit basket), *jirafa y elefante* (elephants and giraffes), *el barco se hunde* (the boat is sinking), *la moneda* (the coin), etc.[11]

The category of instruments we have labelled **tools for data gathering** is perhaps the most similar to those used in a conventional evaluation. These include classic tools such as surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups, public consultations and life histories. The main difference is in the way the tools are used in a participatory evaluation.

11 The names of these energisers vary between regions, context and language. Here we present only the literal translations. Some energisers can be found in: Chambers, Robert. 2002. Participatory Workshops. A sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas & activities. London: Earthscan Sourcebook 21.

Here, the topics and questions used for data collection are defined as part of a participatory process by an evaluation team composed of numerous civil society groups connected to the intervention.

For their part, the tools used for **analysis, reflection and examination** consist of a diverse set of experiential, performance-based, audio-visual, graphic and visual activities. Their main purpose is to facilitate analysis of an intervention, by creating a level playing field for exchange and reflection and to draw conclusions based on the views of multiple social actors. They can also be used to explore topics gradually, in more depth, breaking down concepts or ideas, summarising individual ideas and constructing shared ones. In addition, a large number of additional tools exists, ranging from the well-known, such as focus groups, collective interviews and SWOT analyses to more complex instruments including simulation games, group mapping, matrices and transects, mazes, races and chains of association..

Finally, the category of **tools for communicating and sharing** results includes a set of instruments that ensure that the diverse actors

involved in an evaluation are aware of its progress, agree on the principal findings, and are included in the basic recommendations. Posters, documentary or testimonial videos, photo exhibitions, radio forums, knowledge-exchange workshops and differentiated reports are all valid instruments to use for this purpose.

Communicating and sharing partial or final evaluation results contributes directly to the ownership and adoption of recommendations, and we therefore recommend using these tools as effectively as possible.

BY WAY OF RECOMMENDATION

The likelihood is that, when a particular tool is used, opinions and reactions will be produced that go far further than we had imagined. It is therefore very important to be clear about the topic and objective at hand and to define beforehand how deep we want the reflection to go during the activity. It is also important to know how to "read" the situation, understand the nature of the group's engagement in the process and gauge the concerns and enthusiasms generated among participants by the discussions. On some occasions it will be necessary to let the conversation "flow" and on others to be strict, and end debates if they are getting "out of hand" or have deviated from the original focus, in order to ensure that the planned sequence of activities is not jeopardised.

3. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING AND USING PARTICIPATORY TOOLS

"The way we do things is just as important as the things that we do", said a leader of an agricultural workers' organisation from north eastern Argentina. Her words are applicable when it comes to considering which tools and instruments should be selected for use in a participatory evaluation process. This section presents a set of practical considerations that should be taken into account when choosing and using a tool. It also explores the challenges associated with the application of this type of tool.

Define the specific topic and objective that the tool will be used for

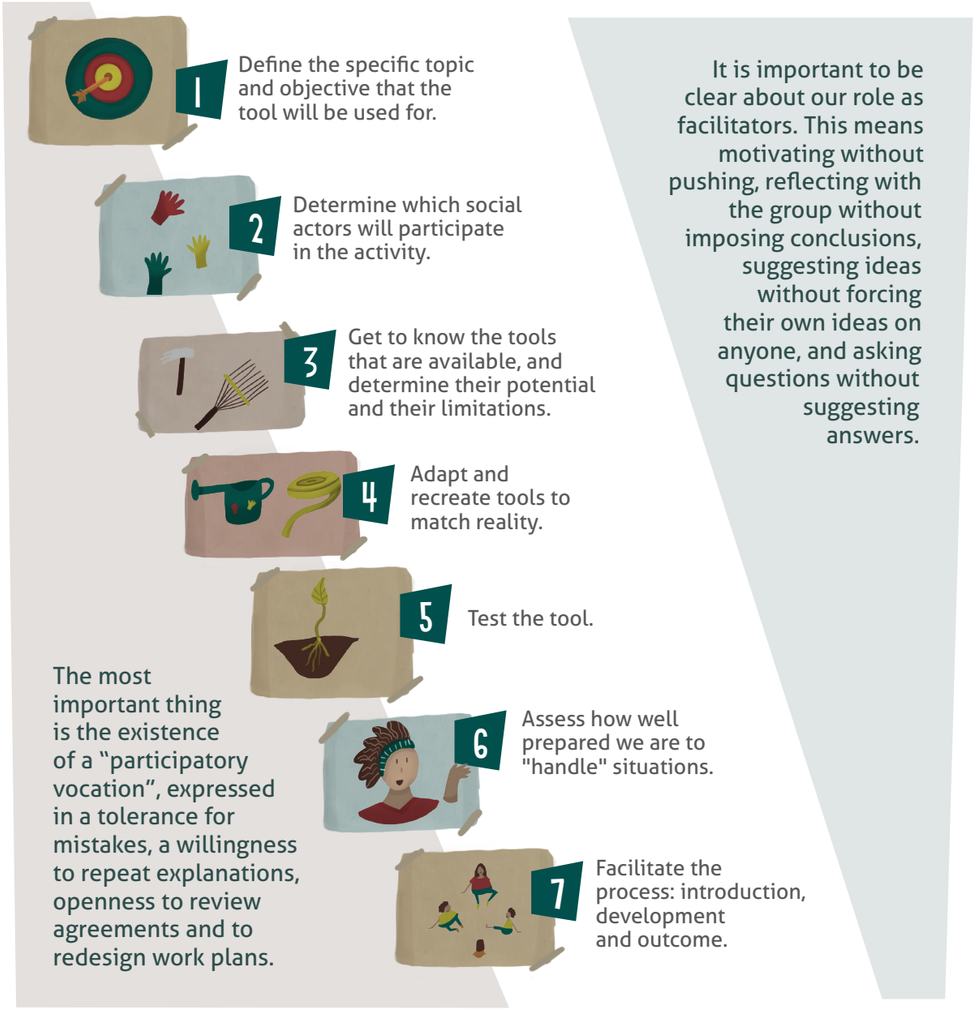
Although it may seem obvious at this stage, we believe it is important to highlight that tools should always be selected and used in order to address the specific topic and objective at hand. The same participatory tool can be used for various purposes and to deal with different topics at different moments of the participatory evaluation process.

It is fundamentally important to define the matter we wish to understand or the topic to be addressed, not only to be able to define the scope and focus of our enquiry, but also in order to choose the tools that are most appropriate to the purpose. Defining the topic can involve a series of different aspects, one of which consists in determining the things that are important and relevant for the participants. Also important is the depth with which we wish to explore each topic, a decision that likewise depends on the diversity of the social actors.

Furthermore, the complexity of a topic should be taken into consideration when selecting the appropriate tool: in other words, the kind and source of information that might be needed, the people who might be able to provide it, or the potential difficulties involved in its analysis, etc. Finally, consideration should be given to the possible controversies that might exist around the topic. Are disputes involved? Has it attracted debates and led to polarisation? Is it reasonable to expect to arrive at a consensus? These and other similar questions can be helpful when it comes to choosing the most appropriate tool.

Defining the objective involves delimiting what it is hoped to achieve by broaching the topic. For example, a tool might be used to grasp the different attitudes of different actors to the results of the intervention. In this case, the tool should be capable of showing how diverse actors perceive the initiative, and their views of its impact. It may be more interesting to identify shared aspects rather than capture the different viewpoints. In this case, an activity that favours reaching

What should be taken into account when selecting and using participatory tools?



consensus should be chosen, regardless of whether the current interest is to engage in analysis and reflection or produce recommendations. Likewise, a tool might be used as a mechanism for facilitating shared decision-making, or even as a strategy for disseminating and sharing evaluation results.

Thus, defining the priorities of the activity beforehand makes it easier to choose or create a tool that meets requirements. When it comes to thinking about the objective it is hoped to achieve with the tool, it is also very important to identify the social actors involved and the use to which it is intended to put the data or information that emerges.

Characterise the social actors who will participate in the activity

As has been said, it is important to ensure the involvement of the greatest diversity possible of civil society actors in a participatory evaluation, including specialists in the topic, directors and mid-level managers involved in the intervention, programme or service users, local residents, high-ranking public officials, NGO representatives and civil society organisations. Individual levels of participation will depend on the topic chosen at each particular point and on the remit of the evaluation. Although desirable, not everyone involved in or associated with the intervention under evaluation will be able to participate. When it comes to designing each activity, the group of actors that will take part should be identified and defined. This decision will also affect the choice of tools to be used.

Depending on the nature of the group or sector involved, the tools or games selected for each activity will differ, or require certain adaptations. Designing an activity for the users of a programme is not the same as designing one for public officials and decision-makers. In addition to considering

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "TOOLS THAT FACILITATE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DECISION-MAKING" HERE

> "It is quite a challenge to find tools that allow groups, individuals or beneficiaries to express their opinions, but also to make decisions based on their own analyses. I think you have to be pretty sincere and not so romantic as to think that everyone is going to participate and that we are going to hear everybody's voice. It's not like that! So, it's important that the main actors should participate: I mean those we want to gain from the intervention. Because from a rights-based approach, you have to examine unequal relationships there too, the lack of information and often, also, the lack of participation in the project and programme planning processes. So, it is very important to make use of an inclusive methodology right from the planning stages of an intervention".
>
> Dagny Skarwan, participant in the participatory evaluation gathering in Quito.

the different roles individuals play in the intervention, it is also necessary to consider sex; age; the cultural, economic and political context where the activity is carried out; the background and previous experience of the participant group; their level of schooling, etc. It is important to keep in mind that the people involved have different skills, motivations and availability. This will also condition the type of tools to be used.

Get to know the tools that are available, and determine their potential and their limitations

As we know, today a wide range of tools that can be used in democratic and participatory evaluations is now available. It is important to explore these and to understand which of them will encourage significant contributions from as many people as possible, rather than only the most extrovert. Furthermore, it should be recognised that all tools have limitations which vary - among other things - according to the group involved, context, resources and time availability. It is important to explore this aspect properly in order to be fully informed about the specific characteristics of each tool, its potential and its limitations.

Often -in particular in relation to activities based on lived experiences- there is a tendency to abuse the symbolic elements of a tool and, as a result, impose conclusions or make comparisons that cannot be backed up by the conclusions of the group process. It is recommended, therefore, not to expect more from a tool than it is able to provide. Otherwise, facilitators might end up presenting the fruits of their own imagination as if they were those of the group.

Moreover, it is important that facilitators avoid becoming "fans" of a single tool that they know well. It is common to acquire a certain level of skill in handling some tools, either because we know them well or because we use them effectively. It is important to understand that the same tool cannot be used in all circumstances and to identify the one that is most appropriate to each case. Exploring new options and trying different ways of using them, or new combinations of them, will improve the capacity of facilitators to manage participatory and creative processes. The diversity of available tools enriches this process.

> The participatory tools and tools must be redesigned for each specific case, according to the circumstances or situation at hand, as well as the characteristics of the group or sector involved.

Adapt and recreate tools to match reality

As indicated in the previous point, all tools have their limitations. Using them in their "purest" form, according to the book, without combining them with others or adapting them, will almost certainly make them less effective. They must therefore be redesigned for each specific case, according to the circumstances or situation at hand, as well as the characteristics of the group or sector involved.

It is important to use the toolkit creatively. The same tool can have

YOU CAN WATCH THE VIDEO "HOW TO ADAPT AND RE-DESIGN TOOLS" HERE

multiple versions, or different procedures when used with different participants, in different situations or to achieve different objectives. Knowing how to adapt them to a specific reality or context will ensure they are as effective as possible. Similarly, it is recommended to combine different tools, as this enables an ordered and systematic examination of the case in hand. As is true in most situations, with practice, we acquire skills and learn which aspects of a tool need to be changed to ensure it "works" well.

Test the tool

While it is not always possible, it is definitely advisable to test the tools before using them, on a similar group and in a similar context. As has been said, it will not always be possible to find a tool that is appropriate to a specific need, with the result that it must be adapted and redesigned according to the aims and subject matter -and the group- with which the work is going to be carried out.

Testing the tool with the evaluation team, even if only in a practice session, makes it possible to tweak the instructions, clarify terms using the appropriate local terminology, estimate the time that will be spent on the exercise and understand the extent to which the tools engage the interest of participants and are likely to have the hoped-for impact. This process will also help foresee the tool's potential undesired consequences.

If the activity is to be carried out with different groups, it is important to stick to a single procedure or protocol to ensure that the information produced can be compared and the process is rigorous and credible. In these situations, tools should be tested and designed to be used in different potential scenarios and contexts.

BY WAY OF EXAMPLE

At EvalParticipativa we have developed a process of capacity building for participatory evaluation processes. To help examine conceptual issues in a participatory way, we have designed two tools that -depending on the experience and training of participants- may be used independently or together. If used together, they can provide a step-by-step process to approach the topic.

The tool "Defining Participatory Evaluation" is aimed at people who manage and evaluate social and cultural programmes and projects. The idea is for participants to design a participatory evaluation. The process starts by presenting a set of words that may or may not be relevant to the concept. Debate about these words facilitates reflection and helps prioritise those that are most relevant, constituting in an initial approach to the "what?" of this evaluation approach.

The tool "The Participatory Evaluation Playing Card" is intended to explore this topic in greater depth. The purpose here is to reflect on the principal characteristics of this kind of evaluation and on the role of the evaluator. For this purpose it uses a rights-based approach with a gender perspective and a commitment to citizen participation. A card game is used to prioritise, discard and create slogans from a list of key characteristics and to create a set of participatory evaluation principles collectively, which are then used as a reference point for future evaluation practices.

Assess how well prepared we are to "handle" situations

The capacity and experience of the facilitator of a specific activity during the evaluation process will often limit their ability to use certain types of tools and oblige them to use others. This is because -should the structure, dynamic and potential application of a given tool be insufficiently tested and understood- the possibility of success may be affected to such an extent that it might even be counterproductive to use it.

It is not enough simply to know about a tool and understand how to use it, the time it requires and the appropriate

It is not enough simply to know about a tool and understand how to use it, how long it lasts and the appropriate target group. It is also important to know whether the facilitators have the wherewithal to "manage" situations that might result from the activity and to take care of and respect the feelings of the participants.

Sometimes, a single tool is not sufficient to deal with a topic. It is therefore necessary to consider a wide range of interlinked resources rather than limit ourselves to a rigid or predictable approach.

target group. It is also important to know whether facilitators have the wherewithal to "manage" situations that might result from the activity and to take care of and respect the sensitivities of the participants. It should not be forgotten that, in the coordination of group activities and participatory evaluations, facilitators must deal with people with different feelings, cultures, habits and preferences.

As facilitators, we frequently use activities based on lived experiences, which awaken emotional processes that we are not equipped to deal with or handle. Tools such as in-depth interviews, life histories and the Most Significant Change approach require more than just openness and a willingness to listen. In certain groups, role plays can unintentionally open some people up to ridicule or generate conflicts that facilitators also lack the skills to deal with.

It is important to be aware that when people "give their all" to a process, they surrender a part of their life to the collective process. In situations like this, it is important to be extremely respectful and careful about the potential implications of our actions, especially if we do not have the professional training or resources to handle and contain difficult situations. If we do not feel up to the task, it is better to choose a simpler tool even if the result and depth of analysis will not be as rich.

Facilitate the process: introduction, development and outcome

Other than when tools are used to create a positive and dynamic environment for the task or organise group work, we suggest implementing the following steps when using the tools: 1) introduction, 2) development and 3) outcome.

Introduction. The topic should be introduced to participants, who should be encouraged to participate fully in the process. The facilitator should ensure that every participant knows what is going on and the procedures to be followed. Clear, easy-to-follow guidelines or instructions can help the group to function properly.

Record conclusions, agreements and the closure of the activity

1. RECUPERATING THE EXPERIENCE

This stage involves an initial ordering of the (quantitative or qualitative) information that emerges from the group.

Listening tools	What did we hear?
Audiovisual tools	What did we see? What did we hear?
Experiential tools	What happened? What did we feel?
Written or graphic tools	What did we read? What did we present?

2. INFORMATION ANALYSIS

The facilitators ask questions to discover why something has happened. The process involves obtaining and interpreting the findings.

What do we think about the things we have seen, said or experienced?

Why do we think this way?

Are there different perspectives or is there a consensus?

3. ANALYSIS OF IMPLICATIONS

Using the data and opinions that emerged during the activity, we try to construct useful recommendations at different levels. These vary according to the case and the tool used.

What are the implications of what we think about the things we have seen, said or experienced?

Is it possible to generate recommendations based on these implications?

4. ENDING THE ACTIVITY

We seek to identify the main conclusions so we can consider ways of documenting and communicating them.

What have we learned from this activity?

What new knowledge can we offer as a result?

What can we do so that the conclusions and recommendations are useful to the programme and other people?

Development. During this step, the group or subgroups carry out the activities that correspond to them, following the steps set out in a guide, or set of instructions. It is important to accompany the process, responding to doubts and difficulties and ensuring that most participants are actively involved in the activities included in the tool. At times, depending on the tool selected, there will be times when it is useful to delegate members of each group to coordinate its activities, ensure that the established procedure is followed and keep a record of the main conclusions that it arrives at. Everything depends on the type of meeting, the size of the group, how long the activity lasts and the human resources available. This moment of peer-to-peer discussion and debate about the ideas and perceptions participants have of the intervention being evaluated, is usually the richest part of the process. It is very important to pay attention, observe and document the contributions of the evaluation's key civil society actors.

The outcome. This refers to the stage when conclusions are drawn and agreements made, the activity is brought to a close and the hoped-for outcomes are achieved. As we have seen, one tool can be used for different purposes: to analyse an intervention, reflect on achievements and difficulties, identify lessons learned, come to agreements and consensus positions, identify points of disagreement and note down the diversity of opinions, etc. In some situations, this is the time to draw conclusions. There are different ways of doing this, depending on the way each tool works, but it generally involves a plenary meeting attended by all the participants. Once the group work is finalised (having applied the tools), it is possible to move on to the next steps and questions featured in the table below.

In conclusion, we could say that a tool or a particular technique is in itself neither good nor bad, as everything depends on the specific topic being addressed, the proposed objective, and the context and the characteristics of participants. We believe that choosing, replicating and adapting participatory tools brings with it a great responsibility. As with any other tool, it is important to understand what it can be used for and how and when. The most important thing is that facilitators should have an open-minded and receptive attitude.

Going beyond the tool, it is essential to keep in mind the profound importance of the participatory nature of evaluations, which should be based on equal relationships and the facilitation of spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange. And, although we might not want to admit it, we have to accept that "there are no magic solutions". Both activities to encourage social and cultural groups and our experiences in the field of participatory evaluation reveal that intuition often plays a fundamental role.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have developed some basic notions about participatory evaluation methodologies and tools. We have constructed a generic classification of the available tools, bringing together modality and purpose. Finally, we have shared a set of criteria and recommendations that should be taken into account when selecting and using different instruments. In this final section we conclude by presenting a set of challenges faced by those of us who want to facilitate participatory evaluation.

First, we should acknowledge that these instruments cannot do everything. Just as important (if not more important) as the tools, is the existence of a "participatory vocation", expressed in a tolerance of mistakes, a willingness to repeat explanations, review agreements and redesign work plans, etc. In this sense, it is important to be clear about the fact that facilitators are external agents, even though they also participate in the process. This means recognising that their role is to motivate without pressuring, reflect with the group without imposing conclusions, suggest ideas without forcing their own conclusions on anyone and asking questions without suggesting answers.

Second, we believe it is necessary to be imaginative and creative when

it comes to adapting or designing instruments. Nothing is more appropriate (or important to take on board) for organisations than the tools that are created in relation to participants and the specific situations that must be faced, in light of the requirements of the evaluation.

Third, it should be recognised that every evaluation that is successful in producing results and recommendations is underpinned by a credible, rigorous process. It is important to study and find out more about the tools that can be used, test them out in pilot schemes and ensure that they will be used in the most rigorous way possible. It is important to ensure the availability of spaces for genuine, horizontal, participation, involving transparent selection processes and participants who represent the whole. Likewise, the criteria used for data analysis and systematisation must be clear. If the evaluation is going to be of high quality, it is vital to monitor the process, request and receive supervision from a mentor, and share and validate partial results in order to legitimise its findings and conclusions.

Finally, when it comes to adopting and using participatory tools, it is important to be aware of the different problems that might arise. This means being willing to assuage interpersonal tensions, offer additional information, engage in dialogue with all parties, encourage the participation of the less experienced, create spaces for dialogue and promote consensus-building.

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2020 will forever be remembered as the year that the COVID-19 pandemic exploded into our lives, disrupting them in many ways. We experienced the depth of our global connection and interdependence, and the ways that the realities we live in are deeply interwoven.

This participatory evaluation handbook had its origins and was developed in this context, as a message from the field of evaluation intended to express the idea that we will only be able to immunise ourselves against the limits of self-sufficiency and fragility by recuperating a multiplicity of participant voices and perspectives. To do this, we explore the current realities and the potential of participatory evaluation in Latin America, the phases of its development in practice, the key role of those who facilitate these processes, and the purpose and place of participatory tools and instruments in this approach to evaluation.

Guided by a transformative way of perceiving reality, this handbook presents participatory evaluation as a community of dialogue that collectively harvests the fruits of a project or programme and then sows these lessons in how to overcome obstacles in order to contribute to changing reality now and in the future.

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