

Introduction

Participation is a term that is used synonymously to refer both to development goals and to development approaches.



It is often associated with rural communities since a lot of the approaches were developed with farmers. However participation works at every level and every sector whilst aiming to empower people and groups who are most vulnerable and less easily able to ensure their needs and expertise are represented in decision making.

Participation can be described as *“A growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life conditions in order to plan and act”*

There has been a marked shift away from the reliance on large scale surveys as the main method of research. The tools are often, visual, active, immediate widely communicable. The arguments for the use of participatory tools include:

- Motivates immediate action by the end user

- Data more closely reflects local realities
- Includes dynamic factors of power relationships in the analysis
- Analysis is quickly and immediately available to the end user
- Interpretation can be checked easily in situ

The 3 Pillars of participatory approaches are

- Attitude & Behaviour
- Tools
- Sharing

Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation

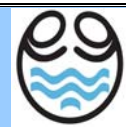
Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) differs from more conventional approaches to monitoring and evaluation in that it seeks to engage key project stakeholders more actively in reflecting and assessing the progress of the project and directing the achievement of results.

Stakeholders are the prime actors within the PM&E process rather than being objects of an evaluation. PM&E is an intrinsic part of participatory development processes. These seek to involve key stakeholders in analysis, decision making and action based on local realities.

The critical feature of this approach is the emphasis on who measures change and who benefits from learning about these changes.

Seven Steps for Participatory Monitoring

Take the time to prepare and plan monitoring. It helps everyone know why they are monitoring and how it will be done. The first



meeting to plan for monitoring can include all those directly involved in the activities as well as other interested groups.

But it will be concentrated on those directly involved or those selected by the groups who will be responsible for monitoring. Planning for monitoring can use a framework much like those used for Participatory baselines and participatory evaluation. This framework is explained in the following steps:

1. Discuss reasons for monitoring

Review the benefits and purposes of monitoring, so that insiders can decide for themselves whether monitoring will help them.

2. Review objectives and activities

Objectives and activities should have been established during the planning phase and will form the basis for the logframe. If 'insiders' have not been previously involved the objectives and activities as established by outsiders can be reviewed and discussed by insiders. A participatory assessment may be necessary if insiders and outsider objectives are very different.

3. Develop monitoring questions

After objectives and activities are reviewed discuss the information needed to help know if activities are going well. Focus on the questions: 'what do we want to know?' and 'what do we monitor that will tell us this?'

The facilitator can write or draw on large sheets of paper or blackboard, the monitoring questions generated around each objective and activity. There should be agreement by the group on each monitoring question. If many

questions are generated they can be ranked in order of importance.

4. Establish direct and indirect indicators

For each monitoring question, determine direct/indirect indicators that will answer the monitoring questions.

5. Decide which information gathering tools are needed

The most appropriate tool will depend on the question being asked, the size of the group and the profile of the group. One tool can gather information that answers many monitoring questions. Using a number of tools to ask the same question ensures accuracy through triangulation. Visual tools often enable more people to participate.

6. Decide who will do the monitoring

Monitoring may require people with specific skills such as bookkeeping or mathematics. It will also require a certain amount of labour (time) from people. Those with the skills and the time can be identified. There may have to be compensation for the task of monitoring. It might be part of the job of a paid person or of community members.

7. Analyse and present results

It is important that information monitored and analysed at specific times throughout the activities is made visible and easily accessible.



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