Participatory Program Evaluation Manual

Involving Program Stakeholders in the Evaluation Process

By Judi Aubel, Ph.D. MPH

Second Edition

A joint publication of the Child Survival Technical Support Project and Catholic Relief Services

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PREFACE

FOREWARD

Evaluations are an opportunity for a program or project to examine how well it is implementing its activities, to take stock of progress towards results, and to formulate lessons learned. From the larger perspective, evaluations present an opportunity to determine it the program strategies are working, or are the most appropriate.

Although an outside evaluator may bring to bear new vision and breadth of experience, a better way to institutionalize the use of data and information for project improvement, is to ask the evaluation resource person to act as a facilitator in the evaluation. This lead person can involve and teach the program implementers and other stakeholders about the evaluation process, while in turn benefiting from their observations and close project involvement. Partnerships can be strengthened and communication channels opened if key stakeholders at all levels of the program or project are involved in a participatory evaluation process. Involvement starts with the design of the questions to be investigated, and continues through information collection, analysis, and interpretation leading to the formulation of lessons learned and. It doesn't end until an action plan for future steps is formulated. Although this approach necessitates many resources and the time of numerous participants, it has been shown to be a truly great learning experience if it is carried out in a structured way and led by a dynamic facilitator.

A participatory or collaborative evaluation approach provides the partners and stakeholders involved with hands on practical, experiential training in monitoring and evaluation techniques. It can contribute to the institutionalization and use of information for project improvement by local actors.

The participatory evaluation methodology developed by Judi Aubel and laid out clearly in this manual has been utilized by several evaluation facilitators with good results. Participants have learned new monitoring and evaluation skills, and been challenged to examine ways of doing things to see if there might be a better way. They have been encouraged to think creatively and be innovative problem solvers. Stakeholders at all levels have been empowered to speak out and share their concerns and their ideas.

While good monitoring and evaluation techniques and processes are a means to an end, for the goals of continuous learning and improvement of programs and activities, participation describes both a means as well as the end. Access and participation by local people to decision-making processes have been identified as results USAID seeks to support; they are considered to be fundamental to sustained development.

As part of the mission of the Child Survival Technical Support Project (CSTS) to build competence in project management, we are pleased to collaborate with Catholic Relief Services to update and expand the first edition of this manual and to make it available in English, French, and Spanish. We invite child survival projects, private voluntary organizations, and development program stakeholders to use and adapt the 20 step methodology outlined in the *Participatory Program Evaluation Manual* in their quest to strengthen their capacity and that of their local partners to achieve sustainable service delivery and assist disadvantaged communities around the world to improve and sustain the health of their populations.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The participatory evaluation methodology presented here draws heavily on the work of the North American educator, Michael Quinn Patton. His conviction that any evaluation exercise should be a learning experience for program implementers resounds throughout this work. Several of his books are included in the bibliography and I strongly recommend them to those who want to know more about participatory and qualitative methodologies. A second important influence on the development of the methodology is the work of David Korten, development management specialist. Korten has argued that both institutions and programs need to develop mechanisms which promote ongoing "organizational learning." This evaluation methodology, which aims to develop program implementers' ability to analyze and learn from their own programs, responds in a small way to Korten's challenge.

The methodology is also influenced by the recent developments in Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Research for Action (PRA) both from the field of rural development, and by Rapid Assessment Procedures (RAP) from the health and nutrition field. These methodological developments are all attempts to develop approaches to data collection which are less time consuming than conventional research methods and which foster more horizontal, more informal relationships between evaluators, project implementers and community members. This evaluation methodology is in keeping with many of the key concepts of RRA, PRA and RAP.

The manual is also based on experiences which I have had the past 10 years using the participatory methodology in evaluations of community and district health programs in different countries. Those evaluations were carried out in Burkina Faso (AFRICARE), The Gambia (GAFNA/CRS), Nigeria (AFRICARE), Cameroon (ILO), Senegal (World Vision), Senegal (ILO), India (CRS), Bangladesh (CARE) and Sierra Leone (CRS). Each of those experiences contributed to the development of a practical, yet conceptually sound, approach to evaluating programs **with** program implementers.

The first edition of this manual was published by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in 1994, in English. Since then the methodology has been refined based on experience using it. Many program managers and implementers have found it to be useful, however, it was only accessible to English speakers. In 1999, with support from both CRS

and the Child Survival Support Project (CSTS) managed by Macro International, we were able to revise and expand the manual, and also to translate it into French and Spanish. This has been a great accomplishment, especially given the fact that there is little user-friendly material on participatory evaluation available in those languages.

I would really like to hear from those who use this methodology as it is presented, or in some modified form. Please send me copies of the reports of the participatory evaluations you do, along with your suggestions on how to improve either the methodology or the manual itself.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. Purpose of this manual

This manual is intended as a tool for PVO staff, their NGO and government partners to use in evaluating development projects and programs. There are many ways to go about evaluating a project or program. The choice of the most appropriate approach largely depends on the goal and objectives of the evaluation as well as on the availability of human and material resources for the activity.

The evaluation approach presented here is particularly relevant to **process evaluations** in which the aim is to assess the program implementation process. This methodology has been used in programs in a number of countries and found very effective. The evaluation methodology focuses on the analysis of program activities and strategies, which have been implemented and on the **development of "lessons learned"** which can be applied in the future. Given this orientation, it is particularly well suited for use in mid-term evaluations of ongoing programs.

The concept of a "participatory evaluation methodology," used here, implies that **program implementers are actively involved** in all steps of the evaluation process. While participatory approaches are currently very popular in development programs, it is my belief that participation is effective only when the aim of the participation is clear and when a process to structure and channel that participation is clearly defined. This manual describes a simple and straightforward way in which program stakeholders can be involved in planning and carrying out a program evaluation.

The success of a participatory evaluation depends largely on the experience and skills of the **evaluation coordinator** who is responsible for both designing and facilitating the exercise. This is a very challenging and demanding role and for this reason the coordinator must be carefully chosen. He/she can be an outside consultant or someone from a partner organization, depending upon where the required expertise can be found.

Another key to the success of a participatory evaluation is support from program managers based on their clear understanding of the process. Their support for the participatory approach will be critical to the success of the exercise while it is going on. It will also be a critical factor in determining whether the evaluation results and recommendations are acted on once the evaluation is completed.

The involvement of program stakeholders (decision-makers and information-users) in the entire evaluation process is based on the assumption that this will contribute to greater relevance of the evaluation and to greater accuracy in the evaluation findings. It is also based on the belief that program stakeholders involved in the evaluation can both contribute to the evaluation process and learn from each other. The sharing and learning stimulated by the group process can contribute to **organizational learning.**

While the methodology presented here is oriented toward a structured and comprehensive evaluation of an ongoing program, many of the concepts and techniques can be used both in end-of-project evaluations and in ongoing program monitoring activities.

The sequence of steps included in the methodology presented here has been successfully used in a number of different settings. However, this does not mean that the methodology is perfect, or set in stone. Each time the methodology has been used it has been modified based on the earlier experiences. The participatory methodology should continue to evolve and improve. I hope that if you try using this approach and find ways to modify, simplify and improve it, you will share it with others.

As stated above, the core methodology presented here is based on a series of steps and tasks, which are carried out by program stakeholders who, in most cases, are program implementers. The participation of community actors in this process is limited to their involvement as interviewees during the data collection phase. Since 1993 when the first edition of this manual was published there has been increased discussion regarding the importance of actively involving community members in evaluating their own programs. While community members can and should be involved in evaluating community activities and programs, I am not certain that it is either advisable or possible to involve them in this 20-step process, which takes place over a 3 1/2 to 4 week period, and which requires that participants be literate. In order to address the issue of community involvement in monitoring and evaluation, an additional chapter has been added to this edition of the manual. In Chapter 4, entitled "Involving community actors in monitoring and evaluation activities," several key concepts and simple tools are discussed which can be used along with the core methodology to ensure greater community responsibility for monitoring and evaluating community activities on an ongoing basis.

B. Organization of the manual

This manual provides readers with practical guidelines for carrying out a participatory evaluation. For those who are thinking of carrying out such an evaluation it is **strongly recommended** that you carefully read chapters one through five before you start planning and budgeting for the activity.

In chapters I and II a number of concepts about participatory approaches to evaluation are presented which are important background information for deciding if and how you might use the participatory methodology. In the first chapter you will find a glossary of terms. In the second chapter there is discussion of how participatory evaluation differs from other approaches, of who should be involved in such an evaluation and on why the evaluation process focuses on formulating lessons learned for future programming.

In Chapter III there is a description of each of the 20 steps to be followed in planning and carrying out the participatory evaluation process including who is involved at each step, how they are involved and what the outcome of each step is. Each step is illustrated with examples of what was done in an evaluation of a community nutrition project implemented by one of Catholic Relief Services' partner organizations in The Gambia in West Africa.

Chapter IV includes conclusions regarding the use of a participatory methodology. The participatory methodology proposed here could be very effective; however, it is not a simple task. The success of the activity depends upon careful planning, and on the availability of key human and other resources.

In Chapter V a series of caveats related to the use of the participatory methodology are enumerated.

In Chapter VI, there is a discussion on how community actors can be involved in monitoring and evaluating community health projects or programs. It is not recommended that community members be involved in the 20-step participatory evaluation methodology presented in the earlier chapters. Alternative ways in which community members can participate in M&E activities are presented in this chapter. This includes discussion of Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) activities that can be used as M&E tools. These alternative methods can be used either with or by communities themselves to complement data collection and analysis carried out using the comprehensive 20-step evaluation methodology.

For those who want to read more about qualitative data collection and analysis, participatory training and evaluation, Chapter VII includes a list of practical references, which should be easy to find in either North America or Europe.

C. Glossary of terms

In this manual, a number of terms are used which can be defined in different ways. For the purpose of this discussion, these terms have been defined in this short glossary.

Blueprint approach (to evaluation): A top-down approach to evaluation, which measures program accomplishments against program objectives, defined in the original program "blueprint."

Closed questions: Questions that elicit a short, often yes or no, response. These questions do not usually require the respondent to think at length before answering.

Content analysis: The basic approach to data analysis in qualitative research. In this approach the responses of an individual or a group are organized according to the categories identified in the responses themselves through a discovery process.

Data collection: The collection of quantitative and/or qualitative information through the use of various techniques in order to answer questions of importance to the evaluation or study.

Double-barreled questions: Questions that ask two different things at the same time. For example, "What do you think about the training and supervision you received?" Such questions should be avoided in interviewing.

Evaluation questions: The questions about the program which stakeholders/evaluation team members want to find answers to during the course of the evaluation. These should not be confused with "interview questions."

Impact evaluation: A type of program evaluation that aims to determine if there have been changes in the target group members or in their activities because of the program.

Interview questions: The actual questions asked of interviewees during either individual or group interviews.

Iterative process: A spiral-like process in which experience or knowledge is acquired, reviewed, modified, applied, etc., in an ongoing fashion.

Leading questions: Questions that are formulated in such a way that they suggest the answer sought. For example, the question, "Would you agree that the training was well done?" suggests to the respondent that he/she should answer affirmatively.

Learning Process Approach (to evaluation): An approach to evaluation which focuses on developing lessons for future program implementation based on the analysis of program accomplishments and constraints.

Lessons learned: Based on both accomplishments and difficulties in program implementation identified in a program evaluation, lessons which are developed to improve the program in the future.

Methodology: A series of defined steps which are followed in carrying out a given task, for example, a program planning methodology or a program evaluation methodology.

Monitoring: Systematic and ongoing documentation and analysis of the program activities with the goal of improving how the activities are being implemented.

Objective perspective: The perspective of someone who is outside the community, organization or program who has a relatively unbiased view of community, organizational or program accomplishments, problems, needs, etc.

Open-ended questions: Questions that elicit in-depth detailed responses from interviewees. This type of question is extensively used in qualitative data collection.

Outcome evaluation: A type of program evaluation, which aims to assess program achievements, compared to planned objectives and activities. This type of evaluation focuses, in quantitative terms, on how many objectives and activities were accomplished.

Probing questions: Following a respondent answer, follow-up questions which are used to elicit additional or more detailed information relative to the original answer.

Process evaluation: A type of program evaluation which focuses on trying to understand how program activities were implemented, primarily in qualitative terms. It can, however, include the collection of some quantitative information. Process evaluations seek to determine what approaches were used, what problems were encountered, what strategies were successful and why.

Program evaluation: The analysis of a program's strategies, implementation and outcomes in order to determine how to improve program effectiveness. Evaluations can be carried out during or at the end of a program.

Purposeful sampling: The selection of a sample of people/interviewees who have certain characteristics or knowledge of interest to the researcher or evaluator.

Qualitative data collection: The collection of in-depth information, which reflects "insiders" attitudes, values or priorities, regarding the topics of interest. Results consist of descriptive information that explains patterns or trends in beliefs, attitudes, etc.

Quantitative data collection: The collection of succinct information on various predetermined variables or factors in order to determine their frequency or magnitude. Results are presented as numbers or percentages.

Random sampling: The selection of a sample of people/interviewees who are representative of the whole population. Data collection from a random sample of people allows the researcher to generalize the study findings to the entire population.

RAP (Rapid Assessment Procedures): The use of primarily qualitative, semi-structured data collection techniques to collect information in a short period of time on community knowledge and practices related to health and nutrition. The approach was developed by anthropologists working in public health programs. It is similar to RRA although RAP is used specifically in health and nutrition.

RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal): An approach to collecting information at the community level which involves the use of a variety of data collection techniques intended to help program implementers rapidly and progressively learn about community knowledge and practices. The approach was developed in the fields of agriculture and rural development in the l980's.

Secondary data source: Information which is collected from an already existing source such as reports, registers, files, etc. This is in contrast with information that is collected directly through interviews, observations, etc.

Stakeholders: Persons who have a stake in an evaluation and who will potentially use the evaluation findings to make decisions regarding program strategies and/or implementation.

Subjective perspective: The perspective of someone who is inside the community, organization or program whose view of values, problems and needs is influenced or biased by the fact that he/she is part of that community, organization or program.

CHAPTER II

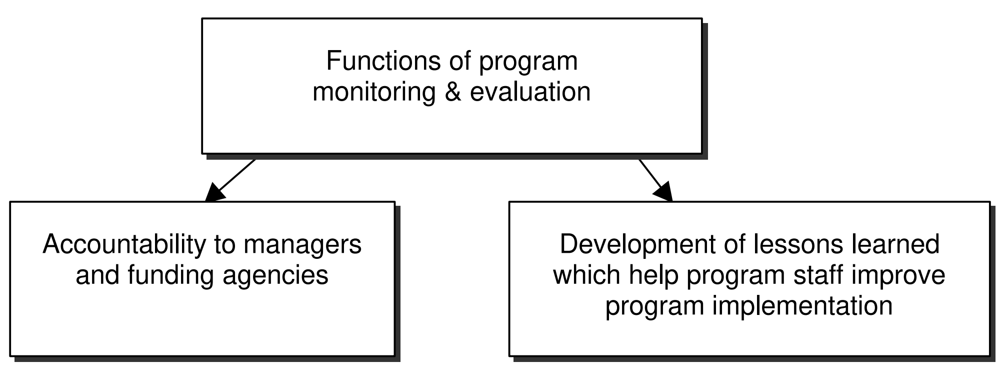
A Participatory Approach to Evaluation: Concepts and Alternatives

In years past, evaluation activities were not systematically included in development programs. Today an evaluation component is included in most, but not all, programs.

Most program managers or coordinators agree that evaluations are both necessary and important to help them make good decisions regarding how program strategies can be strengthened. However, evaluations often do not respond to their expectations. Often, sophisticated evaluation methods are used which mystify the evaluation process and alienate program staff. A widespread problem everywhere in the world is the under utilization of evaluation results.

A. Functions of monitoring and evaluation

Program evaluations should fulfill two important functions. First, the results of a program evaluation should provide information to program managers and funding agencies regarding how resources have been used, whether program objectives have been met and planned activities have been carried out. Secondly, an evaluation should lead to the development of lessons that will help program staff improve program implementation in the future. Many evaluations provide information for accountability purposes but do not generate lessons for the future.



There are multitudes of ways that a program evaluation can be carried out. Program managers must choose the approach which best fits their needs. Choosing the most appropriate evaluation methodology involves consideration of several key issues.

- Who should be involved in conducting the evaluation?
- Is an outcome evaluation or a process evaluation required?
- Should the priority be to identify weaknesses or to develop lessons for the future?

Let us look at some of the differences between how these three questions are answered in a traditional approach to evaluation and in a participatory approach.

B. Blueprint or Learning Process approach: Two ways of approaching program evaluation

The Learning Process Approach to Program Implementation

The methodological approach to evaluation presented in this manual is based on the idea of a "learning process approach" to program implementation. This approach differs significantly from a "blueprint approach" to program implementation that is the traditional and still most widely used approach. In the two approaches to program implementation, the orientation to program monitoring and evaluation is fundamentally different. It is important to understand the differences between the two and why this methodology is based on the learning process approach.

The Blueprint Approach

In the traditional "blueprint approach" to program planning, program objectives and activities are defined at the outset in a "blueprint" which defines how the program should be implemented. Based on the blueprint, an implementation calendar is developed. Monitoring and evaluating the plan consists primarily of determining the extent to which the activities and objectives were accomplished on time. Primarily **quantitative information** is collected in order to verify the number of activities accomplished. For example, information could be collected on the "number of health workers trained" and the "number of community meetings held" compared with the number planned. In this approach, there is no structured system for understanding why activities were accomplished or not, nor how they were carried out. Neither is there a system for providing feedback to the program plan, nor blueprint, in order to modify it in cases where changes could improve program functioning. Another characteristic of this approach is that program managers usually have lead responsibility for ensuring program monitoring and evaluation. The outputs of these activities allow them to report to their superiors on progress toward blueprint goals.

The Learning Process Approach

An alternative approach to program planning and implementation, which has generally been found to be both more appropriate and effective in development programs, is the "learning process approach." In this approach, as in the blueprint approach, project objectives and activities are defined at the outset and an initial implementation calendar is developed. In this case, monitoring and evaluation activities are concerned not only with the extent to which the planned activities are carried out but also with **how** they are carried out. In this approach, mechanisms are developed to help program staff learn from both the successes and problems encountered in implementing the activities in order to improve the program in the future. For example, in a monitoring or evaluation activity it would be important to know not only how many community meetings were held but also to identify both the successful and problematic aspects of those meetings. This would allow program staff to identify ways to improve future meetings. In this approach, monitoring and evaluation activities involve the collection of important **quantitative information** but priority is given to the collection of **qualitative information,** which describes the process involved in carrying out each type of activity. For example, information might be collected on the "number of health workers trained" but also on the "quality of the training," on the "feedback from trainees on the usefulness of the training content" and on "how trainees are using what they were taught" in their work with communities.

Based upon the information collected, "lessons learned" are formulated which are fed back into the program plan. Modifications in program activities and strategies can continuously be made based upon the lessons, which are formulated during the entire period of program implementation. In this approach, not only program managers, but also all levels of program staff are involved in program monitoring and evaluation. Program field staff and community actors have a particularly important role to play in providing their observations regarding the activities being implemented and their suggestions of how to improve them. Lessons that are developed by program staff can help program managers make better decisions about how to adjust the program strategy, activities and budget.

The chart below summarizes some of the key differences between the "blueprint" and "learning process" approaches to program evaluation related to the purpose of the evaluation; the scope of data collection; data collection methods used; and responsibility for data collection.

"Blueprint" and "Learning Process" Approaches to Program Evaluation...		
	"Blueprint" approach	***"Learning Process" approach***
Purpose of Evaluation	- to measure progress relative to program "blueprint"	- to measure quantitative achievements - to develop lessons learned to be integrated into program plan
Scope of data collection	- limited no. of variables related to blueprint targets	- holistic analysis - additional dimensions, questions emerge through the iterative learning process
Data collection methods	- quantitative - objective assessment	- qualitative and quantitative - "subjective" judgement
Responsibility for data collection	- external evaluators and/or program managers	- program stakeholders (program managers and implementers)

As stated above, the evaluation methodology presented in this manual is based on a "learning process approach" to program implementation. The practical implications of this approach will be spelled out in the following pages. Perhaps the two most important facets of the methodology are the **involvement of program stakeholders** in all steps in the evaluation process and the focus of the evaluation on the **development of lessons learned** which are translated into an action plan.

C. Who should be involved in conducting the evaluation?

The Expert-Driven Approach

In the **expert-driven approach** to program evaluation, one or more outside evaluators are given full responsibility for conducting the evaluation including: defining evaluation objectives; designing the evaluation methodology; collecting and analyzing information; and formulating their own conclusions and recommendations about the program. Many people believe that the use of outside evaluators assures that the evaluation will be more "objective."

In many cases, however, when responsibility for program evaluation is delegated to outside evaluation "specialists" they adopt a top-down, doctor-patient relationship with program staff. Often program staff is excluded from the process and the aura of secrecy which this creates, can make them feel suspicious and uncomfortable. The use of sophisticated data collection and analysis techniques reinforces the idea that the program must depend on an evaluation expert to carry out the exercise. Frequently, evaluation results are not easily understood by program personnel, nor readily applicable to their work. All of these factors can contribute to program staff's disinterest and even alienation from an evaluation activity.

In more traditional approaches to evaluation, evaluation "experts" often reject the involvement of program staff in the evaluation of their own programs. In many cases, when responsibility is delegated to evaluation experts to define the orientation of an evaluation, program staff resents being excluded and, therefore, either ignores or criticizes "the evaluators' findings and recommendations."

The Participatory Approach

In a **participatory approach** to program evaluation, an evaluation coordinator, often from outside the program or organization, works in partnership **with** program "stakeholders" in all phases of the evaluation process. Program stakeholders are those individuals who have a stake in how the evaluation comes out. They are persons who will later make decisions and use the information generated by the evaluation.

Exactly who the program stakeholders are will vary from one situation, or evaluation, to another. In each instance evaluation planners will have to decide who the appropriate stakeholders are and to what extent some or all of them should be involved. Involving a larger rather than smaller number of people is not necessarily better. Also, it is important to remember that not all stakeholders will be interested or able to participate in this time-consuming exercise.

In a participatory approach the evaluation coordinator collaborates with program "stakeholders" to define the evaluation objectives, to develop the evaluation methodology, to collect and interpret information and to develop conclusions and recommendations. In this approach, the evaluation coordinator's role is not only to structure and facilitate each step in the evaluation process but also to contribute as a full member of the evaluation team.

In the participatory approach, the role of the stakeholders is: to share their experiences working with the program; to participate in collecting additional information about program implementation; to work with the evaluation team to analyze both the data collected and the experiences described; and to formulate conclusions about the program strategy and outcomes. In this approach, it is assumed that the quality of the evaluation will be better if the results reflect both the **subjective** perspective of program implementers and the more **objective** perspective of an outside evaluator.

A participatory evaluation is based on the assumption that the stakeholders' involvement will help ensure that the evaluation addresses the appropriate issues and will give them a sense of ownership over the evaluation results. It has been shown that stakeholder involvement also leads to greater use of evaluation results by program decision-makers and implementers. In addition, the participatory approach constitutes a learning experience for the program stakeholders who are involved. It reinforces their skills in program evaluation. In addition, it increases their understanding of their own program strategy, its strengths and weaknesses. Another benefit of the participatory evaluation is that the interactive evaluation process itself can contribute to improved communication between program actors who are working at different levels of program implementation.

D. Outcome evaluation or process evaluation?

Outcome Evaluation

The need for program evaluation originally grew out of the demands of funding agencies for **accountability** on the part of program implementers. Evaluations have traditionally focused on assessing the quantifiable outcomes of program implementation (for example, the number of training sessions conducted, or the number of latrines built). **Outcome evaluations** are widely used primarily to investigate how many of the planned activities were carried out. However, program managers and funding agencies alike have increasingly realized that it is not sufficient to know only the numbers of activities carried out. In keeping with a learning process perspective, there is increasing concern that evaluations should also reveal, in more qualitative ways, the successes and problems encountered in the implementation process.

> Just because you can quantify something doesn't mean you understand it.

Process Evaluation

In contrast to outcome evaluation, process evaluation focuses on the program implementation process in order to analyze how things have been done and decide how they can be improved. For example, how were the various activities carried out? What problems were encountered in conducting the training sessions and how were they overcome? What are the perceptions of field staff and of community members regarding latrine usage? In a process evaluation, quantitative information can be collected on the numbers of activities carried out but the emphasis is on gathering qualitative information.

The orientation of the participatory evaluation methodology presented in this manual is that of a process evaluation of a program. The proposed methodology is intended to produce results, which respond to the information needs of program managers, funders and field staff regarding the implementation of a project or program. Program managers must decide, at the outset, whether they want to carry out an outcome evaluation, a process evaluation or both.

E. Focus on problems or on lessons learned?

Identifying Problems

For many people, the purpose of a program evaluation is to discover what is not working correctly. Many evaluations focus, therefore, on identifying inadequacies and weaknesses in program implementation. Given the nature of development programs, they are all fraught with inadequacies and weaknesses. An evaluation that dissects and then reports on such problems is of value although it usually leaves program staff feeling discouraged and it may not help them to know what to do next.

Developing Lessons Learned

The participatory evaluation methodology described in this manual includes the identification of implementation problems but emphasizes the development of lessons learned based both on the problematic and successful aspects of the program implementation process. From beginning to end the orientation of the evaluation methodology exercise addresses the question "What can we learn from what we have already accomplished in order to improve the program in the future?"

Principles of Participatory Evaluation
1. Program implementers can make a critical contribution to the evaluation process based on their experience with the program. 2. The primary focus of program evaluation should not be on identifying problems and inadequacies but rather on formulating lessons learned for use in the future based both on the successes and constraints. 3. The participatory evaluation process can contribute to improved communication between program staff at different levels of program implementation.

CHAPTER III

Planning and Conducting a Participatory Evaluation: The Steps to Follow

In this chapter the steps to follow in planning and conducting a participatory evaluation are presented. The participatory evaluation methodology consists of seven phases, each consisting of several steps.

Phases in the Methodology	
Phase I:	Preplanning meetings
Phase II:	Evaluation planning workshop
Phase III:	Fieldwork: Preparation, data collection and analysis
Phase IV:	Workshop to formulate lessons learned
Phase V:	Summarize evaluation results
Phase VI:	Development of an action plan
Phase VII:	Finalization and dissemination of the evaluation report

On the next page, Table 1 shows the phases and steps, from start to finish, in the participatory evaluation process. Although the steps in the methodology are presented as a sequence from 1 to 20, in some cases the implementation of the steps resembles a spiral more than a straight line. For example, in Step 3 the logistical planning, begins but it cannot be completed until Step 9 when the sample of interviewees is finalized.

In this chapter each of the steps in the methodology will be described and illustrated with examples from a participatory evaluation of a community nutrition education project which was implemented in The Gambia by the Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA). GAFNA is one of CRS' partner organizations in The Gambia.

TABLE 1: Steps In Participatory, Stakeholder-Driven Evaluation	
Phase I: Preplanning meetings (Evaluation Coordinating Group)	**Step 1:** Define evaluation goal & objectives
	Step 2: Identify Evaluation Team members
	Step 3: Plan logistical & administrative arrangements
	Step 4: Develop visual framework of the project
	Step 5: Orient evaluation planning workshop facilitators
Phase II: Evaluation planning Workshop (Evaluation Team)	**Step 6:** Organize stakeholders into a working group
	Step 7: Define evaluation questions
	Step 8: Identify data collection sources and techniques
	Step 9: Develop data collection instruments
	Step I0: Finalize sample of data collection sites & interviewees
Phase III: Fieldwork: preparation, data collection & analysis (Fieldwork Team(s))	**Step 11:** Prepare fieldwork teams: Data collection techniques and logistics
	Step 12: Conduct interviews & observations
	Step 13: Analyze information collected
	Step 14: Summarize fieldwork findings
Phase IV: Workshop to formulate lessons learned (Evaluation Team)	**Step 15:** Formulate lessons learned for each evaluation question
	Step 16: Team assessment of the evaluation process
Phase V: Summarize evaluation results (Evaluation Coordinating Group)	**Step 17:** Summarize evaluation findings & lessons learned
Phase VI: Development of an Action Plan (Key program stakeholders)	**Step 18:** Develop an action plan based on evaluation findings
Phase VII: Finalization, dissemination & discussion of evaluation Report (Evaluation Coordinator & Evaluation Coordinating Group)	**Step 19:** Write evaluation report
	Step 20: Distribute and discuss evaluation results with program stakeholders

Aubel: 1999

Who is involved in the evaluation process?

There are a number of different individuals and groups who will be involved in the evaluation process. The composition and the roles of each are summarized below.

Evaluation Coordinating Group: A small group (2-5 persons) which ensures the overall coordination of the evaluation from beginning to end. In Phase I they are responsible for all of the initial logistical and methodological planning. During Phase II they should assist with all logistical arrangements and materials. During the fieldwork, Phase III, they serve as team coordinators for the data collection and analysis. In Phases IV-VI they should provide support as needed.

Evaluation Team: This refers to the entire group of program stakeholders who are involved in Phase II to develop the evaluation methodology, and in Phase IV to study the evaluation findings and develop the lessons learned. The team will probably consist of between 10 and 15 people. In cases where the evaluation team is relatively small (10-12 people), it may be possible for all of them to be included in the fieldwork teams. Where the evaluation team is larger, the Fieldwork Teams (Phase III) will probably be made up of a portion of the evaluation team members.

Fieldwork Teams: One or more teams of stakeholders who are responsible for collecting and analyzing data collected during fieldwork interviews and observations. They are a sub-group of the Evaluation Team members.

Fieldwork Team Leaders: During Phase III, each Fieldwork team requires a strong team leader. If possible those chosen should have experience with qualitative data collection and analysis. Most importantly they should have strong facilitation and organizational skills to help team members carry out the fieldwork tasks in a timely and effective fashion.

Evaluation Coordinator: Someone who has experience in qualitative evaluation methods, in group dynamics and training, and in the technical content area/s of the program to be evaluated. He/she designs and has primary responsibility for facilitating all steps in the evaluation process.

Logistics and Materials Coordinator: In order to plan and coordinate all aspects related to materials, transport, lodging, logistics etc., a Logistics and Materials Coordinator is required. These tasks are a key to the success of the evaluation. They should not be the responsibility of the Evaluation Coordinator who needs to be able to focus all of his/her energies on the technical aspects of the work.

Phase I: Preplanning Meetings

In the first phase of the evaluation process, the evaluation coordinator meets with the project managers and other persons who will be involved in the coordination of the entire evaluation activity. In a series of meetings, the Evaluation Coordinating Group is responsible for defining and developing key elements related to the first five steps in the evaluation process.

In order to determine whom you should include in the Evaluation Coordinating Group (ECG), re-read the description of the role of the ECG on the previous page. You may decide that all members of the ECG do not need to participate in all five steps included in this phase.

Evaluation Coordinating Group Members in the GAFNA Evaluation
• Nutrition Education Project Manager
• GAFNA Nutrition Coordinator
• CRS Title II Coordinator
• Health Education Unit Chief from the MOH
• Evaluation Coordinator

You can estimate that it will take 3 full days of meetings to deal with Steps l-4 if you have a strong facilitator to keep things on track. In past experiences it has often taken longer. Steps l-3 should be discussed and developed at least 1 month before the Evaluation Planning Workshop so that many of the logistical items, including the choice and invitation of evaluation team members can be done ahead of time. Step 4 should ideally be completed a week ahead of the Phase II planning workshop. For Step 5 a one-day meeting should be planned to orient the evaluation facilitators.

Phase I: Pre Planning Meetings
Step I: Define evaluation goal & objectives
Step 2: Identify evaluation team members (stakeholders)
Step 3: Plan logistical and administrative arrangements
Step 4: Develop visual framework of the project
Step 5: Orient evaluation planning workshop facilitators

Step I: Define evaluation goal and objectives

The initial step in the evaluation process is to define the goal and objectives of the evaluation. It is important that the managers of the program to be evaluated be involved in this task to ensure that the goal and objectives meet their expectations.

One broad goal should be defined which reflects the overall aim of the evaluation. The wording of the goal should be concise and simple so that whoever reads it will clearly understand the main aim of the evaluation. In the GAFNA evaluation the Coordinating Group defined the following goal for evaluation:

to assess the nutrition education strategy and accomplishments in order to develop lessons learned for future community nutrition education activities and to develop a nutrition education action plan

Based on the evaluation goal, several evaluation objectives should be formulated which define the main expectations of the evaluation. The objectives can address both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the program, learning objectives for participants and the evaluation process itself.

Objectives of the GAFNA Evaluation
1. to assess the appropriateness of the nutrition education strategy 2. to identify the accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the nutrition education project activities 3. to reinforce the knowledge and skills of project implementers and collaborators in conducting participatory evaluations 4. to assess the usefulness of the participatory evaluation methodology for evaluating community-based health and nutrition interventions

The Evaluation Coordinating Group should be responsible for defining the goal and objectives. Just because the evaluation is participatory does not mean that everyone needs to participate in everything. An experience from another evaluation of a community project carried out in the Ivory Coast suggests why everyone need not be involved in this task.

> ***"Everyone need not participate in everything"***
> In the evaluation of a health education project in the Ivory Coast the Evaluation Coordinating Group decided to involve all of the Evaluation Team members in defining the evaluation goal and objectives. They thought this would be a more democratic approach. Involving all 22 evaluation team members in this task turned out to be extremely time-consuming, as it was very difficult to reach a consensus. ECG members concluded that it was not a good idea to involve everyone at this step in the process.

I strongly recommend that the ECG develop the evaluation goal and objectives on their own. When the goal and objectives are presented to the evaluation team (in Step 6) suggestions can be taken to amend the goal and objectives if necessary.

The GAFNA goal and objectives clearly reflect the idea that an evaluation can be both a "learning process" and a "staff development" exercise. In Step 7, based upon the evaluation objectives defined here, the specific questions that the evaluation should answer will be defined.

Step 2: Identify evaluation team members

Determination of the composition of the evaluation team should be based first, upon the knowledge and skills required to plan and conduct the evaluation, and secondly, on the project/program's staff development priorities. Four types of knowledge and skills should be represented on the team: l) in-depth experience with the program to be evaluated; 2) experience with qualitative data collection methods; 3) team-building and group facilitation skills; 4) skills in planning and managing logistical arrangements for field activities. Evaluation team members should include individuals who are involved at different levels of program implementation.

> Members of the evaluation team should be chosen based either on what they can contribute to the process and/or on what they can learn from it.

Table 2 summarizes the types of knowledge and skills required amongst the team members and their respective responsibilities. Team members should include the project/program managers; program field staff; collaborators from government or NGOs; a logistics coordinator, and the evaluation coordinator. In some cases it will be appropriate to include persons from other ministries or NGOs who have not been involved in the program but who have experience in the sector addressed by the program.

Table 2: Composition and Responsibilities of the Evaluation Team

Knowledge/skills required	Who is responsible?	Responsibilities
In-depth experience with the program to be evaluated	• Program managers • Program field staff • Collaboration from government NGOs	• define evaluation questions • participate in data collection & analysis • contribute to report writing
Experience with process evaluations and qualitative data collection methods	• Evaluation coordinator	• plan & coordinate evaluation methodology • participate in and supervise data & analysis • coordinate report writing
Team-building and group facilitation skills during planning and fieldwork phases	• Evaluation coordinator • Fieldwork team leaders	• develop spirit of collaboration and sharing amongst team members • facilitate daily data analysis sessions
Planning & managing logistical arrangements for field activities and material resources for the study	• Program staff member (logistics coordinator)	• Prepare budget for training, field, and report work production • Arrange logistical aspects of field\work • Procure materials necessary for the evaluation

Program managers

Program managers have an in-depth understanding of their program and its priorities. To assure that the results of the evaluation correspond with their information needs they should be full-time members of the evaluation team. Ideally, all team members, including the program manager/s should participate in all phases of evaluation planning and implementation. It is particularly critical that the manager/s participate in Phases I, II, IV, and VI. Experience has shown that the degree to which program manager's participate in the evaluation process is related to the degree of *ownership* which they develop for the evaluation and to their commitment to using the results of the evaluation.

Evaluation coordinator

The team should include an “evaluation coordinator” who has experience with conducting process evaluations and with qualitative data collection methods. In addition, he/she must be committed to involving program staff in the evaluation process and have skills in team-building and group facilitation. Not all evaluation consultants either believe in a participatory approach to evaluation nor have the skills to effectively involve staff in the process. It is suggested that from the start this person be referred to the “coordinator” rather than the “evaluator,” to help participants view him/her as a "facilitator" rather than as a "policeman."

The “evaluation coordinator” is responsible for: coordinating all of the methodological aspects of the study; participating directly in the data collection; supervising the other team members; facilitating the analysis of the data; and coordinating the preparation of the final report.

Program field staff

The evaluation team should also include program field staff who have been directly involved in implementing program activities. The special knowledge, which such individuals can contribute to the evaluation, is an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the day-to-day implementation of the program activities that the program manager/s usually do not have. Their subjective insights will be invaluable to the team as the assessment of the program proceeds. Their experience will also be critical to the development of lessons learned for the future.

Logistics coordinator

One or more program staff members should be chosen to coordinate the logistical arrangements for both the preparatory and fieldwork phases. This requires someone who knows how to systematically plan activities, to estimate the resources required for each activity, and to assure that the necessary resources are available at the correct time and place. The logistics coordinator should be actively involved in the initial planning meetings to ensure that he/she has a good grasp of the logistical requirements for Phases II through VII.

Evaluation team members

In The Gambia, Evaluation Team members included 22 individuals who had been involved with program implementation at different levels and other key program collaborators.

GAFNA Evaluation Team Members
• GAFNA central and provincial level project staff • Two GAFNA project managers • Health education and nutrition staff from the MOH • Ministry of Agriculture field staff • Community health nurses • CRS Program Manager • Evaluation Coordinator

Step 3: Plan logistical and administrative arrangements

The success of any evaluation depends, to a great extent, on advanced and careful logistical and administrative planning. It is important to avoid the error of focusing on preparing the methodological aspects of the evaluation and giving insufficient attention to the logistical and administrative arrangements.

For this reason, a Logistics and Materials Coordinator should be identified. However, it is important that the Evaluation Coordinator review the logistical plans made to ensure they are appropriate, given the methodological aspects of the evaluation defined by the ECG. For example, the Logistics Coordinator needs to be informed of the field visit activities in order to know: which nights will be spent by how many people at each site; and exactly what type of stationery supplies are required for data collection and analysis.

Planning and supervising all of the logistical arrangements is time-consuming. As much as possible the program manager should delegate these tasks to someone else so that he/she can focus on the methodological aspects of Phases I through VII.

Once the logistics coordinator is identified, he/she should begin the logistical and administrative planning. Planning should begin approximately one month before the Evaluation Planning Workshop is to take place. The planning should progressively be completed by Step l0 when the fieldwork schedule is finalized.

The logistical and administrative planning include: choice of data collection sites; determination of number of fieldwork teams and members of each; choice of fieldwork team leaders; preparation of a budget for all materials and fieldwork expenses; purchase of materials for the training, fieldwork, report writing and duplication; planning lodging and meals locations for the fieldwork period; arrangements for vehicles, drivers and petrol; administrative procedures to inform provincial level authorities of the activity and to elicit their collaboration. The logistical coordinator may accompany one of the field teams during the fieldwork, and/or delegate this responsibility to one person on each of the other teams, to assure all logistical arrangements.

A useful tool for scheduling these practical aspects of the evaluation is an "Evaluation Activity Schedule." Such a schedule can be developed in chart form by listing all of the specific activities or tasks, which must be carried out during the 7 phases of the evaluation. In another column, the material resources required for each activity can be listed, followed by the date by which the task must be completed.

Evaluation Planning Schedule		
Tasks	**Resources Needed**	**Completion Date**
1. Prepare list of materials needed for fieldwork.		June 1
2. Reserve field site lodging by phone.		June 5
3. Send letters to confirm lodging	Secretary	June 10
4. Purchase all fieldwork materials	Purchase order for each store	June 20

Given the need to begin planning for the fieldwork as early as possible, at this stage there should be preliminary discussion of the regions and sites at which data collection will be carried out. This will allow the logistics coordinator to proceed with the planning for the fieldwork period. Details of the field data collection will progressively be determined and finalized in steps 8,l0 and ll.

An important tool for the determination of the fieldwork sites is a map, which shows all of the potential data collection areas. (If a printed map is not readily available a simple sketch of the country/provinces can be drawn on flipchart paper.)

The evaluation coordinating group should define the criteria for the choice of data collection zones and sites based upon three types of considerations: programmatic; methodological; and logistical.

Programmatic considerations which might influence the choice of data collection sites could be, for example, the location of the program activities, or the fact that the same activities were not carried out at all program sites.

Methodological considerations are related mainly to the nature of sampling in qualitative studies, i.e. purposeful sampling (discussed below).

Logistical considerations that would influence the choice of the data collection sights are numerous: the number of fieldwork teams; the distance and time to and between potential data collection sites; climatic and road conditions; the time available for the fieldwork phase of the evaluation. Sites which are the farthest away and the most difficult and time-consuming to get to should not be systematically eliminated from the sample. In many evaluations there is a tendency to exclude sites which are further from the capital city, further from the paved road and accessible by poorer roads. This tendency should be avoided as much as possible.

Obviously, the availability of human and material resources for the evaluation will influence the sample size and the choice of interview sites. The availability of the various team members and of the financial resources necessary to assure their involvement in the study, will determine the length of time the evaluation can last, the number of sites that can be visited, and the number of interviews that can be conducted.

The purposeful sample

As stated above, in a process evaluation, data collection is primarily qualitative. An important methodological consideration, therefore, is the nature of sampling in qualitative research. In a qualitative evaluation, the data collection sites do not need to be randomly chosen as is required in most quantitative studies. Rather, a purposeful sample is chosen based on certain criteria. The choice of a purposeful sample first involves defining the characteristics of the sites or type of persons to be interviewed. Based upon these characteristics, any sites or persons having those characteristics can be included in the sample. For example, if it is decided to include in the sample two "communities, which have provided little support for project activities," in purposeful sampling any two communities, which fit that description, could be chosen.

The determination of the data collection sites can be a time-consuming process given the variety of considerations that have to be taken into account. The initial plan will undoubtedly be revised several times before it is finalized. As suggested above, it is helpful to make a simple map on which the data collection sites can be plotted.

Step 4: Develop visual framework of the program/project

The evaluation team members need to have a common understanding of the aspects or elements of the program strategy to be examined in the evaluation. In this step, the Evaluation Coordinating Group develops a visual project framework, usually in the form of a chart, which defines the scope of the evaluation. The involvement of the program managers in this task is of critical importance to ensure that the elements, which are either included or excluded from the framework, reflect program managers' priorities.

The framework, or "project map" should include the program or project goal, objectives and activities included in the strategy. In addition, it should include the underlying concepts or assumptions adopted in the program strategy such as "community management of project activities" or "participatory training methodologies."

Development of the framework serves several purposes. It requires the coordinating group to clarify the initial program strategy and components and, as such, is a first step toward defining the scope of the evaluation. The available program documents should be used to prepare the chart. The preparation of the framework involves a decision-making process to decide what should and should not be included in the framework and, hence, in the evaluation. The framework will be an important tool for communicating with the other evaluation team members who will need to have a common understanding of the scope of the evaluation.

The framework should be copied onto flipchart paper and also photocopied on A4 paper, so that a copy can be distributed to each team member during Phase II.

The GAFNA Experience
The development of the framework turned out to be a time-consuming task. Although many project documents existed, some elements of the strategy were not written down and had to be reconstituted by those members of the Evaluation Coordinating Group, who had been involved since the outset of the project. A portion of the framework developed by the group is presented in Table 3, "Nutrition Education Pilot Campaign Project Framework."

Table 3: A Portion of the GAFNA Nutrition Education Project Framework

Goals and objectives	Project strategy
Goal: To design and disseminate appropriate nutrition education messages as part of a maternal and child nutrition intervention **Objectives:** To investigate the effectiveness of different communication methods for the dissemination of nutrition education To promote a positive change in mothers' knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding the nutrition of pregnant and lactating mothers and young children through the diffusion of three messages To familiarize Community Health Nurses and village-based traditional communicators with common problems related to maternal and child feeding practices and possible solutions.	**Concept:** Interactive participatory education methods contribute to greater learning **Activities:** - group discussions, role plays and cooking demonstrations conducted by Community Health Nurses - songs and group discussions conducted by traditional communicators - educational activities conducted by traditional communicators and Community Health Nurses **Concepts:** - Nutrition education content should take into account cultural beliefs and practices. - Nutrition education strategy should promote changes in individual knowledge and practices **Activities:** - conduct a review of available studies on infant feeding and maternal nutrition - identify three priority nutrition messages - develop three songs (one for each message) - develop a nutrition education manual for community Health Nurses - conduct baseline survey in pilot villages in three regions

It is hard to estimate how long it will take to develop the framework. It will depend in part on whether all of the necessary information on the program is readily available or not. In the last evaluation I facilitated it took at least 1 1/2 days to complete the framework. Some of the information on the program activities that needed to be included in the framework was not written down anywhere and, in addition, different ECG members had different interpretations of those activities.

Developing the framework is probably more difficult than you imagine. Plan to do it ahead of time. You may be in real trouble if you leave this task until the day before the evaluation planning workshop starts and you find that there isn't time to do a good job.

Step 5: Orient evaluation planning workshop facilitators

During the Evaluation Planning Workshop many of the sessions will require small group facilitators. Likewise, during the fieldwork period in Phase III each field team will require a team leader who has strong group facilitation skills. In most cases, the most likely persons to choose to both facilitate workshop exercises and to lead the fieldwork teams will be members of the Evaluation Coordinating Group. Four or five facilitators will be required for the workshop and depending on the number of fieldwork teams, a leader will be required for each one.

A one-day orientation session should be carried out with the facilitators and team leaders to address several topics: review of key facilitator strategies for channeling participants' contributions during small group work; discussion of the small group tasks planned for the Phase II workshop; plans for the fieldwork period (See Steps 11-14); and discussion of the approach to be adopted by the field teams for daily analysis of the data collected.

The most challenging and time-consuming topic to be dealt with is the last on the list, related to the daily data analysis. During the orientation session, the information provided in Step 13 on the aspects and steps to be followed in analyzing the qualitative data should be reviewed and if possible, a practical exercise should be done with the designated field team leaders.

Phase II: Evaluation Planning Workshop

The second phase in the participatory evaluation methodology consists of the "Evaluation Planning Workshop". All of the Evaluation Team members identified in Step 2 should participate in this 4-5 day workshop. During the workshop the team members are first introduced to the basic concepts of participatory program evaluation and secondly, they actually develop key elements of the methodology which will be used in the evaluation. The workshop should last a minimum of 4 days and preferably 5. During the workshop Steps 6-10 should be addressed.

This phase does not include the preparation of the field teams for the data collection and analysis. That will take place at the beginning of Phase III. In many cases only a sub-group of the evaluation team members will be involved in the fieldwork and, therefore, the entire Evaluation Team need not participate in this preparation.

Phase II: Evaluation Planning Workshop	
Step 6:	Organize project stakeholders into an effective team
Step 7:	Define evaluation questions
Step 8:	Identify data collection techniques
Step 9:	Develop data collection instruments
Step 10:	Finalize sample of data collection sites and interviewees

The planning workshop must be carefully planned based upon clear workshop objectives. At least a week before the workshop is to begin, the evaluation coordinator should draft a set of objectives that should be discussed and revised as necessary with the program manager and/or Evaluation Coordinating Group members.

Don't confuse the "Evaluation Planning Workshop objectives" with the "evaluation goal and objectives" (developed in Step l). People sometimes confuse the two. The objectives for the workshop define what needs to be accomplished during the 4-5 day planning workshop.

The GAFNA Experience
Evaluation planning workshop objectives

General objective:
to involve project stakeholders in developing the evaluation methodology

Specific objectives:
1) to define three main types of program evaluation
2) to define the function of evaluation in a “learning process” approach to program implementation and evaluation
3) to define the concept of participatory evaluation
4) to identify the steps in a participatory evaluation
5) to identify the main differences between quantitative and qualitative data collection
6) to describe 5 qualitative data collection techniques which can be used in health and nutrition projects
7) to define the evaluation questions for the GAFNA nutrition education project
8) to identify from whom/what source information should be collected for each evaluation question
9) to identify the most appropriate data collection technique/s for each evaluation question
10) to develop evaluation data collection instruments: interview and observation guides

Based upon the training objectives, detailed training plans should be developed for each of the sessions. This task is primarily the responsibility of the evaluation coordinator, who should be experienced in designing participatory training, although other Evaluation Coordinating Group members or experienced trainers/adult educators may also be involved. The workshop sessions should be highly participatory, but at the same time structured, so that the necessary tasks are accomplished as planned.

If the Evaluation Coordinator shares responsibility for facilitating the large group sessions with other facilitators, it is very important that detailed written session plans be prepared. Involving others as facilitators doesn't mean allowing them to do whatever they want. The session training designs should ideally be developed with them, or otherwise for them.

In the health education evaluation in the Ivory Coast, mentioned above, there was a problem in this regard. The co-facilitators were asked to develop their own session plans and on several occasions what they planned and presented took the workshop process off track, which took up time and which meant that some activities were not completed.

Table 4 shows the four-day GAFNA evaluation planning workshop schedule.

Step 6: Organize project stakeholders into an effective team

During the pre-planning phase, evaluation team members were identified. Now they must come together as a team to carry out the different tasks associated with the evaluation. Teams of people do not automatically work effectively together. An initial step in Phase II is to begin to develop a sense of team membership and mission. At this stage, the evaluation coordinator is responsible for designing and facilitating a series of exercises which both orient participants to the participatory evaluation process and contribute to team building. An ongoing effort must be made, however, during the entire evaluation process to encourage a spirit of openness and collaboration between the team members.

Table 4: Schedule For Evaluation Planning Workshop			
Day 1	**Day 2**	**Day 3**	**Day 4**
8:30 – 12:30 Introduction Presentations Workshop goals and objectives Concepts of program evaluation 3 types of evaluations Learning process approach to program implementation and evaluation	Nutrition education	Developing data collection instruments	Verbal and non-verbal communication in interviewing Principles and steps in in-depth interviewing Types of questions
14:00- 16:30 Participatory evaluation Overview of RRA, PRA, and RAP Qualitative and quantitative methods Steps in participatory evaluation	Defining data collection sources and techniques	Developing data collection instruments	Active listening: Exercise in small groups Principles of note-taking

Participants should be introduced to the concept of participatory evaluation and to the role of each individual on the evaluation team. The rationale for the involvement of all levels of program implementers in the evaluation process in terms of what they can both contribute and learn should be discussed. The notion of evaluation as a "learning process" in which the contribution of all team members is important in generating lessons for future programs should also be stressed.

The GAFNA Experience **"Demystifying evaluation" or "What am I doing here?"**
At the outset of the workshop, many of the participants felt uneasy and unclear about their role on the evaluation team. They assumed that outside "experts" would be scrutinizing their work and didn't understand what role they could possibly play in the evaluation. During the planning workshop, special effort was made to demystify the concept of "program evaluation" and to convince the participants that they all had an important role to play. By the end of the second day, it was clear that the participants were feeling more comfortable and had a clearer idea of what was expected of the team and of each team member.

In these initial sessions, other concepts related to program evaluation can be introduced such as the differences between summative and formative evaluation, and the distinction between process and outcome evaluation. In the first participatory evaluations I facilitated I presented key concepts in evaluation such as these. However, I found that this tended to confuse rather than clarify things for participants. My suggestion would be to provide participants with only essential and simple introductory information on program evaluation in order to demystify rather than mystify the process. In this step, the objective is to make participants feel that evaluation is useful and that they can contribute to the evaluation process.

Step 7: Define evaluation questions

In this step participants will begin developing their own evaluation plan based on the basic concepts of evaluation presented to them in Step 6. The task involves defining: What do you want to find out in the evaluation? In the first part of the session (3 1/2 hours) small groups of participants will develop "evaluation questions." In the second part of the session (2 1/2 hours) the small groups will present the questions they have developed and receive feedback from the entire group.

The involvement of the project stakeholders in developing the evaluation questions is important for several reasons:

- ensure that the evaluation responds to the concerns of program managers and field staff
- develop a sense of ownership of the evaluation on the part of program stakeholders
- ensure that the evaluation coordinator has a clear understanding of the concerns and priorities of the program manager, staff and counterparts for the evaluation

Development of the evaluation questions is based on the project framework, which was presented to participants in Step 6. This is a challenging task. For this task, participants should be divided into small groups of 3-6 persons. If you put more than 6 people in a group the work will be even more tedious and time-consuming than it already is. Each group should be assigned to work on one portion of the framework.

For example, one group could work on the "training activities" in the project to include: training aspects of the strategy; training outcomes; and training impact. Another group could work on the strategy, outcomes and impact of the health promotion activities.

The GAFNA Experience
The program stakeholders were divided into four groups corresponding to the four components of the project framework: 1) project management and monitoring; 2) nutrition messages and materials; 3) nutrition education sessions at the community level; 4) training.

The members of the working groups for this task should be carefully selected. It is important that for any given group the majority of the members were extensively involved in the activities for which they are asked to develop evaluation questions. For example, the participants in the group assigned to work on the project training component, should include people who were actively involved in the training activities. Their experience will serve as a basis for deciding what the evaluation needs to investigate.

Another key to the successful accomplishment of this time-consuming but critical task is the choice of a good facilitator for each group. The group facilitator should have some familiarity with the activities the group will be developing questions on. During the group work the Evaluation Coordinator should continuously monitor the group work and assist the group facilitators where necessary to keep the work on track.

The task of each of the groups is to define specifically what information should be collected on their aspect of the program and to formulate this as questions. For example, in terms of the training activities, participants needs to define precisely what it is important to find out regarding how those activities were carried out.

For this task each group will need a large flat wall to work on, on which a chart made of several pieces of flipchart paper can be hung. An example of what the “Data collection planning chart” should look like is found on page 33. Some groups may want to write their questions on writing paper and recopy it later. I would strongly discourage this for two reasons. First, when group work is written on a chart on the wall it is much easier for all group members to follow the work and to actively contribute. Secondly, recopying the chart later will take extra time.

Examples of evaluation questions from GAFNA evaluation

The GAFNA Experience
Examples of evaluation questions: Project management & monitoring: *Was there a system in place, to address problems/constraints between all project actors?* Training: *For each training event, was a training plan developed and a report of the activity written?*

WARNING: It is important to point out that the "evaluation questions" developed in this step define the information which the evaluation seeks to collect. These are not the "interview questions" which will be asked to project actors and which will be developed in Step 9. This will inevitably be confusing to people, as it was in The Gambia. Be prepared to give several examples of evaluation questions, before the group work starts and monitor the groups to make sure they're not developing the actual "interview questions" at this stage. (See the box below for examples of the two types of questions.)

The GAFNA Experience
For example, one of the GAFNA **evaluation questions** was: "Was the content of the training relevant and sufficient for the tasks the traditional communicators (TC) are expected to carry out?" This question would not be directly asked of the TCs. Rather they could be asked the following **interview questions**: 1) What are your main activities as a traditional communicator? 2) (For each activity listed) Did you learn anything in the training course to help you do this task? 3) Are there things that were not included in your training that you would like to learn in order to carry out these activities?

Step 8: Identify data collection sources and techniques

For each of the evaluation questions defined in Step 7 the team must decide:

1) Is quantitative and/or qualitative information required?
2) From whom or what source should the information be collected?
3) What data collection technique/s should be used?

In this step, the same small groups used in Step 7 should continue to work together because this task builds on the preceding step. Participants will continue to work on the Data Collection Planning Chart on the wall. Before the small groups begin work on these three sub-tasks an explanation of each of the tasks should be provided and they should be given an exercise which allows them to practice each of the sub- tasks.

Completion of the explanation, exercises and small group work will take approximately 3 to 3 l/2 hours.

Do we need quantitative or qualitative information?

In a process evaluation such as this, data collection is primarily qualitative. As an introduction to this step there should be a short presentation on the differences between qualitative and quantitative data collection. Basic differences between the two types of data collection included in the table below should be presented along with concrete examples of each.

Contrasting Characteristics of Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection Methods

	Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
Sample size	• large sample	• small sample
Type of sample	• random sample	• purposeful sample
Data collection technique	• individually administered questionnaire	• individual or group interview, observation
Data analysis	• information collected is classified according to predetermined categories	• information collected is classified according to the categories of responses which are identified in the data itself
Relationship between interviewer and interviewees	• informal, structured, distant	• less formal, semi-structured, attempt to get as close to the community as possible

In the first participatory evaluations I facilitated, I gave a more detailed presentation on the differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. However, I found that it confused many people and decided that what is included in this table is probably sufficient for the purposes of this type of evaluation.

Where can the necessary information be found?

The next step in completing the Data Collection Planning Chart is to decide where or from whom the information needed to answer the evaluation questions can be found.

For this task, the participants should work in the same small groups to which they were assigned in Step 7. As in Step 7, their work should be recorded in the Data Collection Planning Chart. In explaining how to complete the "information source" column in their charts, the facilitator should ask the workshop participants to make a list of the most important categories of people they will want to interview.

When the small groups begin their work, it is important to remember that information sources should not be limited to community-level individuals and groups. Although the program to be evaluated is community-based, it will undoubtedly be important to also collect information from organizational staff (for example, from ministries and NGOs) who is involved in the program in some way. Don't forget them. They are often important information sources.

Examples from the Evaluation Planning Workshop work in The Gambia related to the training component of the nutrition education project are found in the Table below:

The GAFNA Experience

Data collection planning chart
Program component: Training

Evaluation questions	Quantitative &/or qualitative	Information sources (where or from whom	Data collection technique
1) For each training activity, was a training plan developed?	Qnt.	Project Files	Secondary Data Source
2) What type of orientation was provided to training facilitators for each training event?	Qlt.	Facilitators Project Managers	Individual Interviewers
3) Was a report prepared on each training event?	Qnt.	Project Files Project Managers	Secondary Data Source Interviewers
4) To what extent did different categories of trainees use the training they received?	Qlt.	Trainees Project Manager	Individual Interviewers

What data collection techniques should be used?

In evaluations of community development programs, numerous data collection techniques can be used. In the RAP, RRA, and PRA methodologies developed in the last several years, more than 20 different data collection techniques have been experimented with. Many of them can potentially be used in program evaluations. (See additional references in Chapter 7.)

In this manual only a few of the more frequently used quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques are discussed. Two simple quantitative techniques are mentioned, namely written questionnaires and tables or forms. Five frequently used qualitative techniques are discussed here, namely, in-depth individual interviews, key informant interviews, group interviews, observations and analysis of secondary data.

These techniques can all be used to collect information both at the community and organizational levels. Each of the techniques should be described. Participants should be asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each and to give specific examples of how each of the techniques could be used.

Key Qualitative Data Collection Techniques to Use in Community Development Programs
In-depth individual interview: A semi-structured interview using a flexible interview guide consisting of mainly open-ended questions. The aim is to collect detailed information on the individual's beliefs and attitudes related to the topic being studied.
Key informant interview (a special type of individual interview): A "key informant" is someone who has extensive experience and knowledge on a topic of interest to the evaluation or study. Often key informants are community leaders. The interviewer must develop a relationship of confidence with the individual so that his/her experience and insights will be shared.
Group interview: Similar to the individual interview but with a group of people with similar characteristics and experience. Allows group members to discuss their opinions and attitudes with others. Interviewer can determine the trends in group beliefs and knowledge based on the responses of the group members.
Observation: While an activity is going on, an observer records what he/she sees either using a checklist or by taking descriptive notes. The observation can include information on: the setting (the actors, context, and surroundings); the actions and behavior of the actors; and what people say, including direct quotations.
Analysis of secondary data: Reports and other written documents that provide information on the activities planned and carried out.

Step 9. Develop data collection instruments

Based on the evaluation questions developed in Step 7 and the choice of data collection techniques made in Step 8, team members will next develop the draft data collection instruments for the interviews and observations to be carried out. In this step team members will continue to work in the same groups as in Steps 7 and 8. For each evaluation question, and for each category of persons from whom they have decided information should be collected, (as recorded in the third column of the Data Collection Planning Chart) the teams develop one or more interview questions or observation elements. Five to six hours will be required to draft the interview/observation guides.

In this step, the groups of evaluation team members will prepare one interview/ observation guide for each category of interviewee. In the GAFNA evaluation, for example, one guide was developed for each of the following categories of interviewees: traditional communicators; women's committees; community women; community health nurses, project managers, and GAFNA directors. While the guides for each of the different categories of interviewees will differ, many of the questions will be the same because certain evaluation questions will apply to more than one category of interviewees.

The evaluation coordinator should provide the team with an explanation of how the interview/observation guide will be used and guidelines on how to develop each of these types of instruments.

Interview Guides

An **interview guide** is a set of mainly open-ended questions which is used either with an individual or group to collect detailed, primarily qualitative information. It is important to point out that an in-depth interview guide is quite different from a traditional **questionnaire**. A questionnaire is used in a very structured fashion and in the same way with each interviewee. The in-depth interview guide, on the other hand, is a more flexible method which "guides" the interviewer but which allows him/her to adapt or modify the questions, to some extent, as the interview proceeds.

The ingredients necessary to develop an interview guide include the evaluation questions to be answered through the interview and some knowledge of how to formulate good questions. In a process evaluation, the aim is primarily to collect in-depth information on people's attitudes, opinions and knowledge. Primarily open-ended questions are required to elicit in-depth, qualitative information. In addition, the formulation of the questions should follow these criteria:

- They should be clearly and simply worded.
- The formulation of the question should not suggest the answer.
- They should not be "double-barreled", i.e., asking two things in the same question.
- They should not be formulated in the negative.

The questions should be carefully sequenced with easier questions proceeding the more difficult ones, and the less intimate ones coming before those which ask about more sensitive matters. The interview guide can contain questions, which require both quantitative and qualitative responses.

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A portion of the interview guide for Community Health Nurses
1. What was your role in the Nutrition Education Pilot Campaign (NEPC)?
2. What was the role of the Mothers' Committee in the program?
3. To what extent did they assume that role?
4. Did you receive your fuel subsidy?
5. Was the fuel given adequate for carrying out your NEPC activities?
6. What was your role in monitoring the NEPC activities?
7. Were you trained on how to monitor the NEPC activities?
8. What information did you collect in the monitoring?
9. How frequently did you monitor the activities?
10. Did you encounter any obstacles in monitoring the activities?
11. What did you do with the information you collected

In qualitative data collection, the pre-testing of the interview guide is not as critical as when a structured questionnaire is to be used. This is because in qualitative, in-depth interviewing questions can be modified during the data collection process if the way they are phrased does not elicit the type of response desired. If time is available members of the evaluation team can informally test the guides, by doing simulation interviews amongst themselves, and modifications can be made before they are photocopied.

The Observation Guide

An observation guide is a tool which helps the observer structure his/her observation of certain aspects of an activity which are of interest. While the activity of interest is being carried out, the guide is used by the observer, as discretely as possible, to record essential information on the content and/or process employed. Development of an observation guide requires understanding of the evaluation question to be answered and identification of the key aspects of the activity to be analyzed.

Observation Guide for Performance By Traditional Communicator

	Adequate	Rather Adequate	Not Adequate	Remarks
Message Content				
Flow/Sequence				
Participant Involvement				
Discussion				
Role Play				
Songs				
Review				

Developing good data collection instruments is not an easy task and it is not expected that team members will produce perfect instruments in a short period of time. For this reason, following preparation of the draft instruments by the team members, time should be allotted for the evaluation coordinator and one or more members of the evaluation coordinating group to review and revise the instruments.

This task will probably take approximately a day and a half, assuming the group responsible for the task is efficient and that they have several computers at their disposal. They will need to type and photocopy the revised instruments for distribution to fieldwork team members.

In in-depth interviewing, notes of interviewees responses are taken on sheets of plain paper, or in a notebook, rather than on the interview guides themselves. This is because the length of responses cannot be anticipated, and interviewer notes should not be limited by a fixed space on an interview guide. The interview guides can, therefore, be typed double-space to facilitate reading, but space does not need to be left on the guides to record interviewees' answers. This also means that team members will each only need to be given one copy of each type of interview guide.

Step I0: Finalize sample of data collection sites and interviewees

In this step, final decisions must be made regarding the data collection sites, the sample of persons who will be interviewed at each site and the schedule for the data collection by site. Due to the complexity of determining the data collection sample, this task should mainly be the responsibility of the Evaluation Coordinating Group. Too many cooks can spoil the stew. Plans regarding the sample prepared by the coordinating group and their proposal for data collection sites and interviewees should be presented to the evaluation team at this stage in the workshop.

In Step 3 the data collection zones and sites were determined. In Step 8 the types of persons to be interviewed and observed were identified. In this step final decisions must be made regarding the characteristics and number of each type of interviewee per data collection site as well as the detailed scheduling of the site visits, i.e., date and time.

Based on the decisions made in Steps 3 and 8 regarding the data collection sites and types of interviewees, here final plans are made regarding the data collection sample. The “Data Collection Planning Worksheet”, shown below, can be a useful tool for deciding what types of data collection can take place at each site.

Data Collection Planning Worksheet

Number of groups/individuals to interview or observe per site Region: Western			
Data collection sites	**Community health nurses**	**Mothers**	**Traditional communicators**
Kerowan	2 (individual)	10 (2 groups)	3 (1 group)
Benbara	1 (individual)	10 (2 groups)	4 (1 group)
Winela	2 (individual)	10 (2 groups)	3 (1 group)

Once the planning worksheet is completed, another table should be prepared which indicates, for each site, the dates and approximate time that each type of group/ individuals will be interviewed or observed. In order to complete this detailed scheduling PLEASE READ CAREFULLY the information on "planning for group interviews" below, and on the "daily data collection schedule" described in Step 11. A number of past teams did not follow this advice and almost died from overwork during the fieldwork. As discussed in Step 11, in your planning don't forget to add on one day at the end of the fieldwork to do the "synthesis of the data analysis" before leaving the last field site.

Planning for group interviews

The number of persons in each group interview should be limited to 6 to l0. Groups of this size are desirable for two reasons. First, the small group allows all participants to contribute their ideas to the discussion. Secondly, it is much easier for an interviewer to facilitate than is a group with more than l0 participants.

Based upon the defined characteristics for each type of interviewee, the team should decide upon the best process for choosing specific group members. It is important that whoever is responsible for identifying interviewees clearly understand: the characteristics defined for each type of group, and the number of interviewees per group. Scheduling the interviews should take into account the time required to conduct each interview (approximately 1 l/2 hours). Generally one team can conduct a maximum of two group interviews or 3-4 individual interviews per day.

Phase III: Fieldwork: Preparation, Data Collection and Analysis

Based upon the elements of the evaluation methodology developed in Phase II, the third phase consists of preparing fieldwork teams to carry out the data collection and analysis in the field and to prepare a summary of fieldwork findings. As explained earlier, probably not all evaluation team members will participate in this phase unless the evaluation team is small (maximum 10-12 persons).

Phase III: Fieldwork Preparation, Data Collection, and Analysis	
Step 11:	Prepare fieldwork teams
Step 12:	Conduct interviews and observations
Step 13:	Analyze information collected
Step 14:	Summarize fieldwork findings

For Step 11, approximately 1 l/2 days will be required to prepare fieldwork team members for the data collection activities and to orient them to the logistical arrangements. If all evaluation team members participate in the fieldwork, one and a half days can be added to the Phase II planning workshop for the Step 11 orientation. Whatever the number of persons who will participate in the fieldwork, they should be divided into several fieldwork teams, probably with 4-6 members each. Fieldwork team members will be involved in Steps 11-13. The length of time devoted to the fieldwork is highly variable but will probably be between 6 and l0 days. The data collection and data analysis (Steps l2 and l3) should be carried out simultaneously as will be further explained below.

Step 11: Prepare fieldwork teams

Prior to beginning the fieldwork, an essential step is the orientation of fieldwork team members. The orientation, which should last one and a half or preferably two days, should focus on several key topics: logistics for the fieldwork phase; roles and expectations of team leaders; roles and expectations of team members; in-depth interviewing skills; note-taking; and a brief discussion of how the analysis of the qualitative data will be done in the field. As regards data analysis, based on past experience, it is suggested that in most cases it is probably better not to try to explain the data analysis procedure to team members during the orientation session. It is preferable to orient the field team leaders to the data analysis procedure to be followed rather than trying to teach the field teams how to do it on the last day of the orientation.

During the orientation, 3-4 hours should be allotted for discussion of logistical matters related to the fieldwork. This will leave approximately one day to devote to reviewing the revised interview guides and to work on in-depth interviewing skills. For this topic, the evaluation coordinator is encouraged to develop one or more exercises on in-depth interviewing skills.

Logistics and expectations of team members

It is important that the fieldwork team members be informed of the logistical arrangements that have been made for the fieldwork period phase. Each team should be informed of: the travel schedule for each day in the field; the lodging and meal arrangements; and the sites where they will be conducting interviews. Most of the logistical and administrative planning for the fieldwork should have been done ahead of time but final details can be discussed at this time.

Each fieldwork team must have a leader. The role of the team leaders should have been explained to them in Step 5. In this step, the role of both the team leaders and of the other team members should be presented and discussed.

The responsibilities of the team leaders are:

- to develop a sense of team spirit and cooperation amongst the team members
- to encourage the participation of all team members and respect for each member's contribution
- to delegate responsibility for data collection and analysis according to individual abilities and interests
- to reinforce the interviewing skills presented during the orientation
- to facilitate daily group analysis of the data collected
- to ensure that by the end of each day a written synthesis of the data collected that day is completed
- to supervise the logistics coordinator
- to ensure that by the end of the fieldwork period information has been collected relative to all of the evaluation questions.

It is important to insist on this last point. It should be clearly explained to the team members that the fieldwork period would involve not only data collection but also data analysis and that the latter may often require working into the evenings. There will be no way getting around this so it is useful to prepare people for this ahead of time.

In-depth interviewing skills

The quality of information collected in both individual and group interviews depends to a great extent on team members' skills in in-depth interviewing. During the orientation, the attitudes, knowledge and skills required to conduct effective in-depth interviews should be addressed. During the fieldwork phase those same skills should be continually reinforced by the team leaders

What makes a good interviewer?

Attitudes	• respect for group participants' ideas, cultural values, traditional ideas • horizontal relationship between interviewer and interviewees • commitment to "learn" from interviewees rather than to "teach"
Knowledge	• familiarity with evaluation questions and interview guides for each type of interviewee • principles of interpersonal communication • non-verbal behaviors which encourage or discourage interviewees • steps in the interviewing process
Skills	• in-depth questioning strategies • active listening • note-taking • small group facilitation

All of these topics should be dealt with during the orientation. As many practical exercises as possible should be used to allow team members to both observe and practice using appropriate interviewing skills. Participatory learning activities including role-plays and exercises in pairs or triads, can be designed for each of these topics.

For example, role-plays (such as those described in the box) can be used to help participants identify effective and ineffective approaches to interviewing.

Sample role-plays on interviewing

The Ineffective Interviewer	A mother is interviewed using a structured questionnaire on child feeding. The interviewer demonstrates both verbally and non-verbally a lack of interest and disapproval of the interviewee's responses. He is not attentive when the mother is speaking, he verbalizes his impatience with her and abruptly interrupts her several times when she gives lengthy answers or when her responses are not what he expects.
The Effective Interviewer	A group interview is conducted with 4 mothers regarding their beliefs and practices related to diarrhea. The interviewer demonstrates, both verbally and non-verbally, her undivided attention and interest in the responses of each of the mothers. She encourages all of the group members to participate, asks good follow-up or "probing" questions to get the interviewees to expand upon their initial responses, and she accepts all of their responses with the same degree of openness and enthusiasm.

Following each role-play, participants can be asked to assess the interviewer's approach. The group can identify strengths and weaknesses in the interviewer's attitude and skills, and develop a list of "do's" and "don'ts" for their own interviewing.

Questioning strategies

In interviewing, the primary tool for collecting information is the question. Team members should recognize that there are different kinds of questions, that different types of questions elicit different types of responses and that certain ones are more appropriate for in-depth interviewing than others.

- **Closed questions** should be used to a limited extent.

  Example: *Do you think the nutrition education project was useful?*

- **Leading questions** should be avoided.

  Example: *Do you agree that the community health worker training was well done?*

- **Double-barreled questions** should be avoided

  Example: *Did the community health workers actively participate in the training sessions and use what they learned when they returned to their villages?*

- **Open-ended, probing and follow-up questions** should be extensively used.

  Examples:
  – Open-ended question: *What are your impressions of the activities carried out by the traditional communicators?*

– Probing question: *Why do you say that they were effective?*

– Follow-up question: *What do the others in the group think about what Mrs. Diallo has said?*

The interview guides for each category of interviewees are the basis for conducting the individual and group interviews. Unlike a questionnaire, which should be rigidly followed, the interview guide is used in a more flexible manner. If the interviewee does not adequately understand one of the questions included in the guide, the interviewer can reformulate the question so that the meaning of the question is clear. In many cases, in addition to asking the questions included in the guide, the interviewer will need to ask other probing and follow-up questions to ensure that precise and detailed information is obtained. The purpose of the questions is to collect information, which will help answer the evaluation questions. The interview guide is a tool, which the interviewer should use in a flexible and creative way in order to accomplish that objective.

Principles of note-taking

In addition to knowing which types of questions to ask, it is important for interviewers to know how to record the responses given. The following principles of note taking should serve as a guide:

1) Notes should be recorded in the first person.
2) Key words and ideas should be recorded.
3) Original, descriptive phrases or sayings should be recorded word for word as quotations.
4) Information should be recorded exactly as it is heard and not “filtered” based on interviewers’ ideas or values.
5) As many notes should be taken as possible.
6) In group interviews the different opinions in the group should be recorded.

Materials to be prepared for each data collection team

- copies of the evaluation questions
- copies of interview & observation guides
- large writing pads or sheets of plain white A4 paper
- 1 clipboard for each team member
- pens
- file folders to organize notes by category of interviewees
- paper clips and/or stapler and staples

Remember that each field team member needs one copy of each interview/observation guide and one set of the revised evaluation questions.

It is preferable to provide team members with pens rather than pencils. Especially in the evenings when light may be dim, it may be almost impossible to read notes written in pencil.

Step I2: Conduct interviews and observations

Once the orientation session is completed, the fieldwork phase of the evaluation can begin. If possible, it is a good idea to plan one free day between the end of the orientation session and travel to the first field sites. This will give team members time to rest, after a long week of intense work, and to make necessary arrangements in order to leave their personal affairs in good order. It is important; however, that the orientation be conducted immediately before the data collection phase so those team members do not forget the skills they have learned.

The daily data collection schedule

In most cases, the majority of the data collection will consist of interviews. There are several considerations in planning the interviewing schedule.

Data collected in each interview should be analyzed the same day that it is collected.

Between 2 and 4 hours is required to analyze the data collected in a group interview and approximately l l/2 hours for an individual interview.

It is easier for the team to conduct the interviews in the morning in order to be able to complete the data analysis by the end of the same day. However, the time of day at which the interviews will be held should be decided in discussion with persons who are familiar with the daily schedule of the target group interviewees and/or through discussion with target group members themselves.

Experience has shown that it is usually feasible for a team, composed of one interviewer and one or two note-takers, to conduct one to two group interviews or two to three individual interviews per day. Planning the daily fieldwork schedule should take into account time for: travel to the data collection site; greeting organizational or community leaders; gathering together or waiting for the interviewees to arrive; conducting the interviews; traveling to the lodging site; meals; rest time; and group data analysis sessions.

For the purposes of the evaluation, the more people you can interview the better. However, you should ensure that you have enough time and energy to accomplish what you plan and that the field teams survive the fieldwork phase.

Preliminary contacts with organizational or community leaders

Once the schedule for conducting the community and organizational interviews is set, someone should travel to each interview site and meet with the organizational or community leaders. The purpose of the upcoming team visit should be explained to them and their collaboration in organizing the interviews elicited. Specifically their help will be needed in identifying the potential interviewees and inviting them to participate. For example, if women with children under five years of age are to be interviewed, a community leader will need to help identify such women. The designated person should be provided with detailed information about: the characteristics and number of individuals or groups to be interviewed; the date and time of each interview.

Where group interviews are to be conducted, it is extremely important to explain the rationale for small groups, 6 to l0 persons. It is often assumed that a visiting team will be impressed if groups are larger. Giving the contact persons at each site clear information about the team's objectives and expectations will help assure that when the team arrives they will find the appropriate type and number of interviewees ready to be interviewed.

Conducting group interviews

The following steps and practices should be followed when conducting group interviews:

1) Before the interview starts
   Choose a quite, secluded spot
   Verify the characteristics of group participants
   Limit the number of participants to approximately l0
   Seat participants in a circle
   Sit at the same level

2) Introduction to the interview
   Greet the participants
   Explain the purpose of the interview
   Assure them of the confidentiality of their responses
   Encourage the participation of all group members

3) Facilitate the group discussion
   Conduct the interview in the local language
   Use interview guide to structure the interview
   Interview should last l to l l/2 hours
   Take as many notes as possible

4) Ending the interview
   Review interview guide
   Thank the participants

Mini feedback session

Following each group interview, it is useful for the study team to take l5-20 minutes to discuss the dynamics of the individual or group interview, to identify constraints and to formulate lessons learned to be applied in subsequent interviews. Analysis of the information collected will be carried out in Step 13.

Suggested questions for the mini-feedback session.

1) What are your observations regarding the participation of the group members/individual during the interview? What non-verbal behaviors did you observe which suggested that the participants were either comfortable or interested or the contrary? Were there problems in terms of group participation? What can be done to improve the participation of interviewees in the future?

2) How was the facilitation during the interview? What were the strengths? What were the weaknesses? How can the facilitation be improved in the future?

3) Were there factors outside of the group, which distracted the participants? How can these problems be avoided in the future?

Step 13: Analyze information collected

A critical step, as you can imagine, is analyzing all of the information you collect so that it can be summarized, understood and used. The data to be analyzed will come from the information collected in the interviews and observations with community and organizational collaborators, from the secondary data sources and from evaluation team members' own experience with the program being evaluated.

In this discussion, the data collection (Step 12) and data analysis (Step 13) are presented as two separate steps in the evaluation process. In fact, the two steps should occur concurrently. As discussed above, each day during the fieldwork, the information collected should be analyzed that same day, by category of interviewees, for each of the interview questions. At the conclusion of the fieldwork phase, the conclusions of the daily analyses should be synthesized for each of the evaluation questions.

It is important to point out that the data analysis is the most difficult step in the entire evaluation process. Amongst all those who have participated in participatory evaluations like this or in other qualitative research activities, there is a consensus that the data analysis is very challenging. I am telling you this not to startle you, but to help you understand, ahead of time, that the data analysis of qualitative data is somewhat tricky and to encourage you to seriously think both about who you choose to be involved in the evaluation and about the preparation and support they receive for the data analysis. In this regard, the choice of the evaluation coordinator is particularly important. This must be someone with considerable experience in qualitative data collection and data analysis.

Approach to the analysis of qualitative information

In quantitative data collection, the data analysis is done after the data collection is completed. In qualitative data collection, one of the critical principles is that data collection and analysis should be done concurrently. Some people who do qualitative studies and evaluations do not follow this rule, probably because they think it is easier to do it at the end. There are two reasons, however, why data analysis should be done in an ongoing fashion during the data collection phase.

Qualitative data collection is intended to trigger an *iterative,* or spiral-like, learning process. In other words, in the analysis of the information collected in one interview, certain aspects of that information may be unclear, and others may suggest additional facets of the topic which were not initially included in the evaluation questions. In such cases, insights gained through the analysis of one set of interview data may suggest modifications that should be made in the content of subsequent interviews. A second reason why it is important to immediately analyze the information collected is that while extensive notes should have been taken, the facilitator and note-takers cannot write down every-thing that is said. Usually they have additional information and insights about the interviewees' knowledge and attitudes, which were not recorded in the notes. Therefore, the sooner the data analysis takes place, the easier it is to retrieve this information.

The analysis of qualitative information is very different and considerably more difficult than that of quantitative data. In qualitative data collection there are guidelines, but no set formulas, for the analysis of the data. The data analysis process can be fascinating but it is also very demanding in terms of the intellectual energy and creativity that it requires. The data analysis process should be facilitated by someone with skills both in qualitative data analysis and in the facilitation of group work. In this regard, the role of the team leader as facilitator of the data analysis process is critical and he/she must be carefully chosen and prepared for this task.

The technique for analyzing qualitative data is *content analysis.* Through content analysis of the information collected, conclusions can be formulated for each of the evaluation questions. The analysis process involves identifying the categories of responses found in the raw data.

Procedure for daily data analysis

The daily, data analysis process is structured around the interview questions asked of each category of interviewees. For example, if in one day the team conducted individual interviews with two nurses, and with one group of traditional communicators (TC), the two sets of data (nurses and TCs) would be analyzed separately based on the questions in each of the interview guides. During the analysis the team may need to refer back to the evaluation questions to clarify the objective of the interview questions.

All members of the fieldwork team should participate in the data analysis sessions. In order to analyze the data, I suggest you use a simplified approach to *content analysis* based on a series of five steps. The process would be similar for analyzing data collected from observations or secondary data sources.

Step 1: **Re-read the interview questions.** One-by-one the interview questions should be read to the group. This allows the team members to recall the focus of each interview question.

Step 2: **Read the interview notes.** The note-taker/s should read aloud the responses, found in the notes for each question. If there are more than one set of notes, each set of notes should be read.

Step 3: **Discuss the responses.** The team leader asks the group to discuss the information included in the notes, to share other comments made by the interviewees that may not have been written down, to clarify exactly what the interviewees were saying.

Step 4: **Categorize the responses and summarize findings.** Together the group identifies the categories of responses in the information collected and summarizes the findings in a concise fashion. The example below illustrates a summary of the findings for one interview question.

Summary of findings for an interview question

What do women think about the use of songs in the nutrition education project?

As an example, perhaps all interviewees agreed that the use of songs was beneficial while a few stated that they were repetitive. The finding for this evaluation question might read:

> *"The women interviewed unanimously said that they enjoyed the songs, that it was an easy way for them to understand and to remember the nutrition education messages. A few of the interviewees stated that the songs were too repetitive and that new songs should continuously be introduced."*

As the example illustrates, the summary should indicate the trends in the information collected in terms of whether the attitudes or ideas expressed were shared by all interviewees, the majority, half, a minority or few of them. While the objective is not to quantify the different types of answers, the trends should be reported.

Step 5. **Identify unclear or missing information.** A last step in the discussion of each interview question is for the group to determine whether there is missing or unclear information that should be further investigated in subsequent interviews. Each of the team members should take note of supplementary questions, which the team decides should be added to the interview guide.

Difficulties with data analysis in the GAFNA Evaluation

The field teams made a valiant effort to analyze the data and summarize findings following the proposed steps. In many cases, teams worked into the evening to get the analysis done. Some participants found this phase to be quite difficult because it required considerable intellectual and physical energy late in the day.

Synthesis of data analysis

At the conclusion of the fieldwork phase, at least one day should be scheduled for each of the field teams to summarize their findings. It is suggested that for this task one additional day be added to the time spent at the last field site. Be warned that if you plan to do this task when the team returns to the training site/capital there is a risk that all team members will not participate on a full-time basis and this will make the task infinitely more difficult.

In a working session in which all members of the fieldwork team participate, findings should be synthesized for each evaluation question. In this session, the evaluation questions should be read one at a time, the findings from the different groups of interviewees which are relevant to each question should be read from the daily analyses (prepared in Step 4 of daily analysis process) and the team's findings for each evaluation question are written down.

Step 14: Summarize fieldwork findings

At the conclusion of the data collection phase, the findings from the different fieldwork teams must be summarized. For each evaluation question, the findings of each of the teams should be integrated into one set of evaluation findings. The team leaders in collaboration should carry out this task, if possible, with one member of each of the fieldwork teams. All of the fieldwork team members should not be involved in this task. The participation of all team members would make it very time-consuming. This task should take two days, assuming the session is well facilitated, probably by the Evaluation Coordinator.

In this step, for each evaluation question, the two representatives of each of the fieldwork teams should present their team's findings and a comprehensive summary of the findings should be written. The summary statements should be concise and clearly worded so that they can easily be understood without referring back to the original evaluation questions. This approach will greatly facilitate the discussion of the findings by the full evaluation team in Step 15.

Examples of findings for two evaluation questions

The GAFNA Experience	
Question	**Findings**
To what extent did the community contribute to the project?	In human resource terms the communities have made a considerable contribution to the project: the participation of the Traditional Communicators and Management Committees; the attendance of the mothers at the sessions. They have not, however, made any financial contribution to the project. This arrangement may contribute to dependency on "outsiders" rather than to self-reliance on the part of the community.
To what extent was the project conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Health?	The ministry staff interviewed stated that the Health Education Pilot project is in keeping with the Ministry of Health's policies and objectives. However, one of the Regional Medical Officers stated that the program was "running parallel" to the Ministry of Health programs rather than as an integrated component of their program. He stated that he and his team wished to be more involved in the initial planning of such projects and that periodic coordination meetings should be organized by project staff at their level.

The findings for each of the evaluation questions should be typed up, ideally alongside each of the evaluation questions. For the Phase IV workshop copies of the complete set of findings should be prepared for each of the evaluation team members.

Phase IV: Workshop to formulate lessons learned

In most program evaluations, external evaluators are responsible for formulating recommendations based on the evaluation findings. In keeping with the concept of participatory evaluation, in this methodology Evaluation Team members are responsible for studying the evaluation findings and for formulating recommendations. The team's involvement in this task is critical in terms of developing their sense of ownership of the recommendations and their commitment to implementing them. In this phase the evaluation team can also formulate conclusions regarding the participatory methodology.

Phase IV: Workshop to Formulate Lessons Learned	
Step 15:	Formulate lessons learned for each evaluation question
Step 16:	Team assessment of the evaluation process

In Phase IV, all of the evaluation team members who were involved in Phase II come together again for 2-3 days to carry out Steps l5 and l6.

Step 15: Formulate lessons learned for each evaluation question

As stated earlier, in a learning process approach to program evaluation, the ultimate aim of the evaluation exercise is to develop lessons which can be applied in the future. In this step, Evaluation Team members discuss the Fieldwork Teams' findings and develop a set of lessons learned. The role of the Evaluation Coordinator, as in other phases of the process, is both to structure the task for the group and to actively contribute to the development of lessons based on insights from the fieldwork and on his/her own experience with other programs.

The lessons developed by the team should be based not only on the problematic aspects of the program identified in the evaluation, but also on the positive or effective aspects. Important lessons can be learned not only from what did not work, but also from what worked well and can be used in the future. Often in evaluations program successes are not sufficiently analyzed and conclusions drawn for the future.

In evaluations using this methodology, typically there are a large number of evaluation questions and, therefore, a large number of findings. For this reason, the group process must be well structured in order for the group to accomplish the task in a timely fashion. It is suggested that for this task the participants be grouped by program components, in the same groups in which they worked in Step 7-9 in the evaluation planning workshop. In this way, the team members who developed the evaluation questions for a particular program component will study the findings and develop lessons for that same component.

Each of the evaluation workshop participants should receive a list of the findings for his/her component. It is not necessary for all participants to receive copies of all of the findings as they will not need them for the small group work and will not have time to study them during the workshop. Furthermore, it is probably better to type up the findings along with the corresponding lessons learned, in a table format similar to the one below, and to distribute this after the workshop.

Once again, it is important that each group have a strong facilitator who encourages group members to systematically discuss each of the findings and to formulate one or more lessons learned. The skill of the facilitator, in helping the groups develop clear and concise lessons, is of utmost importance. The clearer the lessons learned the more easily others will understand them.

The GAFNA Experience Table 5: Examples of Evaluation Findings and Lessons Learned	
Evaluation Findings	**Lessons Learned**
Development of nutrition education themes and messages Development of the nutrition themes and messages was based on two excellent quantitative/qualitative studies on maternal dietary beliefs and practices and on child feeding practices.	Development of themes and messages for nutrition education should reflect cultural beliefs and practices of the target group. In-depth qualitative studies are particularly important as a basis for the development of educational content.
Training of the traditional communicators (TCs) The majority of the TCs are Mandika speakers, and most of the training was conducted in Mandika. The training was not adapted to the language needs of the Sarahule and Wolof speakers, who therefore did not fully benefit from the training.	It is not appropriate to conduct a training program in only one language. If there is ethnic variation amongst trainees, the training must be adapted to the linguistic needs of all.
Community health nurses' fuel subsidy In most cases, the nurses report that they received their fuel subsidy (D35 per month). However, in many cases, the payments were received late out in the regions.	The system for distributing fuel subsidies should be reviewed to ensure timely payment in all regions.

Examples of evaluation findings and lessons learned

In past evaluations, the involvement of program stakeholders in the development of lessons learned in this way has proved to be very effective. The lessons which stakeholders develop tend to be based not only on the evaluation findings but also on their understanding of policy priorities, program context, resource availability, etc.

Participation fosters ownership. It has been found that where program stakeholders have participated in this way in developing lessons, they not only have a clearer understanding of the evaluation results and of how they should be used, but also a greater commitment to putting the recommendations into practice. It is suggested that all of the findings and lessons learned be included in the evaluation report presented in a multi-page table similar to Table no 5.

Step 16: Team assessment of the evaluation process

In this step, all of the evaluation team members are asked to give their feedback on the evaluation process itself. This is an opportunity for all participants to develop conclusions regarding the participatory methodology itself. Given the innovative nature of the methodology, it is important that it is assessed and lessons formulated regarding its usefulness for the future. A simple tool and/or exercise can be developed for carrying out this assessment.

The rationale for the use of the participatory methodology is that the approach contributes: to the development of practical lessons for improving program implementation; and to the development of staff skills. The assessment of the methodology should, therefore, address these two aspects as well as others, which seem important to the Evaluation Coordinating Group.

Different techniques can be used to carry out this assessment, including: an individual written questionnaire; a group assessment through small group discussion, or a combination of both. The Evaluation Coordinating Group can be responsible for designing an assessment tool and/or exercise.

In the GAFNA evaluation, analysis of information collected through an individual written questionnaire administered to evaluation participants revealed a number of common themes regarding the benefits of the methodology. These are illustrated by the quotations in the box below:

The GAFNA Experience
In the GAFNA evaluation, team members completed an individual written questionnaire on their impressions of the evaluation process. Here are a few of their responses: **A forum for discussion** "The evaluation activity created a forum for those who were involved at a different levels of program implementation to review our combined efforts and to decide together how we can improve the program strategy." *(Josephy Jassey, GAFNA Field Supervisor)* **Strengthening team collaboration** "The evaluation helped me to understand that every individual believes that his/her ideas and thoughts are important. By respecting the point of view of other team members your relationship with them is strengthened and all team members work harder." *(Baboucar Jobe, GAFNA Project Assistant)* **Learning from others** "I benefited from the other team members who shared their knowledge and experience with me." *(Malang Fofana, Nutrition Assistant)* **Listening to the community** "The evaluation created a forum for us to listen to the community's views, criticisms, and suggestions to ensure more realistic and appropriate planning in the future." *(Muhamed Freeman, GAFNA Field Supervisor)* **Demystifying evaluation** "Evaluation has ceased to be a word I fear because now I know how to plan an evaluation exercise that will produce valid results." *(Kinday Samba, GAFNA Project Manager)* **Practical lessons for the future** "The evaluation helped us develop comprehensive and practical lessons for future programs." *(Saihou Sanyang, GAFNA Project Manager)* **Future evaluations** "I can't over emphasize the need to apply this type of participatory methodology in the future to help us improve our nutrition programs." *(Bintou Keita Kunju, Food and Nutrition Unit)*

Observations and suggestions formulated by the Evaluation Coordinating Group (ECG) on the participatory evaluation process

At the conclusion of the evaluation, members of the ECG developed a few suggestions for future evaluations.

Suggestions for improving the evaluation methodology

- The evaluation process could be broken up and spread over a longer period of time.
- Time should be scheduled either during the workshop or field-orientation phase to interview evaluation team members themselves.
- Whatever the timeframe, teams should not begin the fieldwork until the evaluation coordination team has revised and approved a final list of evaluation questions and of interview guides.
- The manager of the program being evaluated should be freed from his/her regular responsibilities in order to enable him/her to participate fully in the evaluation.
- Secretarial support should be planned far ahead of time. This support is especially important during Steps 7, 9, 14, 15 and 17.
- Members of the evaluation team who do not have considerable experience both with the project and with adult training methods should not be used as lead facilitators. Such persons can, however, be used as small group facilitators.

PHASE V: Summarize evaluation results

Step 17: Summarize evaluation findings and lessons learned

The evaluation findings and lessons learned will probably be quite lengthy. Therefore, it is essential that a summary be prepared. The summary can be organized around the major elements in the program framework. The Evaluation Coordinator in collaboration with one of the other Evaluation Coordinating Group members can complete this task. If those assigned to this task are well organized and are skilled at writing succinctly they should be able to complete the summary in 4-5 hours, otherwise it will take more time.

In the GAFNA evaluation, summary results were developed for each of the key aspects of the project framework. Examples of summary results on two different aspects of the GARNA nutrition education project are shown in the box below.

The GAFNA Experience
• Project monitoring & supervision Monitoring and supervision of project activities at field level took place but neither was systematic nor frequent. This was largely due to the fact that monitoring roles, guidelines and tools for key actors were not developed. In the future, monitoring roles should be defined, tools developed and trained key actors provided to ensure efficient and systematic monitoring and supervision of activities at all levels. Monitoring and supervision activities should include follow-up of mothers in satellite villages. • Effectiveness of the three nutrition education strategies: The evaluation team concluded that the most effective nutrition education method was the combined use of the Traditional Communicators and Community Health Nurses. While the Traditional Communicators are skilled at disseminating information in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways, the involvement of Community Health Nurses is important to reinforce the Traditional Communicators' knowledge of nutrition concepts and to help them plan and evaluate their activities.

Phase VI: Development of an action plan

When an ongoing program is evaluated, the lessons learned should be drawn up and integrated into the program implementation plan. Ideally, the development of a revised action plan, which incorporates the lessons, should take place immediately after the evaluation. This task should be carried out by a relatively small group, composed of the program manager, one or more field staff members and the Evaluation Coordinator. This exercise can take one or two days or more, depending upon the level of detail included in the plan.

Step 18: Develop an action plan based on evaluation findings

In most evaluations, the last step in the evaluation process consists of the development of recommendations. In the case where the program evaluated is ongoing, evaluation results should be integrated into the program. Often, however, there is a lack of continuity between evaluation results and their use in program planning. Sometimes when the incorporation of findings is left for "later" it never happens. Many excellent evaluation reports have been carefully kept for years on program managers' shelves only to gather dust and to never be used.

To overcome this problem, it is proposed that the evaluation exercise include this step in which a draft action plan for the program is developed based on the evaluation findings and lessons. The product of this step need not be a polished final action plan but should include the main program objectives, components, activities and strategies to modify or integrate based on the evaluation results. Experience has shown that when this step is included as an integral part of the evaluation process, there is a greater chance that the evaluation results will be systematically integrated into the program plan. Of course, this activity lengthens, by a few days, the time that is devoted to the evaluation exercise.

Details of the action planning process are not discussed here as each organization has its own approach to program planning. It is suggested that a sub-group of the larger evaluation team be involved in this planning exercise. Their draft plan can later be discussed with the larger group of program stakeholders.

If it is not possible to hold the action-planning meeting at the end of the evaluation, it can be done later. Hopefully you will at least be able to organize a half-day session to discuss the action plan at the end of the evaluation when the lessons learned are fresh in people's minds.

Phase VII: Finalization, dissemination and discussion of the evaluation report

In this important last phase in the evaluation process, two important, but sometimes neglected steps, are included.

- Step 19. Write evaluation report
- Step 20. Distribute and discuss evaluation results with program collaborators/stakeholders

Step 19: Write evaluation report

An obvious, but not always completed step, is the preparation of the evaluation report. It is important that at the outset of the evaluation process (Phase I) responsibility for writing the report be assigned to one or more persons involved in the study and a date for completion be decided upon. This is frequently overlooked and can contribute to delays in finalizing the report.

The content and style of an evaluation report depends upon how its function is defined. Should it merely report the results or should the steps in the process be described? In most evaluation reports, the focus is on reporting the findings and recommendations. If, however, the report is viewed as an "educational tool" which can help the reader learn about the methodology itself then the steps in the process should be discussed as well. In any case, it is important that it be written in simple language so that it can be understood by all program stakeholders.

The report should include a 1 - 2 page "executive summary" of the major findings and lessons learned. Many people will not have time to read the entire report. The Executive Summary appears at the beginning of the report but it should be written last.

All of the lessons learned and summary findings prepared in Phase IV should be included in the report. The action plan may be voluminous and it should be decided whether to include it in the same document or for it to be separate.

Step 20: Distribute and discuss evaluation results with program collaborators/stakeholders

An important aspect of any evaluation is that the findings be shared with all program collaborators. It is critical that everyone involved in the program not only be informed of important lessons learned, but also have the opportunity to discuss the results. In most cases, only a few copies of an evaluation report are produced and hence, it is distributed on a limited scale. Alternatives to the typical and limited approach should be explored and the Evaluation Coordinating Group should develop a plan for how the findings can be distributed and discussed with all key program collaborators.

Creative strategies for diffusing study results from the central to the community level should be explored. A few approaches, which have been successfully tried, include:

- preparing different versions of the study findings for different readers, for example, the full evaluation report can be distributed to a limited number of stakeholders

- summary of the report (perhaps 10 pages) can be distributed to all program staff who were in any way involved with the evaluation

- a "fact sheet" of 2 pages can be widely distributed to a variety of people who would be interested in the main evaluation findings and lessons learned

- holding meetings with program collaborators in each of the program regions to discuss the lessons learned and their possible application

- asking fieldworkers involved in the evaluation to return to the communities where data was collected to discuss the findings and recommendations with program collaborators at that level

There are certainly other creative ways that evaluation results can be distributed and discussed with the interested persons.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusions Regarding the Participatory Methodology

Experience in various countries has shown that a number of the constraints associated with traditional evaluation methods can be overcome through the use of the participatory methodology described in this manual. There are a number of key features of the methodology, which appear to contribute to its effectiveness.

Involving Program Stakeholders

By involving program stakeholders (information users and decision makers) in all phases of evaluation planning and implementation they can overcome their anxiety about evaluations and a sense of ownership of evaluation results can be created on their part.

Simple Data Collection Techniques

Through the use of simple data collection and analysis techniques all program staff can be actively involved and can develop basic data collection skills.

Focus on Lessons Learned

By focusing the evaluation exercise on developing the lessons learned from program implementation, program stakeholders can more openly analyze past problems and successes.

Strengthening Team Collaboration

The involvement of different levels of project collaborators as evaluation team members can contribute to the development of more open relationships between them during the evaluation activity which often continue beyond the evaluation exercise.

Combining Outside and Inside Evaluators

The outside evaluator brings objectivity, skills in data collection methods and in group facilitation. He/she orchestrates the process and participates as a team member. The insiders bring to the evaluation their intimate knowledge of the program and their commitment to discovering how to improve **their** program.

Practical Recommendations for the Future

Based on evaluation findings, team members develop concise and practical recommendations related to each of the program components. The involvement of program staff helps assure that the recommendations are realistic and feasible.

Revised Action Plan

The evaluation does not end with the formulation of beautiful recommendations. A last step in the process is the development of a revised program action plan which incorporates the lessons learned in the evaluation.

Learning Experience for Program Stakeholders

Past evaluation team participants agree that involvement in the entire evaluation process increases both their understanding of program components and dynamics and also their skills in program evaluation.

Learning Experience for Evaluation Coordinator

Each participatory evaluation is an occasion for the evaluation coordinator to explore alternative ways of structuring the evaluation process and of strengthening participant learning.

CHAPTER V

Caveats and Applications of the Methodology

The participatory evaluation methodology presented in this manual has been used with health and nutrition programs in a variety of settings. It has been shown to be an effective tool for involving program stakeholders in the evaluation of their own programs and for developing practical lessons for improving program performance. However, the process is not magic. The success of a participatory program evaluation depends on a variety of factors related to the availability and carefully structured use of human and other resources. A number of caveats, all discussed in detail in this manual, must be seriously taken into consideration if the methodology is to successfully used.

READ THROUGH THIS MANUAL AHEAD OF TIME: It might sound pedantic but the best way to avoid problems in carrying out a participatory evaluation is for the evaluation coordinator and coordinating group members to read this manual ahead of time. The importance of this point cannot be emphasized enough. If you read every page in this manual before you start planning the evaluation many problems can be avoided.

Choice of the Evaluation Coordinator

Based on past experiences, it seems that the most important factor in the success of a participatory evaluation is the choice of an appropriate evaluation coordinator. The individual chosen for this task must have experience in qualitative data collection, in adult learning/training and group facilitation, be open, creative and have a high energy level. The manual tells you more of what to look for in this critical choice.

Careful Planning

Each step in the evaluation process must be carefully planned with respect to the timing, human and material resources required and responsibility for the tasks at each step in the process. A preliminary step in planning, already mentioned, is for evaluation organizers to read this manual so that they have a clear idea of what is involved from start to finish. Only then will they be able to begin planning in detail how to organize the process.

Evaluation Facilitators

A critical factor in ensuring that participation is channeled and productive during the evaluation process is that group facilitators have sufficient experience and preparation for the task. It is good to involve various program collaborators as facilitators in the evaluation process; however, they must be skilled facilitators, and be adequately oriented and supervised in carrying out these tasks. Responsibility for facilitating the large evaluation team during the workshop activities should be reserved for individuals with strong facilitation skills or weaker individuals can be teamed up with those who have these skills. Participation with weak facilitation often leads to detours, the loss of precious time and frustration on the part of everyone.

Coordination of Fieldwork Logistics

Perhaps the most complicated aspect of the overall planning is that associated with the fieldwork phase. Logistical planning for the fieldwork must begin early and anticipate a variety of factors/aspects detailed in the manual. Both prior to and during the fieldwork phase, responsibility for logistical arrangements must be clearly defined.

Scheduling Data Collection and Analysis

In developing the daily schedule for fieldwork data collection, it must be remembered that the analysis of qualitative data is very time-consuming. As a rule of thumb, the analysis of a set of interview data will take approximately twice as long as conducting the interview itself. It is recommended that the time planned for actual data collection, including travel time, be limited to a half-day to leave the remainder of the day for data analysis.

Skills in Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Most teams have reported that the most difficult part of the entire evaluation process is the analysis of the qualitative data. It is imperative that at least one person on the evaluation team, and preferably several, have strong skills in qualitative data collection and analysis. The evaluation coordinator should have these skills. A team of persons with skills only in quantitative research methods will encounter numerous problems using this essentially qualitative methodology.

Involvement of Program Managers

A tendency has been observed in participatory evaluations for program managers to delegate too much responsibility to program implementers for conducting the evaluation. The concept of stakeholder involvement in the evaluation implies that both program implementers **and** managers must be actively involved in all phases of the process. The involvement of program managers is of critical importance to ensure that their priorities and opinions are incorporated into the evaluation process.

Effective Group Facilitators

For all of the group planning, training and orientation sessions, experienced group facilitators are required. Group facilitators should have skills in active listening, questioning and synthesizing. The presence of good facilitation skills will help assure that groups accomplish their tasks in an effective and timely fashion.

Scope of Data Collection

The evaluation methodology is particularly suited for use with community-based programs. However, an evaluation of such programs should include data collection not only at the community level but also from institutional actors who are involved with the program. It is only by assessing the opinions and attitudes of institutional and community actors that the evaluation will yield a holistic understanding of program accomplishments and constraints.

Experienced Fieldwork Team Leaders

The success of the fieldwork phase depends largely on the skills of the team leaders. They must be carefully chosen in terms of their: physical stamina; ability to motivate and coordinate team work; group facilitation skills; analytical thinking skills required for qualitative data analysis; experience with the type of program being evaluated.

Time Commitment on Part of Team Members

The evaluation methodology involves a learning process which can be effective only if team members fully participate in that process. This requires that individuals chosen as members of the full evaluation team and/or of the field teams must be available to participate on a full-time basis, for the duration of the corresponding phases of the evaluation.

Support from Management

The use of the participatory methodology will be effective only if it is understood and supported by management. Institutional and program managers must understand the rationale and practicalities of this type of methodology and must provide the human and other resources required. Without their full support, the evaluation cannot succeed.

Choice of Evaluation Team Members

Both the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the later impact of evaluation results depend upon the careful choice of persons to be involved in the process. Choice of the program stakeholders, the decision-makers and potential information-users, must be carefully made to assure that the right people are included in the process.

The Challenge

The methodology proposed in this manual may seem like a rigid recipe. It is hoped, rather, that it will be seen as a framework which helps groups of persons within programs and institutions to design participatory program evaluations using some of these elements and modifying others. Participatory evaluation is a young field and the best ways to go about it remain to be discovered. The challenge to all of us is to experiment and to develop methodologies, which help us to more effectively learn from program constraints and successes, in order to continuously strengthen program strategies.

CHAPTER VI

Involving Communities in M&E Activities

A. Why involve community members in evaluation activities?

There are several key reasons why it is important for communities to be involved in the evaluation of community health and development programs.

First, their involvement should ensure that the subjective, or insider, perspective of community members is reflected in evaluation findings and recommendations.

Secondly, through involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities, community members can gradually develop responsibility and skills in this area. In any effort to strengthen community capacity to manage local health and development programs, skills in M&E are an important component.

Thirdly, evaluation activities can stimulate community learning on how to implement community programs. Just as the involvement of program implementers in evaluation activities can stimulate *organizational learning*, so community involvement in evaluating community programs can stimulate *community learning*. Through evaluation activities communities can systematically analyze their experience with community programs and develop lessons for the future.

Community Involvement in Evaluation

- Ensures that communities' subjective perspective is reflected in evaluation findings
- Develops M&E skills of community members
- Stimulates community learning related to implementation of community programs

Limitations of the participatory evaluation methodology

In feedback received from people who have used the participatory evaluation methodology described in earlier chapters, some have said that community members were not sufficiently involved in the evaluation process. Many people have asked how their involvement could be increased. It is true that in the evaluation methodology presented in this manual the role of community members is relatively limited. The methodology focuses on how to involve program implementers in evaluating activities and strategies, which they have developed and carried out.

B. What role do community members play in the participatory evaluation methodology?

In the seven phase participatory evaluation methodology, the role of community members, as interviewees, is very important although it **is** limited in scope. Through in-depth interviews, different categories of community members are asked to give their opinions regarding:

- strengths and weaknesses of program activities
- roles played by community members and development workers
- lessons learned from carrying out past activities
- suggestions on how to develop sustainable future community level activities

In past participatory evaluations, this type of information, collected through interviews with community members, has proved to be very valuable. Undoubtedly, in future evaluations interviewing community members will continue to be an important component. But beyond acting as interviewees, "How can community members play a more active role in the monitoring and evaluation of community health programs?"

In this chapter, I will first discuss the constraints to greater community involvement, in the evaluation methodology presented in this manual, and; secondly, I will describe alternative ways that communities can be involved in M&E activities on an ongoing basis.

Given the way the core participatory evaluation methodology is designed, there are four reasons why I do not believe that it is feasible to involve community members to participate in this entire process.

Time: The seven-phase evaluation process takes between three and four weeks to complete. This is usually too much time for community members to be away from their community and family responsibilities.

Requires literacy: The evaluation process depends to a great extent on the ability of participants to read and write. Involving illiterate or low-literate people in this process would undoubtedly be quite frustrating for them.

Intense analytical task: The three to four-week evaluation process involves intense analytical work. Even some development workers find the various tasks in the evaluation to be mentally quite fatiguing. It would not be realistic to expect community members, who are not used to being involved in extended periods of intense "brain work" to actively participate in the evaluation process.

Scope of evaluation: In the holistic approach proposed in the evaluation methodology all facets of program implementation are examined, including administrative, logistical and managerial issues. Many of these issues are not of direct relevance to community members and their involvement would not be appropriate.

For these several reasons, in my opinion it is not advisable to try to involve community members as full partners in the 20-step evaluation methodology. Rather, I would suggest considering alternative methods and ways in which communities can be involved in M&E activities on a more ongoing basis.

The discussion which follows deals with three issues related to community involvement in M&E:

- Who should be involved in M&E activities?
- When should community members be involved in M&E activities?
- What methods can be used with and by community members in M&E activities?

C. Who should be involved in M&E activities?

In community health development programs different categories of community members should be involved both in initial assessments and in program planning activities. Likewise, different groups of community stakeholders should be involved in evaluating community level activities. Depending on the activities to be evaluated, categories of community stakeholders who should be involved in M&E activities might include:

- formal community leaders
- informal community leaders (often these are women leaders)
- men
- women
- youth
- members of different gender groups, ethnic groups and castes

M&E activities should ensure that the voices of all groups within the community are heard.

D. When should community members be involved in M&E activities?

Community health programs should seek to involve community members in evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. They can be involved:

- In baseline data collection
- During program implementation
- When outside support for a project/program comes to an end

At each of these stages, different approaches can be used to involve community members in M&E activities.

E. What approaches and methods can be used with and by community members in M&E activities?

Participation of community members in M&E activities can take place in different ways. Four quite different approaches have been used to involve community members in M&E activities. In each approach, the amount of responsibility assumed by development workers and by community members varies. The four approaches are described in the text below, and are summarized in Table 6.

Communities can participate in monitoring and evaluating community programs in different ways.

1) Community members as data collectors

   The most frequently used approach to involve communities in M&E is one in which development workers decide what information to collect, they design simple data collection tools and they train community members how to use those tools. Examples of such tools include:

   - A table in which traditional birth attendants record birth and deaths
   - A table in which community health workers record cases of diarrheal disease, treatments used and outcomes

Usually, once community members have collected such data, development workers are responsible for analyzing it and formulating conclusions. In some cases community members analyze the information themselves and draw their own conclusions. In many cases, this type of community involvement is rather superficial and not particularly useful or meaningful to community members themselves. Although the community's role is quite limited in this approach, their participation in data collection does help program implementers monitor community activities.

2) Community members as interviewees

A second approach to community participation in M&E is where outsiders interview community members in order to understand their opinions. This is done primarily through individual or group interviews, or discussions. Such interviewing can take place either at the beginning, during or at the end of project activities. Here are a few examples of how this approach can be used:

- Group interviews are conducted with community women to get their feedback on maternal health project activities.
- Individual interviews are conducted with community leaders to assess their understanding of and involvement in a child health project strategy.

Table 6: Four Approaches to Involving Communities in Monitoring and Evaluation

Approach	Responsibility	Training & Follow-up of Communities Required
Community members as data collectors Outsiders develop simple data collection instruments. Community members collect information. Development workers or community members analyze data.	Outsiders with the help of community members.	Initial training and on-going follow-up.
Community members as interviewees Development workers collect information from community members on their perceptions and priorities, and their feedback on program activities.	Outsiders coordinate data collection, analyze and formulate conclusions.	None

Table 6: Four Approaches to Involving Communities in Monitoring and Evaluation		
Communities analyze and draw conclusions using PRA and PLA tools Outsiders facilitate the use of Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) or Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) activities with community groups. Groups analyze information which they generate themselves and draw their own conclusions regarding present situations and future strategies and solutions.	Outsiders facilitate process. Communities analyze their own data and formulate their own conclusions.	None
Communities self-evaluate Community members define criteria for evaluating community activities. They collect information, analyze it and formulate their own conclusions.	Initial facilitation and support provided by outsiders. Community members later assume full responsibility for data collection and analysis.	Intensive training and follow-up

Aubel: 1999

3) Communities analyze and draw conclusions using PRA and PLA tools

A third approach involves the use of simple, visual tools by development workers with community groups to stimulate them to analyze their own situation, values etc. These tools are referred to either as Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) or Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methods. They are used to stimulate learning on the part of both community members and development workers.

Objectives of PRA and PLA tools

- To allow community members to express their perceptions, priorities, problems and plans for the future
- to allow community development workers to listen to and dialogue with community members in order to better understand their lives, perceptions, problems, priorities and plans for the future

PRA/PLA tools were designed for various purposes and they can be used in M&E activities at different times: at the beginning of project implementation; during project implementation; and at the end. Compared with the second approach (above), the participation of community members is greater when PRA/PLA tools are used. These tools require community members to take considerable responsibility for recording their own ideas, for analyzing them and for drawing their own conclusions.

Some of the PRA/PLA tools, which can be used with community groups to monitor and evaluate community level activities, are listed here. Some of these can be used as pre and post-data collection tools, before and after program interventions have been carried out.

- **community mapping:** to understand community perceptions of their environment, natural and human resources, problems and resources for dealing with them

- **time line or pie chart of tasks and time use by gender:** to understand women's and men's tasks and daily time use

- **health problem ranking:** to understand how community members rank community health problems in terms of frequency, severity etc.

- **problem trees or causal diagrams:** to understand communities' ideas about the causes and consequences of priority community health problems

- **body mapping:** to understand community perceptions of body parts and internal functions

- **food calendars:** to understand food availability at different seasons of the year

- **clinical vignettes:** to understand how community members would deal with various health problems which are described to them in short vignettes, or case studies

- **role plays and stories:** to stimulate group analysis of health-related situations and problems depicted in a short role play or story

- **narrated observation walks:** to understand how local inhabitants view both the resources and problems in their environment

(In Chapter VII you will find several references which contain more information on these and other PRA/PLA tools and on exactly how to use them.)

The PRA/PLA tools are useful, not only for collecting information and learning about community realities and ideas, but also for stimulating discussion of what action should be taken. An important final step in the use of the PRA and PLA tools is to discuss what actions communities themselves and development workers can take to deal with situations, problems or needs revealed through the exercises.

4) Communities self-evaluate

A last approach to community involvement in M&E is that in which communities define their own criteria for evaluating community activities and programs and use these elements to carry out their own evaluations of community activities. Community groups can define criteria for evaluating different aspects of community programs, such as:

- Effectiveness of group functioning
- Accomplishment of planned goals and objectives
- Effectiveness of leadership
- Effectiveness of resource mobilization
- Effectiveness of management of planned activities

In this approach, the long-term objective is for communities to be able to develop and conduct M&E activities on their own. At the outset, considerable support is required from development workers to help community members develop basic skills in M&E. Two examples of the types of criteria that communities could define themselves to evaluate community strategies and activities are described below.

– **Village health committee** (VHC): Development workers could ask health committee members to define criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of their own committee. Without talking about "criteria" per se, committee members could be asked to define the characteristics of a "health committee that functions well" and a "health committee that does not function well." To determine how well their committee is functioning they could periodically meet to discuss the characteristics of their committee compared to their definitions of an effective and ineffective committee.

  Examples of community-defined criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of VHCs:

  a) regular attendance at committee meetings
  b) carry out all agreed upon tasks

c) work cooperatively with other community members

– **Community health workers** (CHW) Community members could be asked to define their expectations of the CHWs, i.e., what they expect them to do. They could decide themselves how they will assess the CHWs work and at what frequency.

  Examples of community-defined criteria for evaluating CHW performance:

  a) inform l00% of the women with children 0-23 months of the vaccination days in the village
  b) conduct one cooking demonstration per month with women
  c) conduct one health education session per month with men

Exercise with Community Group Example: Defining and Assessing Group Effectiveness

- Defining group effectiveness: A community group might decide that two key characteristics of “effective group functioning” are:
  – Participation in decision-making
  – Active involvement of all group members in carrying out planned activities

- Assessing group effectiveness: In order to assess “participation in decision-making,” members of a community group could rate their own effectiveness on a scale of one to five:

  1) never
  2) occasionally
  3) sometimes
  4) most times
  5) all the time

On a five-point scale, drawn either on the ground or on a piece of flipchart paper, each group member indicates his/her rating using either a small stone (put on the ground) or a marking pen (on the flipchart paper.) Once all members have recorded their opinions, the results of the assessment are discussed and the group decides how they can work together even more effectively in the future.

If community leaders are provided with sufficient guidance and follow-up they can learn how to facilitate such evaluation exercises themselves.

Conclusions and caveats related to community participation in M&E activities:

- All projects/programs should aim to gradually increase the ability of community leaders and members to develop and facilitate evaluation activities on their own.

- As with participation in any aspect of program implementation, greater involvement of community members in M&E requires greater skill development efforts and follow-up support from development workers.

- The effectiveness of virtually all M&E activities, carried out either with or by communities, depends to a great extent, on the group facilitation skills of either the development workers or community members.

- Programs may have a series of different M&E activities dealing with different aspects of program implementation and carried out at different times. Community members do not necessarily need to be involved in all evaluation activities.

- Methods and tools developed for use with or by communities should be simple. At the same time they should stimulate in-depth analysis on the part of community members.

- There are no precise recipes on how to develop M&E activities and use them with communities. Creativity and ongoing experimentation are required to develop approaches and tools, which are useful both to communities themselves and to program implementers.

- Prior to a comprehensive program evaluation (as described in Chapter III) complementary evaluation activities can be designed for use with or by communities and the results of those activities can be fed into the larger program evaluation effort.

- M&E methods and tools should generate information which not only contributes to **organizational learning** but which also promotes **community learning.**

CHAPTER VII

Other References

The following references, which are organized by topic areas, would be useful to those who want to read more about how to plan and conduct both participatory evaluations and other types of community studies.

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