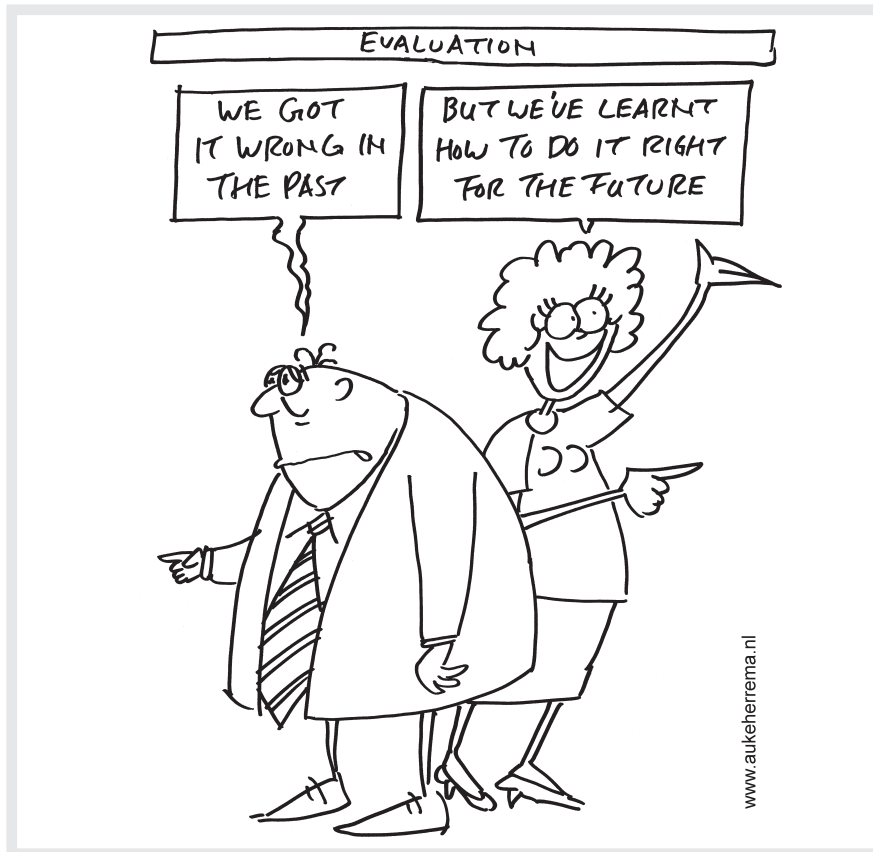


Part 1

THE EVALUATION CONTEXT



Background

Stakeholder participation

Learning

The project cycle

The project plan

Monitoring

Evaluation

Impact assessment

Setting up a monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment system

The evaluation of information projects, products and services geared to reducing poverty and improving livelihoods in developing countries takes place within the context of a set of standard activities. Experience shows that it is difficult to understand, implement and follow-up evaluation without understanding these contextual activities – from project planning, implementation and management to monitoring, impact assessment and follow up.

In Part I, we start by providing some background to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, what the terms mean, and recent changes in approach. We then look at the two fundamental ingredients of good evaluation – stakeholder participation and learning. Having laid these foundations, we move on to the context in which evaluation takes place – the project cycle, a widely used management tool, and the importance of planning. We then look briefly at monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment before moving on, in Part 2, to an in-depth discussion of the evaluation process.

Throughout Part I you'll find information on best practice, as well as examples of applying the various activities in a project cycle to information projects, products or services.

Background

Monitoring and evaluation relate to the assessment of project planning and implementation. Monitoring focuses mainly on the *operational issues*, whereas evaluation is often more concerned with the *strategic issues* and it uses information generated by monitoring. Impact assessment is, in effect, the final part of evaluation, concerned mainly with looking for the changes in the lives of people as a result of a project or programme.

Box 1.1 Definitions

MONITORING

Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analysing project information to assist timely decision-making, ensure accountability and provide the basis for evaluation and learning. It usually consists of a standard set of activities. It is used to provide management and key stakeholders with an indication of progress and achievement of objectives, measured against set indicators and expected results.

EVALUATION

Evaluation is a systematic assessment – as objective as possible – of a planned, ongoing or completed project. It aims to answer specific management questions, to judge the overall value of a project and to provide lessons learned to improve future actions, planning and decision-making. Evaluations commonly seek to determine the accessibility, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, relevance, usability and utility of a project to the organisation's objectives.

'M&E' is a commonly used way of referring to the combination of 'monitoring and evaluation', which together provide the knowledge and information needed for effective project management, organisational and stakeholder learning, reporting and accountability purposes.

IMPACT

Impact is the change in the lives of people as perceived by them at the time of evaluation, as well as sustainability – enhancing changes in their environment to which the project has contributed. Changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended. These perceived changes in people's lives could correspond to either the goal or the purpose level of the intervention (see pages 68-83).

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment processes have traditionally been seen mainly as a means of accounting to funding agencies for expenses on inputs and activities and have frequently been carried out by an outside evaluator. The role of these processes in managing for impact is often neglected, and the information and insights they generate remain unused.

Increasingly, however, it is being recognised that these processes can be used not only to meet funding requirements, but also for self-assessment and learning and that they should include stakeholders, and especially primary stakeholders – those who use the information products/services. This means doing things in a different way with implications for planning, evaluation skills and budgets. Table 1.1 summarises this change in the approach to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

Table 1.1
Change in the approach to monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

OLD APPROACH	NEW APPROACH
Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment mainly for external funding body	Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment for everybody involved in the project
Focused mainly on the logframe activities and on financial reporting	Provides feedback, generates learning and supports changes in direction
Lots of data and little analysis (lengthy reports)	Strong on analysis of how to make improvements
Little learning	Learning is the key
Little stakeholder participation	Lots of stakeholder participation in decision-making and inclusion in the evaluation team
Seen as boring and not very useful for project staff or stakeholders	Seen as active, interesting and useful

If the ultimate goal of an evaluation is managing for impact – and it should be – then that evaluation needs to reflect a strong commitment to stakeholder participation and to learning. How to involve stakeholders, especially primary stakeholders, and how to achieve learning should be built into project management, from start to finish.

Stakeholder participation

Stakeholder participation is the active involvement of stakeholders in the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of a project. Stakeholders are individuals, groups or organisations who have a direct or indirect interest in a project, and/or are affected by its implementation and outcome. They are often divided into primary and secondary stakeholders. Examples of stakeholders include project target groups, NGOs, community leaders and donor agencies.

Primary stakeholders are the people who will be using the information product/service, and therefore the only group who can really talk about project impact. If a product/service is not easily

accessible and usable at the primary stakeholder level, there is unlikely to be impact. Involving primary stakeholders in the project cycle will enhance usability by helping to ensure that:

- the information product/service is complete, relevant and sustainable
- it is accessible both physically and in terms of its delivery (e.g., the language and language level used to deliver and promote it)

The involvement of different groups of stakeholders should be appropriate and mutually agreed. Primary and secondary stakeholder participation can improve the quality and impact of information products/services by:

- helping to establish agreement on the situation to be addressed and the proposed course of action
- giving stakeholders a clear idea of what should be done and why, thus enhancing their support for and involvement in the project
- improving the quality of information collected
- improving the quality of the analysis, with stakeholders often providing a better insight into the strengths and weaknesses of a project
- helping to create more interest in and understanding of the project and thus enhancing its impact

There are various ways you can include stakeholders in the various stages of a project. Participatory approaches have gained increasing popularity since the 1960s, with those coming under the generic term 'participatory learning and action' (PLA) proving to be most effective (see points 5, 6 and 7 in Box 1.2). Older approaches to evaluation tended to see stakeholders as either passive or as sources of information; their active participation was not encouraged (see points 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Box 1.2).

Stakeholder participation is not just about including stakeholders in the project cycle. It is also about ensuring that the level of their participation is meaningful and involves the sharing of ideas, information and decision-making. Stakeholder participation should not be passive, with the stakeholders simply being informed about a project, asked questions, consulted from time to time and/or asked to provide resources to help the project, such as labour or transport.

For stakeholder participation to be effective, it needs to be:

- **Functional:** This involves stakeholders influencing decisions in projects where the general nature of the project might have already been decided upon, but there is a lot of room for further and more detailed decision-making.
- **Interactive:** This involves stakeholders participating in joint analyses, which lead to action plans, new projects and institutional development, as well as an increased sense of ownership of the project

Only with a combination of functional and interactive participation, and the inclusion of primary stakeholders, can stakeholder participation be truly participatory.

Box 1.2**Stakeholder participation in the context of the old and new approaches****OLD APPROACH**

- 1 **PASSIVE PARTICIPATION:** People are simply told what is going to happen or what has already happened. *EXAMPLE: Health officers are informed that a training course on HIV/AIDS will be organised for them over the next couple of months*
- 2 **PARTICIPATION BY INFORMATION GIVING:** People participate by answering questions, without being able to influence the process. *EXAMPLE: Visitors to a library are asked to fill in a questionnaire in order to assess their interest in a range of books*
- 3 **PARTICIPATION BY CONSULTATION:** People participate by being consulted, being able to give their opinion and to comment on the process, but don't share in the decision-making. *EXAMPLE: Readers of a newsletter are asked to give their opinion on its content and format. The publishers decide which suggestions to implement*
- 4 **PARTICIPATION BY MATERIAL INCENTIVES:** People provide resources such as labour, knowledge and transport in return for food, cash or other material incentives. They have a say in deciding whether or not to become involved but can't influence the activity as a whole. *Example: Information project managers write an article for a newsletter, sharing their experiences and being paid a nominal fee for their contribution*

Adapted from Pretty (1994)

NEW APPROACH

- 5 **FUNCTIONAL PARTICIPATION:** People participate and influence decisions in projects where the general content has already been decided upon, but there is a lot of room for further decision-making. *EXAMPLE: Extension officers participate in developing an extension approach and trainers participate in developing the methodology for a training course on the new approach*
- 6 **INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION:** People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans, new projects and institutional development; this increases their sense of ownership and stimulates them to take control over local decision-making. *EXAMPLE: Guided by radio programme makers, young girls are encouraged to identify specific issues they think a radio programme for young people should deal with and get assistance in developing their own programmes*
- 7 **SELF-MOBILISATION:** People are able to identify their own problems and come up with their own solutions, but might need some external help to effect these solutions. *EXAMPLE: Villagers have carried out their own needs assessment and have asked for a meeting with local authorities to help them organise a training course*

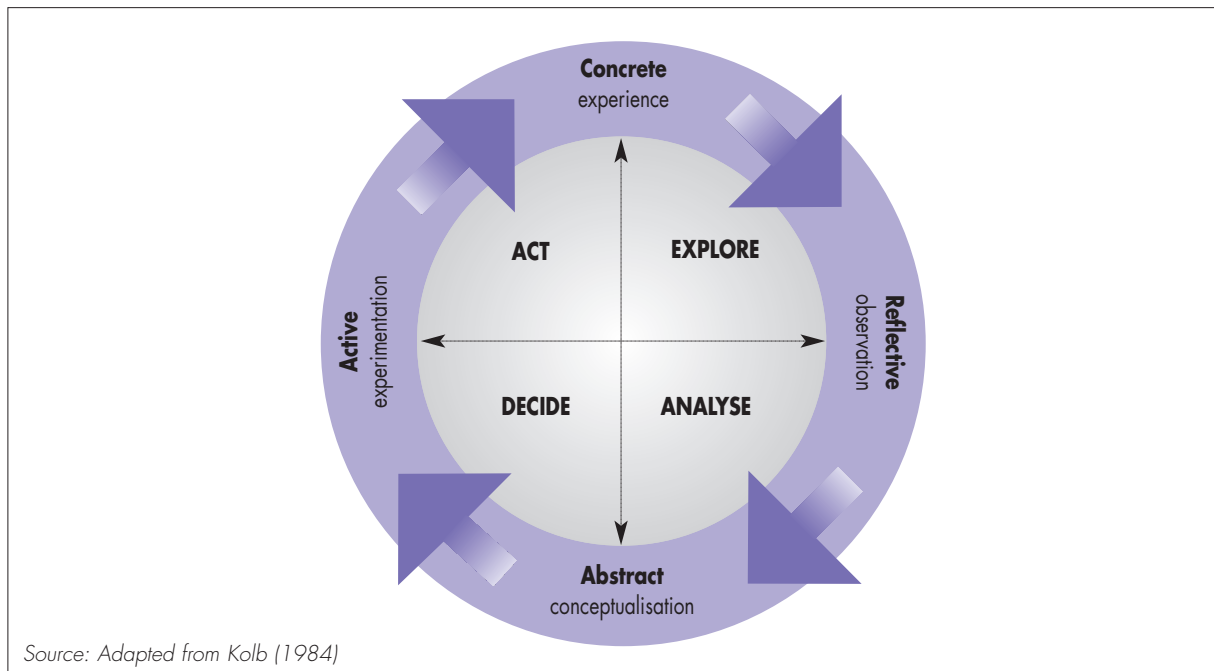
Getting stakeholder participation right is not easy. It can often take a lot of time and resources that may not be available, and you need to be open to different ideas and opinions once you give people a chance to influence decision-making. It is therefore important to think through the process of stakeholder participation, carefully considering both the benefits and the challenges.

Learning

Here we are talking about learning throughout the project cycle, including the evaluation phase of the cycle (see Figure 1.2, page 8). Learning involves reflecting on project experiences and using the lessons from that reflection to improve future actions.

It is important to integrate learning into planning, monitoring and evaluation and to include primary and secondary stakeholders in this process. Using participatory learning-oriented methods in project planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation will encourage stakeholders to share their views. The aim is to create an active learning process, or cycle, that helps to improve your information projects, products and services. Kolb's learning cycle (see Figure 1.1) is a commonly used model.

Figure 1.1
The learning cycle



In this model, 'concrete experience' is followed by 'reflection' on that experience, carried out on a personal or group basis. 'Reflection' is followed by 'abstract conceptualisation', which involves describing the experience and applying known theories to it, and then moving to 'active experimentation'. This involves constructing ways of modifying experience, leading in turn to the next 'concrete experience'. This whole process might happen in a matter of minutes, or over days, weeks or months, depending on the topic, and there may be a simultaneous 'wheels within wheels' process. It is a good idea to start the cycle by reflecting on experiences you've already had (see the example in Box 1.3) and then proceed through the other stages.

It is worth noting that, often, different stakeholder groups find themselves at different stages of the learning cycle. Whereas one group might have already decided to apply some lessons learned, another group might not yet have completed its review or explored solutions to problems revealed by the review. Keeping all parties in step with each other through the learning cycle is important if there is to be impact on the way in which changes are made to the existing project and to future, similar projects. There are many ways in which learning can be enhanced throughout a project. These include:

- involving stakeholders in all stages of the project and providing them with relevant and timely information throughout its planning and implementation
- developing the capacity of stakeholders to contribute to all stages of the learning cycle
- providing continuous learning opportunities (e.g., workshops, training, exchange visits)
- encouraging dialogue, openness, creativity and experimentation

You also need to be aware of factors that could adversely affect learning in an organisation (see Box 1.4).

Box 1.3 The learning cycle applied to farmer training

REFLECTION: The learning in this case applies to a national fisheries extension department that had been working with farmers for many years using the Training-and-Visit (T&V) approach. It did not seem to be working, so the extension workers set aside time with some farmers to reflect upon what might be going wrong and what to change in the next round of training.

LEARNING: From the reflection they learned that farmers wanted training that enabled them to adapt new practices to their own farming methods, and wanted support after the initial training. The farmers were literate and were happy to have support provided via written and illustrated materials. And they wanted materials written at their level of language and understanding, with illustrations related to their environment, and complete in all technical details.

APPLICATION: Based on this reflection and learning, the extension service realised that they needed to work in a participatory way with farmers to develop the materials and that they needed the expertise of writers and illustrators to produce really useful and usable materials. Together they decided to work with the farmers as teams both before and during the training.

ACTION: Before the training, the teams went to the farmers' areas to get to know their working environment and information sources. During the training, the writers and illustrators worked with the farmers to get the language and illustrations right and with the extension workers to ensure that materials were technically correct and complete. The draft versions were tested with a selection of farmers, and were then produced and distributed to the farmers who had attended the training, as well as to those who had not attended but were aware of the training through word-of-mouth, the extension service, the promotional posters developed during the training course and the radio broadcasts arranged by the extension service.

THE NEXT CYCLE: After this initial phase, the extension service went through two further cycles of reflection and learning. From these they learned that providing the materials alone proved almost as effective as providing training and materials. To implement the project in other regions they needed to go through the full cycle of putting teams together, getting to know farmers and their environments, and writing and illustrating specifically for them.

Box 1.4 Factors affecting the learning cycle

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE: In some organisations, accountability tends to be associated with blame. This discourages openness and learning. This culture should be changed, encouraging people to see that there is often as much to learn from poorly performing projects as there is from successful ones.

PRESSURE TO SPEND: Learning takes time, and the pressure to meet disbursement targets can lead to shortcuts being taken during the project planning stage, with lessons from previous experiences being ignored or only selectively applied, in haste.

LACK OF INCENTIVES TO LEARN: If accountability is not built into the project cycle, there will be little incentive to learn. This is particularly so when staff rotation or turnover is frequent, with people often having moved on long before the shortcomings of a project in which they were involved become evident.

LOSS OF INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY: This also stems from frequent staff rotation or turnover, as well as from a reliance on short-term consultants and the weakening or disbanding of specialist departments.

TUNNEL VISION: People, departments and organisations can get stuck in a rut, carrying on with using familiar procedures and approaches even when their shortcomings are well known.

INSECURITY AND CHANGE: If people are unclear about an organisation's objectives, or these objectives appear to change frequently, this will not encourage learning.

INEQUALITY IN THE DONOR RELATIONSHIP: If donors take the driving seat, rather than working on an equal footing with the recipient organisation and sharing decision-making, this can inhibit the incentive to learn.

Adapted from OECD (2001)

The project cycle

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment operate within the context of a project cycle. Before we look at what a project cycle is and how it works, it is important to be clear first about what a project is, and what exactly we mean by ‘information products and services’, the main focus of this *Smart Toolkit*. These definitions are given in Box 1.5.

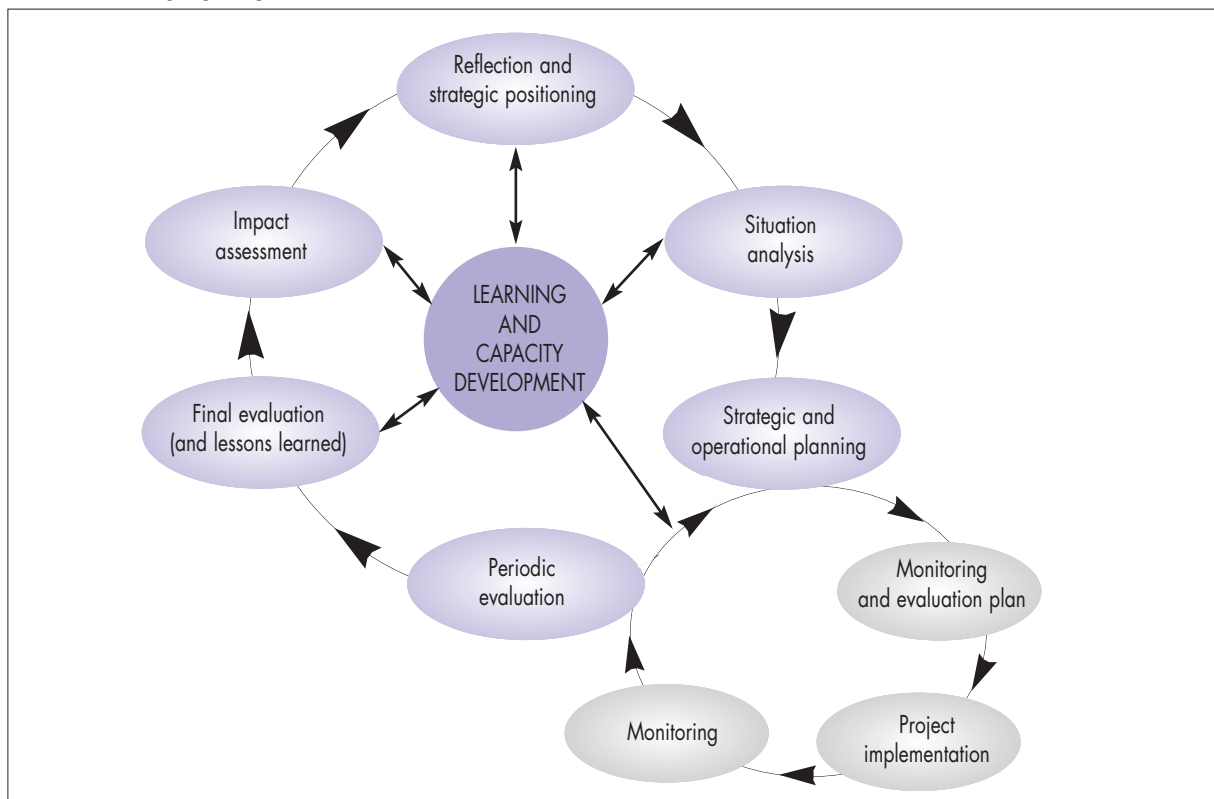
Box 1.5 Some important definitions

What is the difference between a project and a programme?

- A **project** is a one-off activity undertaken to create or deliver a product/service aimed at bringing about beneficial change or added value. It contrasts with processes or operations, which are permanent and seek to create or deliver the same product/service over and over again.
- A **programme** can consist of several projects and is therefore more complex and likely to be spread over a longer period of time. Collectively, these projects are usually intended to contribute to a higher level objective (e.g., improving the livelihoods of the programme beneficiaries).

The terms ‘information **products**’ and ‘information **services**’ usually mean project deliverables, such as training courses, newsletters, information databases and libraries. Unlike projects, which tend to have a beginning and an end, services are often continuous, with no declared end.

Figure 1.2
The project cycle



The activities in a project cycle should relate to each other within an overall, coherent management process. If opportunities for stakeholder participation and learning are built into the cycle, the lessons learned can be integrated into subsequent project cycles, not only to increase the impact of each project, but also to improve overall capacity development.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the project cycle. At the hub of the cycle, and relating to each stage of the cycle, is learning.

Box 1.6 The project cycle applied to a farmers' training course

Take as an example, a training course on improved agricultural practices for small-scale farmers. This project is part of a long-term programme to improve agricultural production in the area, with other elements of the programme including such measures as providing seed and supporting irrigation initiatives. Applying the project cycle stages to this project would involve:

REFLECTION AND STRATEGIC POSITIONING: Be clear about your organisation's vision and policies, and how these relate to strengthening the capacity of farmers to increase agricultural production. At this point, lessons learned from previous project evaluations and impact assessments should be brought in to contribute to strategic positioning.

SITUATION ANALYSIS: Take a critical look at issues constraining agricultural production. These might show that offering a course in improved agricultural practices will probably contribute towards increased agricultural production. Or it may not. Assuming that it does, however, you now move on to planning the project strategy and operations.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Working with stakeholders, decide what you want to change at farmer level. This provides the information you need in order to decide on such strategic factors as course content, form and participants. It should also be fed into the monitoring and evaluation plan, which should be developed at this stage.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING: Sort out practical matters such as the budget, roles and responsibilities, resource persons and participants. You need to make a detailed operational plan. This stage should also include finalising the monitoring and evaluation plan, which should include how and when to conduct the evaluation and who is to conduct it.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN: Monitoring is concerned mainly with operational issues, whereas evaluation focuses on the more strategic questions. A monitoring and evaluation plan involves defining the plan's purpose and scope, reviewing the project concept and objectives, assessing stakeholders' key information needs, formulating indicators, organising data collection and analysis, and deciding on the communication and reporting process.

IMPLEMENTATION: This relates first to project implementation, and then to the implementation of periodic evaluations. The evaluations can be conducted before (*ex ante*), during and/or after (*ex post*) the project is implemented. In the case of the training course, this could translate into running the course (project implementation), then asking trainees for feedback at the end of the course, and following this up some months later with an evaluation of how they applied their learning.

MONITORING: Monitoring should start as soon as the project is implemented. It is a continuous process that should focus on the project inputs (e.g., resource persons), activities (e.g., field trip) and outputs (e.g. number of farmers trained). It can be carried out in a variety of ways, including observations and/or interaction with the participants.

EVALUATION: Evaluation focuses on immediate (short-term) project outcomes (e.g., participant satisfaction, course relevance). The training course evaluation could be done at the end of the course by asking participants to fill in a questionnaire, score the course against given criteria and/or discuss what worked and what did not. They could also be asked whether they can put into action what they have learnt.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: The focus here is on what (long-term) changes occurred in the lives of the target group. Impact assessment can be time consuming and complex requiring, in this case, not only good baseline data about the area's agricultural production, but also a clear idea from the outset of the change the course was intended to have.

Used correctly, the project cycle can be a powerful project management tool, helping to improve the delivery of information projects, products and services and to increase their impact. Box 1.7 gives you some ideas about how to work with a project cycle in order to achieve learning and impact.

Box 1.7 Working with the project cycle to achieve learning and impact

In order to facilitate learning during the project cycle, there are several issues you need to be aware of:

SHARED LEARNING: Involving stakeholders in learning opportunities (e.g., exchange visits, progress meetings) is crucial to the effectiveness of a project. Learning can be stimulated by encouraging people to try out new ideas and new ways of working, to review and analyse project activities, and to participate in decision-making

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT: Stakeholder involvement in the project cycle ensures that different perspectives and views are taken into account, thus enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the project. It also helps to create a sense of ownership of the project, particularly among the primary stakeholders.

LINKING PLANNING AND EVALUATION: It is important to ensure that evaluation is focused on what is necessary to know in relation to the planned activities and objectives of the project. Evaluation findings can assist in making decisions at both the strategic and operational level.

DOCUMENTATION: It is important to document project activities and to collect project information in a well-structured and systematic way, ensuring that the information is reliable and valid. Poor documentation will detract from effective evaluation. It is also important to record project failures as well as successes, if the project is to have credibility

FEEDBACK AND DISSEMINATION: The findings of the different stages of the project cycle need to be fed back and disseminated in a targeted way, ensuring that the right people receive the right information at the right time.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS: It is important to be aware of the extent to which project activities are carried out effectively in terms of cost.

We now look at the core stages of the project cycle – planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, bearing in mind that all of them should reflect a commitment to learning and stakeholder participation.

The project plan

A project plan is a formal, approved document used to guide project implementation and management. It covers such elements as objectives (expected results), assumptions, processes, activities, costs and timing.

Project planning is the process of drawing up a project plan, and it is important to get it right. As the term suggests, it involves planning the whole project, not just individual parts of it. It should provide:

- a **strategic** outlook on how the project can make a difference – its outcome and impact
- an **operational** outlook on how to implement and manage the project – its inputs, activities and outputs
- a clear reference **framework** for strategic monitoring and evaluation

Project plan components

The components of a project plan should include:

- **Background and problem statements:** Explain the context in which your project will operate and the problems it intends to address
- **Objectives:** The *goal* (overall development objective) is the ultimate change in the lives of the beneficiaries that you wish to bring about through the project intervention; and the project *purpose* (specific objective) relates to the change in the behaviour of the beneficiaries you wish to happen in order to contribute towards the goal
- **Assumptions:** These are the external factors that influence the success of your project, but that you can't control; being clear about your assumptions will give your project plan the flexibility it should have
- **Inputs:** These include human and material resources, and their cost
- **Activities:** Specify exactly what you will do in order to deliver the outputs
- **Outputs (expected results):** These include the core product/service you wish to provide that will contribute to the project purpose
- **Indicators, and means of verification:** Indicators are variables that help to measure the success of a project; methods and sources of verification describe how and where you intend finding the required information to verify the measurements

Theory of action

Underpinning all these components should be your theory of action. By this, we mean an idea of what changes the project is expected to bring about and what is needed to bring about that change.

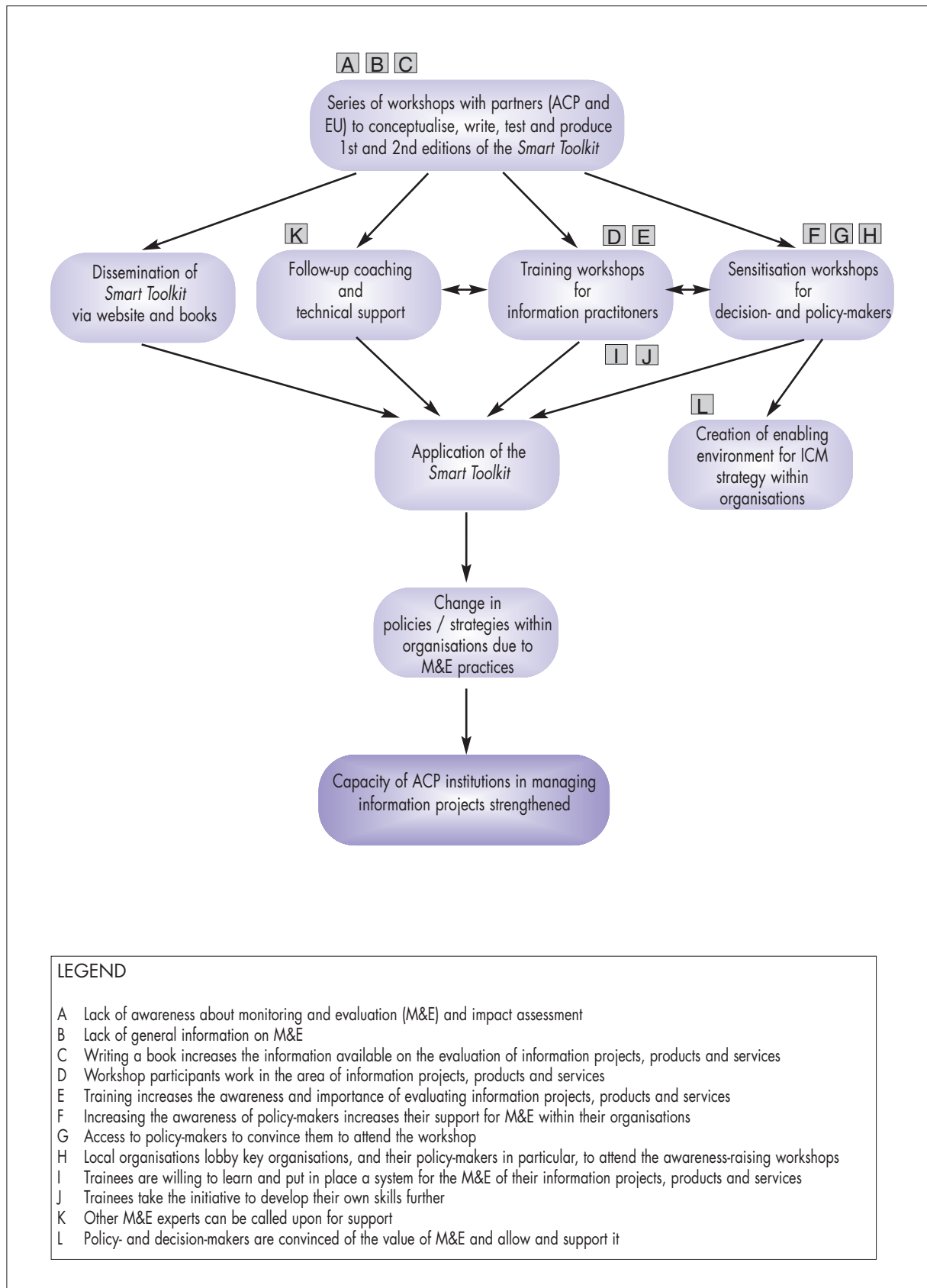
Every project plan should have a theory of action. If your theory of action is clearly spelled out, it will also show what you need to evaluate in order to determine whether expectations are becoming reality. A theory of action is more than just a plan; it helps you to see all the links relating to how the information project will be carried out. It will give you and your stakeholders a clear picture of what you want to achieve, the path to take to get there, and what you need to evaluate to measure your performance.

A visual diagram is a helpful means for creating shared understanding about a project's theory of action. Figure 1.3 provides an example of the theory of action, the project example being the development of this toolkit. Although this pathway was not developed at the outset of the project, it is useful to see the path taken and how it is expected to evolve with time.

Logical framework

Every project plan should also have a logical framework, linked to the theory of action. A logical framework is often used to provide a summary of a project plan. It is meant to create shared understanding among key stakeholders about the thrust and logic of the plan. The standard outline

Figure 1.3
Example of a theory of action, applied to the development of this toolkit



for a logical framework is shown in Table 1.2. People use different terms, sometimes, to those shown in the table (e.g., instead of 'Intervention Logic', which we use throughout this toolkit, you might see 'Narrative Summary' or 'Objective Hierarchy'). Whichever heading is used, it covers the various levels of objectives from inputs to activities, outputs (expected results), purpose and goal. These objectives should be linked in a well-designed and logical manner, such that if all of them are achieved there is a good chance of the goal being fulfilled.

Table 1.2
The logframe matrix

	INTERVENTION LOGIC	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
GOAL				
PROJECT PURPOSE				
OUTPUTS (EXPECTED RESULTS)				
ACTIVITIES				
INPUTS				

A logical framework provides some information that is useful for monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, but it should not be seen as the plan for these processes. It should be used as a flexible planning tool that can be revised regularly to reflect monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment findings.

Table 1.3 gives an example of a logical framework, as applied to the process of developing this toolkit (compare this with Figure 1.3, which shows a theory of action applied to this toolkit).

Developing a project plan

A good project plan is important because:

- it helps you to think through the changes you want to bring about through your information project
- it provides a basis for your monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment
- it makes it easier to develop strategies and operations, including mechanisms for learning and stakeholder participation, that really contribute towards impact
- it provides the basis for obtaining funding

Table 1.3
A summarised logical framework for the development of this toolkit

	INTERVENTION LOGIC	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
GOAL	Contribute to agricultural development by building the capacity in the ACP			
PURPOSE	The capacity of ACP institutions in the management of their information projects strengthened	By the end of 2013 there is evidence of change in the way information projects are run through better targeting, improved content	- Annual reports showing changes in the way they provide services - Budget for M&E - Survey	
EXPECTED RESULT 1	Application of the toolkit	Usefulness of the toolkit in promoting M&E	- Stories - Survey	There is institutional support for the toolkit
ACTIVITIES FOR RESULT 1	Produce the toolkit through the holding of writing workshops, testing and reviewing of the toolkit	Toolkit prepared	Publication	
ACTIVITIES FOR RESULT 1	Organise training workshops on how to use the toolkit in ACP countries	Information specialists in partner organisations trained	Number of beneficiaries trained; plan of action	
EXPECTED RESULT 2	Policy- and decision-makers sensitised on the importance supporting environment for M&E	Policy- and decision-makers aware of importance and role of M&E in the functioning of their organisations	Post-workshop survey (6 months) Policy- and decision-makers are able to cite reasons why M&E is important	'Right' people attend the workshops
ACTIVITIES FOR RESULT 2	Organise workshops in ACP countries to sensitise policy- and decision-makers on the importance of M&E in managing information projects, products and services	Sensitisation workshops held in the ACP	Feedback from the workshop	
EXPECTED RESULT 3	Technical support available to partner organisations	Development of some type of framework which supports the carrying out of M&E	Annual reports Feedback	
ACTIVITIES FOR RESULT 3	Contract consultants to provide technical backstopping	Organisations using this support	Report on feedback of work done and the achievements	
ACTIVITIES FOR RESULT 3	Develop website to support the workshops, training activities, strategy development, etc. and to carry an online version of the toolkit	Website and supporting portal	Feedback via the Q&A	
INPUTS	Funds, technical			

When formulating the steps in developing a project plan, you should invite stakeholders to contribute to this process.

Important steps in the process are:

- Define the basic question, problem field or area of concern. Some possible examples are: What is your vision for an improved future situation? What do you consider your objective to be in relation to the identified problem area? What existing policies might affect your intervention?
- Conduct a thorough situation analysis, including an analysis of external factors (e.g., the policy environment). What is the core problem and how is this affected by other factors?
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis. Who are the stakeholders? In particular, who are the primary stakeholders? How are the stakeholders involved? Can they be included in the analysis? If so, how?
- As part of the stakeholder analysis, information projects need to carry out an 'information analysis' in relation, in particular, to their primary stakeholders (e.g., What information products/services already exist, and which ones are used, and to what extent and why? What means of communication are already available to deliver information, and which ones are used and why? How do people prefer information delivered to them? What language do they prefer?)
- Analyse possible approaches to addressing the problems that have been identified, and develop a strategy.
- Formulate objectives (goal, purpose, outputs), activities, indicators, means of verification, and assumptions.
- Develop a clear and viable plan for monitoring and evaluating the project, and for assessing its impact
- Develop a work plan and budget that include defined tasks and responsibilities, a budget overview and a time frame.
- Consider the need for capacity development for performing project tasks.

Common mistakes that can occur when developing a project plan include:

- not enough strategic thinking on which to base it
- not involving key stakeholders
- not relating the budget to the activities
- not realistically assessing the risks in implementing the plan
- using existing project plans without considering the specifics of a new project
- planning in too much detail too soon
- formulating an unrealistic set of objectives as a 'wish list' for the desired impact
- failing to review the project plan at regular intervals
- not learning from past experiences in planning

Box 1.8 Some key points in project planning

- Define the boundary of the project by being clear about your vision, objectives and policies, as well as existing policies relating to the area of concern; specify expected impact and objectives as SMART objectives (see pages 50 and 96)
- Conduct a thorough situation analysis that looks not only at current problems and issues, but also at possible future directions and opportunities
- Consider issues of usability for all information products/services. Work with primary stakeholders to find out what forms of information products/services they want and can handle
- Be clear about your assumptions, the external factors that might influence your project; the success or failure of a project often turns on these factors
- Work in collaboration with stakeholders as much as possible to ensure shared learning, ownership and commitment and to increase the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the project
- Be explicit about roles and responsibilities
- Use your project plan for monitoring and evaluation, adapting it when necessary at both the operational and strategic levels
- Use the plan for communication with all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone involved knows what they have to do, when, where, how and why

Monitoring

Monitoring helps you to find out if the delivery of your information projects, products and services is going according to your plan. It focuses on assessing project effectiveness and efficiency, especially at the levels of inputs, activities and outputs.

'Effectiveness' means the extent to which activities (e.g., a question-and-answer service, QAS) have contributed to delivering the service (e.g., answers to questions posed by QAS users). 'Efficiency' means the extent to which the project resources (time, people, materials, money) have been used to maximum benefit (e.g., the extent to which the QAS could have functioned with fewer resources).

If the project is not going according to plan, you might need to take additional measures to get it back on track. If that is not realistic, you might need to review your plan. Monitoring also provides you with the necessary background information to help explain evaluation information. Ultimately, monitoring helps you to learn from your experiences during the implementation process and this information is essential for making evaluations.

Monitoring is not an easy task, partly because people often lack the necessary skills and capacity. It involves:

- keeping records and following up all activities and products
- analysing and using what comes out of this work

The monitoring process

Monitoring is a continuous process of assessing what is happening with the project plan. It is mainly about answering the question: 'Are we doing things according to plan?' Monitoring can be conducted at different levels:

- **Individual level:** To what extent is what you're doing in line with the activities that are your responsibility? What is going well and what do we need to improve?
- **Project level:** To what extent are the activities being implemented and the resources being used in line with the project plan? What is going well and what do we need to improve?
- **Organisational level:** Where do we do well as an organisation and what can we improve?
- **Stakeholder level:** To what extent are stakeholders actively engaged in the project (e.g., in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation)? What is going well and what needs to be improved?

Before conducting monitoring, you need to be clear about what aspects you want to monitor and how often to monitor them. For example, will you be monitoring all activities or only those that relate to stakeholders? Will your monitoring focus mainly on assessing how interim results contribute to the overall objectives and goal? Will you monitor activities weekly, monthly, or at some other interval?

Other key issues you need to consider when developing a monitoring process include:

- **Agreeing on the data** that you and other stakeholders need: Who needs what data and when? How do they intend to use the data? Remember that you should collect the data you need, not just data that make the project look good.
- **Agreeing on methods** for data collection and processing: How will data be collected (e.g., via interviews, questionnaires)? Who will collect the data? How will the data be processed (e.g., will the data be analysed using statistics software and then critically reviewed at a monitoring team meeting)?

Box 1.9 Some key points in monitoring

- Ensure that the time and costs of your monitoring system are in balance with total time and costs of the project
- Link monitoring to your operational plan
- Involve stakeholders in the monitoring process. This will help to create understanding, ownership and commitment when making changes in the operational plan.
- Decide on what is essential data to be collected, as well as how to go about collecting, processing and reflecting on it together with the stakeholders involved in the project
- Organise shared learning events with stakeholders during the monitoring process
- Use monitoring data as a management tool, particularly at the level of operations (inputs, activities, outputs/expected results), to inform management and stakeholders about possible action that needs to be taken
- Ensure adequate and timely reporting to management and stakeholders, addressing their specific information needs

Implementing monitoring involves collecting and analysing the data, and reviewing and reporting the findings. Sometimes, findings can be acted upon immediately to improve project implementation. In other cases, they might be more substantial and should be fed into the evaluation process.

Project staff and stakeholders should be involved in designing and implementing the monitoring process. Ideally, the monitoring team should include representatives of the stakeholder groups.

Common mistakes in monitoring include:

- a lack of a clear reference framework in terms of what you will call success and what you will call failure; these are often defined through indicators
- defining too many indicators, making it a huge task to gather data and making interpretation difficult
- not being able to assess change, because you never assessed what the situation was like when you started (people often use baselines for this purpose; see pages 24 and 76)
- not involving stakeholders in defining what data they need and how to go about collecting and processing it
- collecting data, but not analysing them to understand their significance for management decision-making
- lack of clarity about the validity of the data collected and inadequate capacity to verify the data collected
- not organising learning events where the monitoring data are critically reviewed by various stakeholders

Evaluation

Whereas monitoring is concerned mainly with operational issues, evaluation focuses on the more strategic questions about the information projects, products and services. It involves:

- **generating data** on the progress and results of a project
- **reviewing this data** for current and future use and learning
- taking into account the **interests of the stakeholders** (e.g., beneficiaries, target groups, funding agencies, NGOs, partners, policy-makers, networks) who have a direct or indirect interest, positive or negative, in the project

Evaluation gives you the tools to explain what happened, and how and why things happened as they did. Evaluating information projects, products and services is particularly challenging. Whereas evaluating them from a management and accountability perspective is fairly straightforward, trying to determine their benefits, particularly in the medium to long term, is difficult. The picture becomes

even more complex when information and communication technologies (ICTs) are involved and with the increasing globalisation of information products/services.

It is important to distinguish between external and internal evaluations:

- **External evaluations:** These are conducted by organisations or independent evaluators outside the organisation which is implementing and managing the project
- **Internal evaluations:** These are conducted by people within the organisation which is implementing and managing the project

A combination of both, with stakeholder participation, is usually best if real learning and impact are to be achieved. The focus in this toolkit, however, is on internal evaluation.

Evaluations can be conducted at various times in the project cycle:

- At the **beginning** of the project planning stage (also known as *ex ante* evaluation). The focus here is on assessing the project proposal in terms of relevance, feasibility, potential impact or expected benefits. The evaluation is like a second opinion on whether or not the project is viable. It includes checking to see if the needs of the stakeholders have been assessed properly and if the strategies and plans have developed adequately.
- At the **mid-way** (or other) point during the project. The focus here is on looking at project progress and performance and identifying changes in the environment that affect its effectiveness. The evaluation involves collecting and analysing data for performance indicators, to compare how well the project is being implemented against expected results. Sometimes a mid-way evaluation is conducted to explain an unusual event (e.g., the monitoring data might be showing a disturbing or remarkable trend).
- At the **end** of the project cycle (also known as *ex post* evaluation). The focus here is on reviewing the whole cycle within the context of its background, objectives, results, activities and inputs. The evaluation looks at how well the project did in terms of the expected outcomes, how sustainable these outcomes appear to be and what factors led to the results.

As far as possible, evaluation events should also be learning events. This can be done, for example, by organising stakeholder workshops to generate information as well as to communicate and discuss key findings of the evaluation.

The evaluation process

The key steps you need to consider when developing an evaluation process are:

- **Preparing the evaluation terms of reference:** This involves defining its scope and purpose, identifying data sources, deciding on methodology, communication, the evaluation team, the work plan and budget, and the terms of reference
- **Designing the evaluation:** This involves reviewing the project and the data needs, deciding on the focus of the evaluation and the key questions to address, selecting appropriate data collection and analysis methods, and drafting the communication strategy

- **Implementing the evaluation:** This involves collecting and analysing the data, and reviewing and reporting the findings
- **Following up the evaluation:** This involves drafting a plan to act on the findings, monitoring the implementation of the plan and managing any follow-up activities or consequent changes

Project staff and stakeholders should be involved in organising and designing the evaluation, and it is important to think through who will conduct the evaluation. Ideally, the evaluation team should include representatives of the project's stakeholder groups.

In Part 2, we go into detail on all these steps of the evaluation process.

As in monitoring, many mistakes can be made in evaluating a project. It is important to understand what mistakes are possible and how to avoid them. Common mistakes in evaluation include:

- not planning the evaluation in advance, and leaving no time and resources for it
- carrying out an evaluation for the sake of a donor, rather than for learning and development
- collecting data without a clear picture of the evaluation design and expected outputs
- not seeing evaluation as a learning process, and forcing conclusions upon stakeholders, rather than facilitating stakeholders to draw conclusions themselves
- producing too many or irrelevant recommendations
- writing an evaluation report without a clear idea on how the recommendations could be implemented

Box 1.10 **Some key points in evaluation**

- Evaluations should be planned assessments that focus on the extent to which a project has realised its objectives
- Ensure that, as far as possible, evaluations are viewed by the project implementers and stakeholders as a learning mechanism to enhance strategic and operational management
- Plan evaluations carefully at the start of a project, preferably with stakeholders, ensuring that there are enough resources to conduct the evaluations properly, and also to create ownership and commitment
- Develop the evaluation process in collaboration with stakeholders, ensuring that their specific information needs are integrated and their views on data collection and analysis are considered; this will contribute positively to relevance, impact, usability, accessibility, sustainability, utility, effectiveness and efficiency
- Evaluation questions should be broad questions that help you focus on what you need to know, both positive and negative
- Involve stakeholders in implementing the evaluation process (e.g., by setting up a stakeholders' evaluation committee and organising stakeholder workshops)
- Consider an evaluation as an important opportunity to learn and interact with stakeholders
- Relate the recommendations back to the original evaluation questions

Impact assessment

Impact assessment helps you to make strategic choices about your information projects, products or services and assess whether or not they are having an impact on behaviour, lives and livelihoods. Impact assessment is, in essence, an evaluation that focuses primarily on the changes a project or programme brings about. It is related to the highest level of project objective – the goal.

Assessing impact means looking for the changes in people's lives as a result of a programme or project. Often, impact assessments relate to a broader set of interventions (e.g., a programme with interlinked projects), not just one project. They involve looking not only for the expected changes, but also for the unexpected ones, both positive and negative. Impact assessment is usually done when a project or programme has been completed, or at least well on its way towards completion.

In the case of an information project or programme, an impact assessment will look at the broad, long-term effects of the information product/service, at whether the product/service has actually influenced the activities of the target group or led to a change in society. It will ask such questions as: To what extent has the project helped to improve the livelihoods of the farmers? How has it helped – or not helped? What are the unexpected positive and negative side-effects of the project? These questions will generate a better understanding of success or failure.

Although it is difficult to prove that an information product/service has had a demonstrable long-term impact at the level of socio-economic development, it is acceptable in some cases to make assumptions that there is a link between the changes observed and the project or programme, on the condition that the link is plausible. An example is given in Box 1.11.

Box 1.11 Impact assessment of extension booklets on aquaculture

In collaboration with the national fisheries department, an international development agency funded the production of a set of extension booklets to improve aquaculture practices among small-scale farmers. The booklet sets were developed with the farmers following a carefully designed participatory process that ensured they suited the farmers' lifestyle, culture, language, resources and objectives. Some 6,000 booklet sets were printed and distributed.

About 3 years later, the impact of the extension booklet sets was assessed. The impact assessment was conducted among three groups of farmers:

- those who heard about the booklets and came to the project office to get them
- those who received training in using the booklets, and were given the booklets during training
- those who received training but were not given any booklets

The farmers were asked to complete questionnaires designed to find out if they understood the booklets, had followed the recommendations in the booklets, had told other farmers about them, and had seen changes in levels of production. More than 70% said they had followed the recommendations, with higher levels among those who had received the booklets during training. Over the 3-year period, from a region where fish production among small-scale farmers had been static for many years, there was an average annual increase in production of 27%.

The impact assessment drew a direct link between the extension booklets and this increase in production, and attributed much of the success of the project to its inclusion of the farmers in developing the booklets.

The impact assessment process

The reasons for conducting an impact assessment can include:

- it is required for accountability purposes
- it is needed to help convince stakeholders (e.g., donors, partners and target groups) that the project is relevant to the intended changes
- it will improve the understanding of the effects (both positive and negative) on target groups
- it will help reformulate the strategy not only of the project, but also of the organisation implementing the project

Impact assessment can be time consuming and costly as it requires assessing changes at the level of the target groups, which can be quite complicated. The first step to take before conducting an impact assessment is to revisit the strategic framework of the project or programme. This should spell out what the intended impact is, the process leading to it, and the factors contributing to the change.

The key information needs of the different stakeholders then need to be addressed, and these will help determine the appropriate methods to be used for the assessment. The method chosen will also depend on the purpose and scope of the impact assessment. Often a combination of quantitative (e.g., statistics) and qualitative (e.g., perceptions, narrative) information will be gathered. If the purpose is not only accountability but also learning and empowerment, and the scope of the assessment is very participatory and there are adequate financial resources, then more participatory and qualitative methods will probably be appropriate, not least because they can be used to enhance learning.

Common impact assessment methods include:

- **Using available data on the target group:** These data might have been collected by the project organisation or stakeholders, or from external sources such as a bureau of statistics. If the data required are available, this is a cost-effective basis for an impact assessment. Often, however, the available data might not be exactly what are needed and therefore do not clearly show what changes the project has brought about. Taking as an example the farmers' training course referred to in Box 1.11, if there has been increased production this might be attributable to the course, but it could also be attributable to more effective extension services or simply to the weather being more favourable. Will the available data distinguish adequately between these various possible reasons for increased production?
- **Surveying the target group:** This involves conducting the assessment among a sample group of the intended project beneficiaries. If the target group is extensive, the sample should be large, but the cost of this needs to be taken into account compared with the total cost of the project.
- **Self-assessment:** This can be conducted on various aspects of changes (e.g., change in capacity). A range of tools can be used, preferably participatory and learning-orientated ones, in line with PLA (as discussed earlier, under 'Stakeholder participation', see page 4).
- **Impact stories:** Here the emphasis is on collecting in-depth qualitative information ('stories') from a limited number of people in the target group. The stories can provide rich information

that helps to interpret the impact of the project on the target group. A useful methodology for this is the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique (Davies and Dart, 2005), based on finding out what people consider the most important change to have occurred as a result of a project, and being prepared for changes that were not envisaged in the original project plan. This technique has the added advantage that the key indicators are chosen not by outsiders but by the people in the target group.

- **Participatory methods:** An example of a participatory method is an impact flow chart. Here, people in the target group (and other stakeholders) are asked to describe the key elements of the project and how these have contributed to observed or perceived changes.

It is often advisable to use a mixture of methods. Increasingly, engaging primary and secondary stakeholders in impact assessment is seen as good practice. Interactive methods such as self-assessment and story-telling can facilitate such involvement.

Making impact assessment participatory is important because the only perspective from which to see impact is that of the target group itself. The impact the target group sees is the impact that matters. The typical characteristics of participatory impact assessment are given in Box 1.12.

Box 1.12 **The core issues of impact assessment**

The core issues to be aware of when designing an impact assessment include:

- communication (the information needs of all stakeholders)
- context (the effect of the environment on the assessment)
- scale and scope (where the assessment is conducted and how much it seeks to address)
- attribution (who takes credit for change)
- indicators (what indicators are used and how they are selected)
- learning and accountability (why the assessment is being done)
- participation (who is involved in the assessment)
- resources (what is available in terms of human, material and financial resources)
- time and timing (when the assessment is conducted and how much time is need to implement it)

Common mistakes in impact assessment include:

- waiting for the results of an impact assessment when you could have already understood many key lessons about the outcomes from earlier monitoring and evaluation
- not planning enough time and resources for conducting the impact assessment
- confusing attribution and contribution; at the level of impact, usually you will not be able to attribute change to your project alone, as there could be many other influencing factors
- not giving enough attention to communicating the assessment findings to stakeholders and not encouraging them to analyse the findings
- conducting the impact assessment too early for project impact to be shown, or too late, when changes could have been affected by many other intervening factors

Box 1.13 Some key points in impact assessment

- Gather baseline data as early as possible (ideally, at the start of the project) to be able to measure change against these data
- Ensure that the resources needed for the impact assessment are available
- Involve stakeholders in the design and implementation of the impact assessment
- Combine quantitative and qualitative, participatory and conventional, and individual and group-based methods of data collection
- Ensure adequate feedback of the findings to all stakeholders
- See the assessment as an important tool for strategy development
- Link the evaluation of project outcomes to impact assessment

For a more detailed understanding of impact assessment, its core issues and how these issues are played out in actual impact studies conducted around the world, it is worth reading the CTA publication *Perceptions and Practice: An Anthology of Impact Assessment Experiences* (2006). The book describes a number of impact stories.

Setting up a monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment system

This involves the following steps:

- 1 **Define the purpose and scope** of the system: The purposes could include: accountability to funding agencies (upward accountability is most common), to partners (sideways accountability) and to beneficiaries (downward accountability); informing strategic directions, to make changes if necessary; informing operational directions, to make changes if necessary; and empowering key stakeholders. Each purpose has different consequences for the process (e.g., where the purpose is to empower the stakeholders, the process will be more participatory and learning-oriented). By 'scope' we mean the level of detail required, the level of stakeholder participation and the level of funding available (e.g., you might want to make the system highly participatory, but funding constraints limit the extent to which you can involve stakeholders).
- 2 **Review the project concept and objectives:** This involves asking such questions as: What is the project about? What is the theory of action underlying it? What does it intend to achieve? What are the assumptions about critical success factors?
- 3 **Assess the stakeholders key information needs:** The most important question here is: What do management, other project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders need to know and when? Information needs usually relate to project relevance, impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency. Evaluation questions focus on relevance, impact and sustainability at the level of goal/impact and specific objective/outcome. Monitoring questions focus on effectiveness and efficiency at the expected results and activity levels. Table 1.4 illustrates how information needs relate to different levels of objectives, with some sample questions.

Table 1.4
Linking information needs with different levels of objectives in a farmer training project

OBJECTIVES	LEVEL OF OBJECTIVES	EVALUATION CRITERIA	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
GOAL To improve farmers' livelihoods	IMPACT	Impact Relevance Sustainability Utility	<i>Evaluation questions:</i> To what extent have farmers' food security situations improved as a result of the project? Why/why not? What are the unexpected positive and negative side-effects? To what extent is improving food security relevant to farmers' livelihoods? To what extent is the change in the food security a lasting change? Why/why not?
PURPOSE To increase the number of farmers who apply improved farming practices	OUTCOMES	Effectiveness Relevance Usability	<i>Evaluation questions:</i> To what extent has the training contributed to good farming practices? Why/why not? To what extent are good farming practices relevant to the needs of the farmers? Why/why not?
EXPECTED RESULTS Farmers trained in improved agricultural farming practices	OUTPUTS	Effectiveness Accessibility Usability	<i>Monitoring questions:</i> Are farmers using the new practices? If 'Yes', then ask why and with what result? If 'No', then ask why not?
ACTIVITIES - Assess needs - Develop training course - Organise training course - Run training course - Follow up trainees	ACTIVITIES	Efficiency	<i>Monitoring questions:</i> Could the activities be implemented with less money and fewer materials and human resources? Why/why not?

- 4 **Formulate indicators and other data requirements:** You need to formulate a list of criteria against which to measure effectiveness and efficiency, and determine the type of data (quantitative and qualitative) you will need to carry out this measurement (e.g. 'number of farmers applying good farming practices' and 'reasons for not applying good farming practices').
- 5 **Organise the data collection, recording and analysis:** What methods will you use to ensure the right data are being collected and properly recorded and analysed? They can be qualitative/quantitative, individual/group based, participatory/conventional; there is more on all these methods in Part 2 (pages 106-114). How will the various stakeholders be involved in these processes? There is more information on different types of stakeholder involvement in Part 2 (pages 35-37).
- 6 **Organise critical reflection of events and processes:** Critical reflection means asking not only 'what happened' and 'why', but also 'what does this mean?' and 'what are we going to do about it?' This assists in learning and in managing for impact.

- 7 **Develop the communication and reporting process:** You should decide whom you need to communicate with and report to during the monitoring and evaluation and impact processes, and how to do this. Different stakeholders have different information needs and different reporting requirements.
- 8 **Assess capacities and conditions for implementing the system:** You need to be clear about what you need in terms of human capacities, incentives, structures, procedures and finance. You also need to assess the potential risks in the process of data collection, recording and reporting. Training farmers in participatory data collection methods will help to build the human capacity and also be an incentive for them to be involved in participatory monitoring and evaluation. A low level of support for a project will have implications for the capacities and conditions necessary to conduct monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, so it may be necessary to think about how to motivate stakeholders about the importance of these processes.

A well-designed and organised system will ensure that:

- the right data are being collected at the right time during and after project implementation
- the data collected will help guide project implementation and strategic decisions
- project staff and stakeholders will not be overwhelmed by the amount of data gathered
- the time and money spent in collecting and analysing data, and collating and reporting the information derived from this, will be reasonable

Box 1.14

An example of using a monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment system to shape communication activities

Healthlink Worldwide is a specialist health and development agency with a strong focus on:

- communication: supporting partners and clients to share health information effectively
- information and knowledge management (IKM): helping people find solutions to specific IKM problems
- networking and learning: sharing learning through interactive local, national and global networks

Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment have always been an important component of Healthlink's work, but the nature of these processes has changed over the years:

- they are now more participatory, all being done in consultation with the beneficiaries or their representatives, from the point when the evaluation plan and indicators for a project are developed, to the analysis of results and implementation of learning
- a qualitative approach is now more common; although Healthlink still keeps track of numbers, these are linked to qualitative changes that have taken place in projects, in the belief that marrying up qualitative and quantitative indicators gives more meaning to the numbers
- Healthlink now looks beyond immediate results of a project, at the wider implications of its achievements and actions on a broader group and across sectors
- while reporting to donors is a requirement of projects, Healthlink also works with beneficiaries to analyse the findings and draw out results that can help inform future decisions related to the beneficiaries
- findings are also now used to determine the type of resources or activities that may be of use to beneficiaries

Box 1.15
Some key points in monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

Stakeholder considerations

- 1 **SHARED LEARNING BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS:** To involve stakeholders in reflective learning sessions and opportunities (e.g., exchange visits, progress meetings) is crucial in making decisions that are owned, effective and sustainable in the long term
- 2 **INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS:** To promote trust and acceptance of the findings and agreement relating to what has been learned; to ensure that different perspectives and views are taken into account, thus enhancing relevance and effectiveness of the information projects, products and services
- 3 **OWNERSHIP:** To ensure that evaluation is owned as much as possible by the project implementers and by stakeholders as a learning mechanism and to assist in strategic and operational management
- 4 **SHARED PROCESS DEVELOPMENT:** To develop the processes in collaboration with stakeholders, ensuring that their specific information needs (key issues) are integrated and their ideas for collecting, processing and reviewing data are included
- 5 **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION:** To encourage shared learning and to ensure strategic decisions are understood and supported in the next phase of the project
- 6 **LEARNING EVENTS:** To encourage stakeholders to see monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment as important opportunities to learn together and enhance the impact and sustainability and efficiency of the project

Planning

- 7 **PLANNING THESE PROCESSES CAREFULLY:** To ensure there are enough resources to implement them and to create ownership and commitment. This is done with stakeholders at the start of a project
- 8 **DEVELOPING THE MONITORING, EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM:** To ensure that all three processes are part of a wider system that is designed during project planning

Data collection and documentation

- 9 **DATA COLLECTION:** From project inception, data relating to the information product/service should be collected in a way that is well structured and systematic so that it allows for regular monitoring of results, as well as ensuring preparation for an evaluation and impact assessment
- 10 **COMBINING METHODS:** Consider combining quantitative and qualitative, participatory and conventional, individual and group-based methods of data collection
- 11 **FOCUS:** Monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment should be focused on what it is necessary to know rather than what you think you might like to know
- 12 **CREDIBILITY:** Document both the successes and failures of the information project

Feedback

- 13 **FEEDBACK AND DISSEMINATION:** the findings emerging from the different stages of the project cycle need to be fed back and disseminated in a targeted way, so that the 'right audiences' receive the information most appropriate to them
- 14 **RELATE RECOMMENDATIONS BACK TO ORIGINAL QUESTIONS:** the findings from monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment can assist in making decisions at both strategic and operational levels