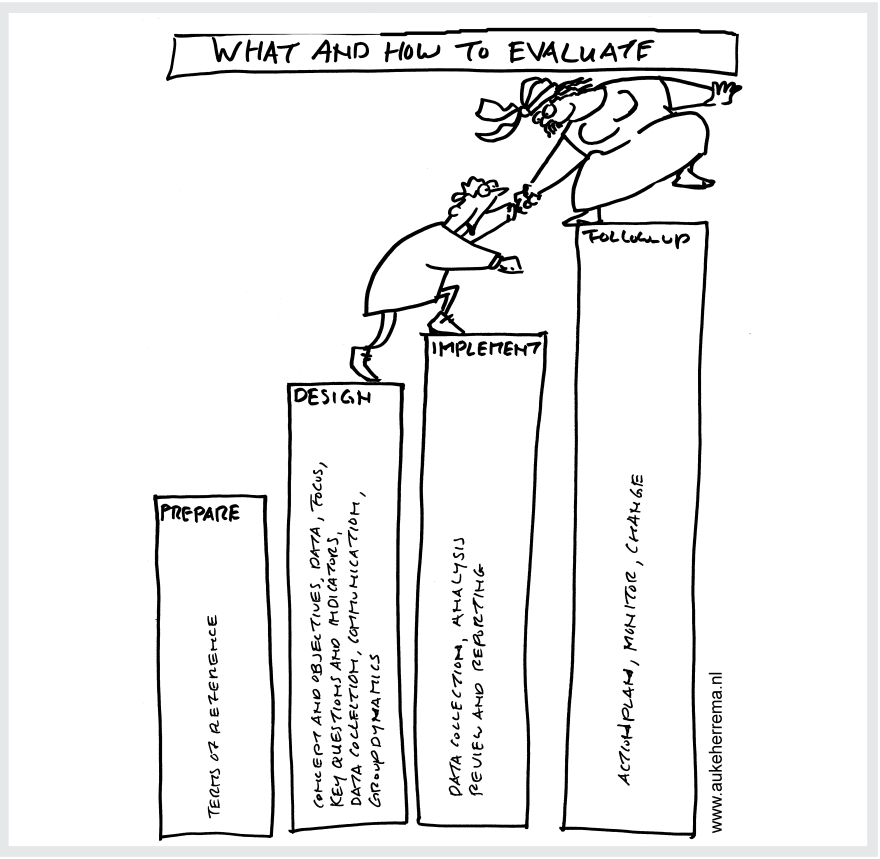
Part 2

THE EVALUATION PROCESS



In Part 1 we looked at the definition of evaluation, its purpose, trends and core ingredients, and at the context in which it occurs – the project cycle. We also looked briefly at the closely related processes of monitoring and impact assessment.

Now, in Part 2, we move on to the evaluation process itself. This process can be grouped into four phases:

- preparing the evaluation terms of reference
- designing the evaluation
- implementing the evaluation
- following up the evaluation

What are the main issues you have to think about when organising the evaluation of an information project, and how do you reflect them in your terms of reference? How do these issues affect the way you design the evaluation? How do you select the evaluation tools? Do the tools you select match the objectives set and the resources available? What does evaluation follow-up involve?

The process described here is intended mainly for self-evaluation, involving you and key stakeholders in the whole process. As we noted in Part 1, self-evaluation enhances the learning experience and makes it easier to apply the lessons learned to a project, with the overall aim of increasing its impact. We look both at the evaluation process in general and at how it applies, specifically, to information projects, products and services.

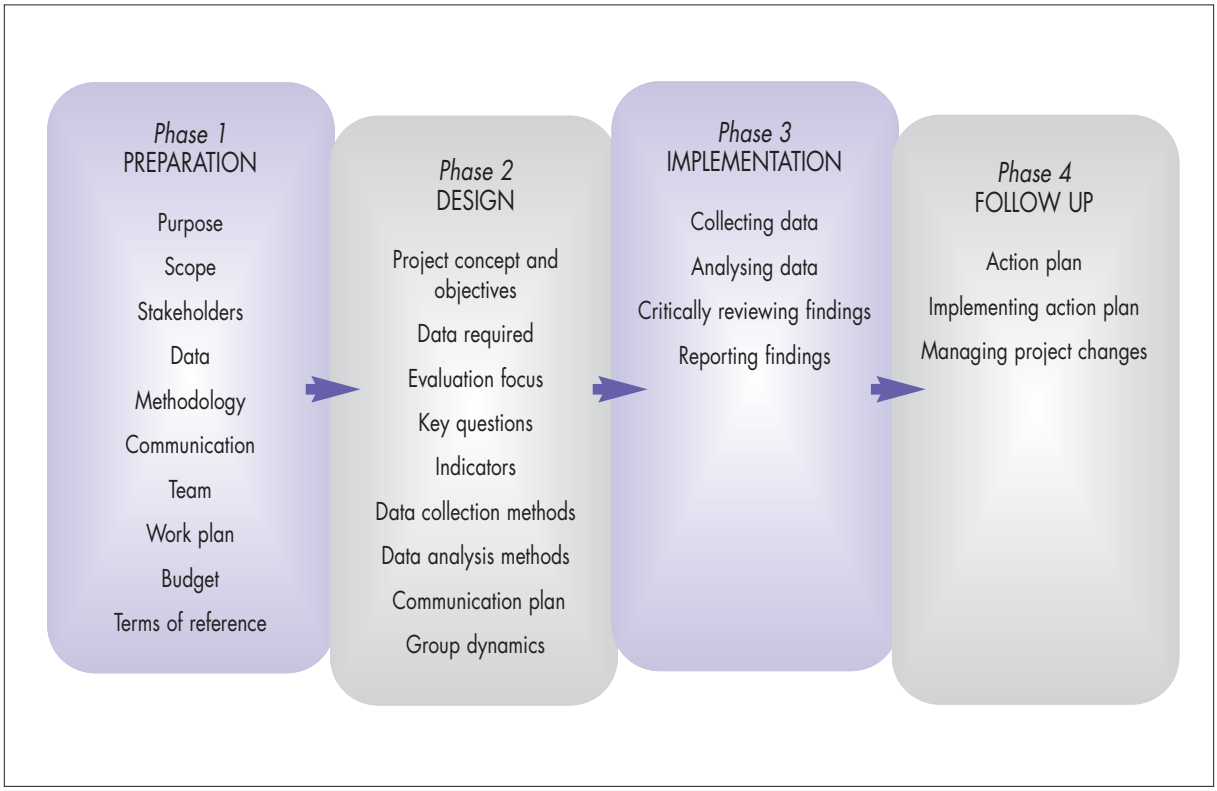
The four phases in the evaluation process can be subdivided into a clear set of stages:

Phase 1: Preparing the evaluation terms of reference
- Define the reasons for and purpose of the evaluation
- Define the scope of the evaluation
- Organise stakeholder participation
- Identify existing data and sources of data
- Choose a methodology for data collection and analysis
- Formulate a communication strategy
- Select the evaluation team
- Prepare the work plan and budget
- Formulate the terms of reference

Phase 2: Designing the evaluation
- Review the project concept and objectives
- Determine the data needed to evaluate the project
- Determine the evaluation focus, key questions and indicators
- Design the data collection methods
- Design the data analysis methods
- Design the communication plan
- Integrate group dynamics issues

Phase 3: Implementing the evaluation
- Collect the data
- Analyse the data
- Review and report the findings

Figure 2.1
The evaluation process



Phase 4: Following up the evaluation

- Formulate the follow-up action plan
- Implement and monitor the action plan
- Make changes where necessary

We have listed these stages in chronological order. In reality, however, you might find that in order to go to the next stage you need to revisit an earlier one, to improve it. For example, in Phase 2, when designing your evaluation and in your discussions with stakeholders, you might find it necessary to go back to Phase 1 to refine the terms of reference so that they match your stakeholders' information needs more closely. Also, there is likely to be some overlap between the phases.

The evaluation process involves selecting data collection tools. Here in Part 2, we discuss the process of selection, but do not go into detail on the tools themselves. That is the subject of Part 3, where we describe the tools you can consider for project evaluation, with Part 4 focusing on examples of how specific tools are applied to specific information projects, products and services.

Every evaluation process is unique. You need to design a process that best fits the project being evaluated and the purpose and scope of the evaluation. Whatever process you design, however, it needs to involve your stakeholders from start to finish. Without this level of stakeholder participation, the value of the evaluation in terms of learning and impact will be considerably reduced.

Preparing the evaluation terms of reference

The first phase in evaluating an information project, product or service is preparation. Getting the preparation right is crucial to the success of any evaluation. Getting it right means being clear about:

- the **purpose** of the evaluation
- the **scope** of the evaluation (what it will cover, and what it will not)
- who the **stakeholders** are and how to involve them in the evaluation
- what existing **data** and sources of data there are
- what **methodology** will be used to collect and analyse data
- the strategy for **reviewing and reporting** evaluation findings
- having a **team** capable of conducting the evaluation and implementing the lessons learned
- the **work plan and resources** (time and money)

Only when all these ingredients are clear should you move to formulating the terms of reference (ToR). It is crucial that the ToR are clear and detailed. They provide the parameters of the evaluation, enabling the evaluation team and the stakeholders to see:

- **what** is to be done
- **who** is to do it
- **how** it should be done
- **when** it should be done

The process of formulating the ToR should involve both the team and the stakeholders, not only because this is more likely to produce a viable set of ToR, but also because it will enhance the commitment of all those involved in the evaluation process.

Defining the purpose

If you do not know why you are conducting an evaluation, and for whom, it is unlikely that you will make the right choices for the evaluation process (e.g., which stakeholders to involve, how to collect data, what communication strategy to use).

To define the purpose of the evaluation, you need to know why the evaluation was required in the first place. There might be one reason or several. It might have been initiated, for example, to:

- **Empower stakeholders:** There are mechanisms that can be used to empower stakeholders in an information project. One of them is to organise an evaluation with strong stakeholder participation. This enhances their understanding of the project and commitment to it, and encourages them to actively contribute to its success.

- **Build stakeholder capacity:** Participatory evaluation enables stakeholders to learn more about a project, and also to acquire new skills related to project implementation, management and evaluation.

- **Improve project implementation:** An evaluation should show where improvements can be made in the way a project is being implemented, particularly if it is an honest appraisal of both failure and success.

- **Assist project re-orientation:** The project might be facing new challenges, which require a change of course and a new strategy. An evaluation should provide the insight needed to formulate a new strategy.

- **Ensure accountability:** An evaluation is a useful way of keeping people informed about the progress and effectiveness of a project. These people might be the donors (this is sometimes called 'upward accountability') or the primary stakeholders ('downward accountability') or both.

Box 2.1
Some key points in defining the purpose of an evaluation

- Ask yourself these questions: Who wants this evaluation? Why do they want it? How is the project likely to benefit from the evaluation?
- Use the answers to these questions to make the right choices in your evaluation methodology.
- Every evaluation is unique. So ensure that the purpose you define suits your evaluation, and avoid the temptation to lift a purpose statement from another evaluation.
- Defining the purpose of your evaluation is, in itself, a good opportunity for learning, improving your project and strengthening your relationship with the stakeholders.

Defining the scope

If you want to evaluate your information project, you need to know what criteria (or main areas of concern) you want to assess. Establishing these evaluation criteria will help you to define the scope of your evaluation.

Various organisations use different sets of evaluation criteria. Important and frequently used criteria include:

- **Accessibility:** The extent to which your project reaches the primary stakeholders (i.e., how easy it was for them to access the information product/service in terms of its availability, distribution and timeliness).

- **Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by your project, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended (i.e., the extent to which primary stakeholders have successfully used the product/service to improve their lives).

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the product/service is suited to the priorities and needs of the primary stakeholders, and the priorities of other key stakeholders, the project managers and the donor (i.e., the extent to which the project was a good idea).

- **Sustainability:** The extent to which your organisation will be able to continue to provide the product/service after the completion of the project. (i.e., the extent to which the primary stakeholders will continue to benefit from the product/service when the project funding ends).

- **Usability:** The extent to which the primary stakeholders are able to use your product/service. This depends on such factors as completeness of the product/service, accessible language (the language itself, and its level and style), accessible images (diagrams, pictures, etc. relevant to the lives of the primary stakeholders), technically accurate information, and design relevant to the context in which it will be used.

- **Utility:** The extent to which your project could be successfully replicated in another location or among different primary stakeholders. Utility also relates to lessons learned from the project, and how they could be usefully applied to other projects.

- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which your project has achieved its objectives (this is similar to impact, but whereas impact covers both intended and unintended changes, effectiveness is concerned with the intended objectives).

- **Efficiency:** The cost-effectiveness of your project in terms of outputs – qualitative and quantitative – compared with inputs (i.e., has it used the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results?).

Choosing which criteria to use in defining the scope of your evaluation will depend on:

- your organisation's policy and core values
- the policies and interests of other major stakeholders, including your donors
- the current state of your project and the key issues that you need to address
- the level of stakeholder participation you envisage
- the resources (time, money, people) you have

Table 2.1
Applying evaluation criteria to a farmers' training course

EVALUATION CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK
Accessibility	Did the farmers have access to the training course? If not, why not?
Effectiveness	Were farmers able to use the training on their own farms? If not, why not?
Usability	Was the training course delivered in a language which was understood by all participants? Was the training complete in all details so that farmers could implement it? Was sufficient time given to the training for farmers to be able to absorb the information? Was support provided after the training?
Efficiency	Was the training course implemented in the most efficient way, compared with alternatives? Could the same impact have been achieved with fewer resources?
Impact	Has the training resulted in a change in farmer practices? If so, have these improved practices resulted in better yields for the farmers?
Relevance	Was the training course consistent with the farmers' needs and priorities?
Sustainability	When project funding ends, will the implementing organisation be able to continue providing the training? If not, why not? Are the changes made by farmers sustainable? Have the farmers been able to pass on the knowledge gained?
Utility	Would the training be suitable for other farmers in similar situations?

Box 2.2
Some key points in defining the scope of an evaluation

- It is important to carefully select your evaluation criteria to suit your project and resources. This will help to make the evaluation more focused and manageable.
- An important and often overlooked factor in deciding on the scope is to make sure it matches the resources you have available
- Don't include criteria that go with key questions that can't be answered (e.g., don't select 'impact' if the project has only just started)
- Be aware of the possible conflicting interests among the project stakeholders

Organising stakeholder participation

Who are the stakeholders in your project? And why should they participate in the evaluation?

To answer the first question, in any project there are two sets of stakeholders (see Figure 2.2, overleaf):

- **primary stakeholders** (the end-users of the information product/service)
- **secondary stakeholders**, who can be subdivided into:
  - those who provide the inputs for your information product/service (e.g., donors, partner agencies)
  - those who help to ensure that your product/service reaches the intended end-users (e.g., distributors, media organisations)
  - those who are involved in developing and implementing policies relating to the product/service (e.g., government agencies).

Now to the second question: Why should the stakeholders participate in the evaluation? As we saw in Part 1, stakeholder participation in the project cycle is crucial to project success. We also saw that the level of that participation should be extensive and meaningful, and include exchanging ideas and sharing decision-making.

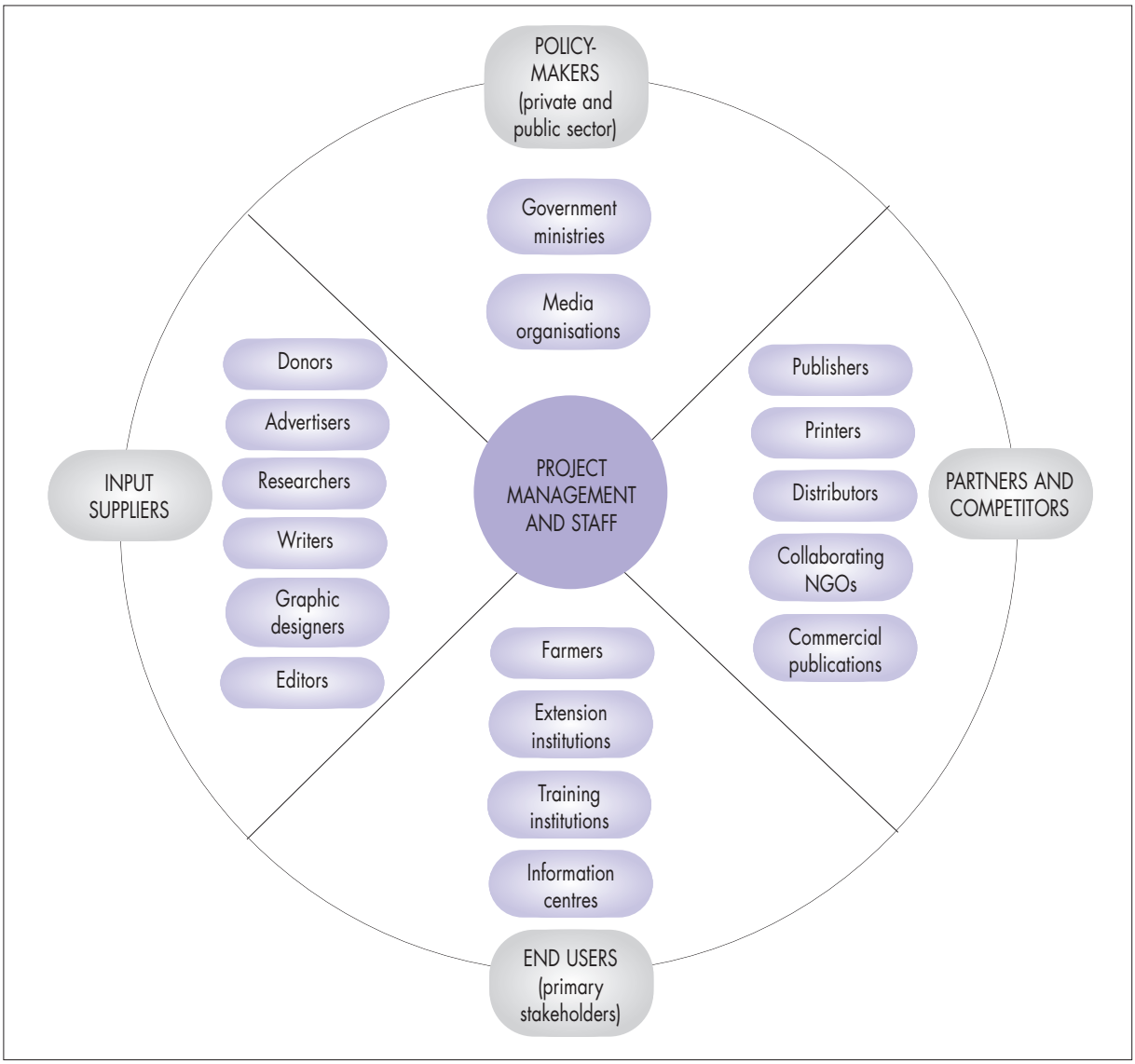
In the old mode of external evaluation (see Table 1.1 in Part 1, page 3), stakeholder participation tended to be top-down and to be seen as:

- **informing** stakeholders about the evaluation process and results
- using stakeholders as a **source of information** (e.g., through questionnaires and interviews)
- **consulting** stakeholders to obtain their views on the evaluation process and/or results

Today, however, participatory evaluation implies a far more active role for stakeholders, in which they:

- are part of the **evaluation team**
- **actively contribute** to the design and implementation of the evaluation
- help conduct a **joint analysis** of the findings and recommendations

Figure 2.2
Stakeholders in farmers' newsletter project



In order to identify the stakeholders who should participate in the evaluation, you need to conduct a stakeholder analysis. This requires analysing such factors as those shown in Table 2.2. Whichever groups of stakeholders you identify, there is one group that should always participate in an evaluation – the primary stakeholders.

Issues to consider that relate specifically to the stakeholders participating in the evaluation include:

- their involvement in, and influence on, the information product/service
- their contribution to the information product/service
- how they benefit from the information product/service
- how they should be involved in the evaluation
- their willingness and ability to be involved and to learn from the evaluation
- the most appropriate ways of communicating with them during the evaluation
- the dynamics and conflicts of interest among the participating stakeholders
- the budget for stakeholder participation in the evaluation

Table 2.2
Example of a stakeholder analysis for the evaluation of a farmers' newsletter

STAKEHOLDERS	INVOLVEMENT IN NEWSLETTER	CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEWSLETTER	BENEFITS FROM NEWSLETTER	INVOLVEMENT IN EVALUATION
Readers (primary stakeholders)	Reading the newsletter; providing feedback through questions and comments on articles; word-of-mouth promotion	Time (reading the newsletter); money (buying the newsletter)	Improved knowledge on agricultural production	Represented on the team Valuable source of information
Editors, writers and publishers	Compiling content; designing layout	Time; professional input	Occupation, status, experience	Represented on the team
Partners (e.g., donors, Ministry of Agriculture units, research institutes, printers, distributors)	Providing information, printing newsletter, distributing newsletter	Time; professional and technical input	Disseminating knowledge; income	Represented on the team Involved in analysis and decisions on action
Management	Establishing newsletter concept/objectives; committing resources; overseeing production and distribution	Time and resources (operating newsletter; dealing with partners and donors)	Organisational goals; status	Work with team on ToR, on data analysis and on recommendations Ensure recommendations can be implemented by the organisation

Box 2.3
Some key points in organising stakeholder participation in an evaluation

- Don't be tempted to copy the way another evaluation organised stakeholder participation. Your stakeholders (types, groups, interests, availability, etc.) will be different from those in any other project
- Be sure to involve the primary stakeholders, the users of your product/service, especially in relation to usability
- Make a clear decision about who to involve and when, and avoid involving everyone in everything. Time is valuable; if you ask too much from stakeholders you may not get their co-operation a second time

Identifying existing data

Knowing what data exist that are relevant to your evaluation will help you decide what data you still need to collect, given your time and resources.

Also, looking at existing data may refresh your memory, and give the evaluation team a better understanding of the project background and any earlier recommendations that might have been made. Often, such recommendations get 'lost' and are not acted upon, or are only partly acted upon.

Where would you look for these data? Possible sources include:

- initial strategic and work plans for the information project
- brochures or descriptions of the information product/service
- baseline data collected before the project was implemented
- desk studies

- earlier evaluation reports
- annual reports
- monitoring and follow-up reports
- stakeholder documents
- official statistical information
- financial reports

Box 2.4
Some key points in identifying existing data

- Make a point of looking for documents that describe why the project exists (rationale), what it is supposed to do (objectives and expectations), its assumptions, its planned activities, problems it has faced and any earlier recommendations made to improve it
- Ask project managers and staff for documents; not everything will necessarily be in an archive or library
- Ask stakeholders what data they hold that could be useful. This is often an overlooked source of existing data
- Take stock of all data available in order to decide what additional data need to be collected through a desk study and other data-collection mechanisms

Choosing the methodology

Choosing your methodology for data collection and analysis will be influenced by many factors. To ensure the methodology fits the evaluation, you need to be clear about:

- the **key questions** you want to answer: this relates to the scope of the evaluation, and what the main concerns are (see Table 2.1)
- the **data needed** to answer these questions: this relates not only to the amount of data but also to the type of data – primary and secondary (see Box 2.5)
- the level of **stakeholder participation**: extensive but carefully managed involvement of both primary and secondary stakeholders is crucial (see Table 2.2)
- the **existing data**: this relates to learning more about the project and not wasting resources on collecting data that is already available
- the available **resources** (time, money, skills) to ensure that the methodology matches your resources

There are a variety of data collection methods to consider. You will usually need to choose a mixture of these. The most common methods include:

- **Quantitative methods** produce quantitative (numerical) data that are relatively easy to summarise and compare. The data can be generalised (scaled up) to a larger population if you choose a representative sample; although this can be very efficient, it is not always easy to do in resource-poor settings. It requires trained people to design the questionnaires, administer and analyse them, and then interpret the findings. It is not enough to present tables of numbers without interpretation and explanation. The main limitation of the quantitative approach is that you may gain only a limited understanding of why things happened.

Box 2.5
Types of data to collect

The types of data to collect fall into two groups – primary data and secondary data:

- PRIMARY DATA are collected directly and for a specific purpose: methods could include questionnaires, interviews and focus groups
- SECONDARY DATA have already been collected for some purpose other than the current evaluation: sources could include routine records, reports, newspaper articles, project monitoring sheets and progress reports.

Examples of routine records are data from log books, registers, personnel lists, receipt books, accounts and contact databases. These data are collected during normal activities, such as data on who is using your information product/service, when they use it, and what they are using it for. If your project is not already keeping these types of records, it should start now; staff should be trained to keep accurate, complete and up-to-date information. Routine records can be used to manage the project and to reduce the amount of data collected during evaluations.

- **Qualitative methods** are used to find out why and how people use your information product/service. They draw data from a variety of non-numerical sources, such as words, pictures and plays, and can be used to elaborate the facts provided by quantitative data. The main limitations of the qualitative approach are that it is relatively labour-intensive and time-consuming, requires good facilitation skills, and the findings can't usually be generalised.
- **Individual methods** involve getting data from individual respondents without interaction with other respondents (e.g., questionnaires and interviews).
- **Group methods** seek to encourage interaction between respondents so that they add to each other's knowledge. This can produce a more in-depth picture of the situation (e.g., focus groups).
- **Participatory methods** are based on using stakeholders as part of the evaluation team and involving them in collecting data. This brings them into direct contact with other stakeholders and thus enhances their understanding of the project, its aims and its impact.

Box 2.6
Some key points in choosing the methodology

- It is often worth selecting a multi-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Known as 'triangulation', this will bring greater understanding and increase the reliability of the findings
- Data collection tools such as questionnaires should be pre-tested to ensure that they produce the data you need. The pre-test might show, for example, that there are ambiguous questions that need to be rephrased, that the language used is not understood, or that some of the questions are embarrassing for the respondents
- Use the sources of secondary data, as far as possible, to provide the quantitative information, and use qualitative methods if the evaluation seeks to learn why, how and where you can improve a project
- Consider whether time is an important element. If you want to measure change, time is obviously important. Often, however, all you want to know is what is happening currently (with the time element becoming important only later when you compare results in the longer term)

Table 2.3
Examples of data collection tools

TOOL	DESCRIPTION	MAIN USE	REQUIREMENTS
Self-administered questionnaire	Questionnaires filled by respondents themselves	Useful for collecting quantitative (numerical) information	Interested, motivated respondents capable of filling in the answers. Questionnaire should be short and easy to complete, to prevent boring, tiring or confusing the respondent
Interviewer-administered questionnaire	Interviewer reads the questions aloud and fills in the answers Could be conducted face-to-face, by telephone or via the internet	Useful for collecting quantitative and qualitative information Different kinds of questions can be asked in the same questionnaire	Interviewers need training to ask questions in a positive, respectful way and avoid misinterpreting answers; for qualitative data, they need good listening and recording skills
Focus group interview	Allows interviewer to find out what a group of users think about a project, product or service	Generating qualitative information quickly	Good preparation and an experienced facilitator skilled in accommodating group dynamics
SWOT analysis	Identification and analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of a project, product or service	Useful in group discussion and brainstorming sessions	Important to prepare well for this exercise as it is easy to confuse the various categories (i.e., strengths/ weakness/ opportunities/ threats). Need clear guidelines and everyone involved to agree to them
Case study	An in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event	Useful to identify and reflect on lessons learned from a case, to apply to others	Ability (skill and knowledge) to compare case with others. Good analytical and writing skills
Creative participatory technique	A participatory technique involving such devices as role play, video and drawings to get views and data	Useful for stimulating participation, especially among less literate people	An experienced facilitator aware of cultural meaning of images
After-action review (AAR)	A quick and simple way to gather data on project performance and output	Useful for identifying whether or not the project strategy and processes were adequate	A tactful facilitator who can create an environment where everyone can share their opinions openly
Rapid appraisal (RA)	Range of tools and techniques including focus groups, case studies, semi-structured interviews with key informants, participant observation and use of secondary sources	Useful in complex situations where quantitative data are limited	Ability to conduct interviews and having good knowledge of the subject area being investigated
Participatory learning and action (PLA)	Involves participation of stakeholders in group sessions, with a facilitator, in preparing, e.g., schedules, impact flow charts, village and resource maps, well-being/wealth ranking, seasonal diagrams, problem ranking and institutional assessments	Useful in complex situations where quantitative data are limited	Creation of an environment where everyone can share and participate equally. Facilitation needs to be done in such a way that the opinions obtained are a true reflection of the group.
Direct observation	Physical observation of actions and activities	Useful for seeing how project activities are being carried out in reality; especially useful for training purposes	Discretion and careful management, to prevent participants finding the presence of an observer restricting

Each method brings with it certain evaluation tools. Examples of some of these tools are given in Table 2.3. Selected tools are dealt with in more depth in Part 3.

Some of the tools listed in the table require good listening and recording/note-taking skills, as well as facilitation skills. You need to take account of the skills you have in your evaluation team when choosing tools, or consider training in those skills which you really need.

Formulating a communication strategy

Reviewing and reporting are essential features of an evaluation. Your communication strategy needs to cover:

- how and when the evaluation strategies, activities and findings will be critically reviewed, and who will be involved in this review
- how and when evaluation findings will be reported, and to whom

This takes us back to stakeholder participation, and the importance of including the stakeholders in the design and implementation of the evaluation and in analysing the findings. This means you need to be clear about what the stakeholders want to know, why they want to know it, and how they want it presented.

Stakeholders differ in many ways, including:

- interest in the project
- commitment to the project
- involvement in the project
- access to means of communication
- expectations about feedback
- time available

So it is important to develop a critical review strategy that involves the right people at the right time. For example, in an evaluation of a farmers' newsletter, the strategy should allow for the readers – farmers – to be involved in formal meetings convened to critically review the newsletter, its content, production and distribution.

Similarly, it is important to develop a reporting strategy that ensures that everyone receives feedback that is relevant to them and in the format they require. For example, farmers might prefer feedback in the form of a video rather than a lengthy written report, and a Minister might prefer a summary of the report.

You should be aware that people often don't read reports. Sending reports will not necessarily elicit much in the way of comment and is not really part of participatory working. It might be better to provide feedback in a workshop setting. Here, the main points or even the report itself can be presented as posters on which the participants can write comments on post-its. These can then be reviewed by a facilitator and form the basis of discussion for the rest of the workshop.

There are various communication methods you can use for reviewing and reporting. Some of them are listed in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4
Communication methods for (a) the review process and (b) the reporting process

COMMUNICATION METHOD	USE IN REVIEW PROCESS	USE IN REPORTING PROCESS
Workshops	Make a joint analysis of data collected Create a shared understanding of the situation Assess joint lessons learnt	
Meetings/discussions	Discuss findings from data collection and analysis	Present findings from data collection and analysis
Individual meetings	Provide ongoing feedback to individuals	Provide findings to individuals
Role-play	To visualise the problems and solutions of specific situations and approaches (e.g., how advisors deal with clients)	
Internet pages	Discuss findings with stakeholders or peers	Present main findings to stakeholders, peers and the public
Videos	To visualise the problems and solutions of specific situations and approaches	Present findings to users
Articles (often more for public relations purposes than for communication)		Present main findings to stakeholders, being aware of what will interest primary stakeholders and what will interest secondary stakeholders
Brochures		Present findings or main changes in project, product or service to users and the public
Summary report		Present findings to managers
Full report		Present findings to key stakeholders

Box 2.7
Some key points in formulating a communication strategy

- Involve the primary stakeholders in every stage of your communication strategy – they provide the most valuable feedback
- Often, it is not appropriate send the same report to all the stakeholders. Some information might be sensitive, other information might not be of interest to everybody. Your stakeholder analysis, if done well, will show you who needs what
- When reporting to a stakeholder, concentrate on the consequences of interest to that stakeholder and be aware of potential problems that stakeholders might have in implementing recommendations
- Make sure that the way you disseminate the evaluation findings suits the recipients. That will give more chance of those findings being read, absorbed and acted upon

Selecting the team

A strong team that includes stakeholders will help generate relevant and accurate data. It will also create a shared understanding of the project, which will help in drawing up recommendations that are relevant to stakeholders.

The size of the team depends on the scope of your evaluation and the resources available. If you are conducting a self-evaluation of a small-scale information product/service, the team will probably be a small one.

The main factors to consider when you're selecting an evaluation team are:

- purpose and scope of the evaluation, and the budget available
- evaluation methodology
- knowledge and skills of the team members
- relationships between the team members
- capacity of team members to influence project implementation

Specific questions to ask when selecting a team include:

- Do you need the team to make an independent judgement?
- Do you need the team to act as group facilitators and work with stakeholders to help them take the learning on board?
- Would including other key stakeholders facilitate the learning process and are they willing to spend their time on the evaluation?
- To what extent are gender/age and other balances required in establishing the team?
- What skills are needed in the team (e.g., facilitation, communication, organisational, technical, statistical)?
- How will you reward and/or motivate the team members?

Box 2.8
Some key points in selecting the evaluation team

- If the funding agency wants an external evaluation to be conducted, as opposed to a self-evaluation, negotiate for project staff to be included in the evaluation team. This is important for learning and for facilitating understanding between the various parties
- If you are the sole evaluator, consider setting up an evaluation committee of people who could provide you with feedback on your evaluation design, implementation, analysis and reporting
- Apart from including stakeholders in the evaluation team, consider asking stakeholders to help carry out specific tasks, such as data collection, data analysis and reporting

Preparing the work plan and budget

An evaluation process can involve a complex set of activities. To ensure that the process runs smoothly, it needs good planning and adequate resources. As resources are usually limited, drawing up a work plan and budget helps in assessing what realistically can and can't be done in the evaluation.

Activities that you need to consider in your work plan include:

- selecting the team (including stakeholders)
- arranging team meetings and training
- pre-testing data collection tools
- collecting data
- analysing data
- arranging critical review meetings
- preparing and communicating findings
- formulating the follow-up action plan

The work plan should be clear about who is responsible for the various activities, and about the timeframe, both overall and for each activity (the schedule).

Budget items that should be considered include:

- costs of the various activities
- allowances for team members
- training for team members
- consultancy fees
- transport costs
- workshop venue costs
- workshop materials
- communication costs (telephone, internet, postage)
- printing costs

Box 2.9
Costs to consider when preparing an evaluation budget

Evaluation budgets vary depending on the scope and objectives of the exercise. As such, there is no 'typical' budget for evaluating an information project. As a first step, however, you need to think about how to get your evaluation funded if a budget has not already been allocated.

If you are conducting your own evaluation, you will be doing most of the work, possibly with help from your colleagues, using existing office facilities, transport and supplies. It will therefore be difficult to itemise the costs; on the other hand, the more they are internalised, the easier it will be for you to go ahead with the evaluation. However, you might want some outside expertise in, for example, analysing the data, or additional resources such as statistical software packages. These items will form part of your direct costs and you should have some provision in your budget to cover such expenses. The likely in-house and external costs, if you're conducting your own evaluation, include:

IN-HOUSE COSTS
- your time
- time provided by other staff involved in the evaluation
- time provided by support staff for such tasks as data entry
- meetings (e.g., briefing meetings, stakeholder meetings, validation workshops)
- transport
- office supplies (e.g., stationery)
- communication (e.g., fax, telephone, postage, photocopying, printing)

EXTERNAL COSTS
- consultants (e.g., for evaluation, data analysis, publishing)
- other experts (e.g., IT experts)
- transport and accommodation for these external advisers

Box 2.10
Some key points in preparing the work plan and budget

- Don't be too ambitious in your planning; this could raise expectations that you might not be able to meet
- Be sure to check the skills available to you in your team and budget for training if it is needed
- If possible, plan and budget for additional activities that could be carried out once the initial results from data collection, analysis and review are known
- Ensure that your budget matches the activities you need to carry out

Formulating the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) for an evaluation provide the guidelines for your evaluation team. Even if you are the sole evaluator, it is useful to formulate the ToR, as this will provide an opportunity for an overall view of the organisation of the evaluation before you begin.

The ToR will serve as a blueprint to show why the evaluation is being conducted, how it will be conducted and what it is expected to produce. They are not a wish list. Resources are nearly always less than wanted, and the ToR should reflect the reality of what is available and what can be achieved. Realistic, detailed and well-formulated ToR are useful when seeking approval for the budget and approaching prospective team members.

You should include the following elements in the ToR:

Background
- reasons for conducting the evaluation
- parties involved in commissioning the evaluation

Evaluation
- purpose
- scope
- expected outputs

Stakeholder participation
- who to involve, for what purpose, at what stage, and how

Existing data
- project documents (primary sources)
- records (secondary sources)

Methodology
- data collection
- data analysis

Communication
- critical review process
- reporting
- who to involve, and how

Team
- composition
- expertise represented
- stakeholder groups represented
- roles and responsibilities

Work plan and budget
- activities and schedule
- detailed costing

Box 2.11
Some key points in formulating the terms of reference

- Avoid copying the ToR from another evaluation. Each evaluation is unique and you should take the time to formulate your own ToR
- Don't make the ToR a wish list. Ensure that the terms match your resources
- To get approval for the budget and to sustain commitment from evaluation team members, make sure that your ToR are realistic, detailed and well formulated
- If possible, involve team members and key stakeholders in formulating the ToR. This will enhance their commitment and improve the quality and comprehensiveness of the ToR

Designing the evaluation

Once the terms of reference have been agreed upon and the budget approved, you can move on to designing the evaluation. This is where you have to get down to planning each aspect of the evaluation in detail – exactly who is going to do what, and when, and how, and what resources will be used at each stage.

It is important to remember that all decisions made in relation to the detailed planning will depend on resources, especially the skills and time available. There is no point in choosing certain methods or tools if you have no skills in the team for them and no way of getting access to training.

Designing the evaluation involves going through the following stages:

- reviewing the project concept and objectives
- determining the data needed to evaluate the project
- determining the evaluation focus, key questions and indicators
- designing the data collection methods
- designing the data analysis methods
- designing the communication strategy

Reviewing the project concept and objectives

You can't evaluate an information project, product or service if you don't know what it is about. Even if you're conducting a self-evaluation, you will probably need to refresh your memory about the

idea behind the project, how the project was intended to be implemented and what it was intended to achieve. Unless you know this, you can't make the comparisons between what was intended and what has actually happened, and so you can't really evaluate the project. Studying available documents will help you find out about:

- key issues the project is expected to address
- purpose of the project in relation to these issues
- specific objectives to be achieved within the project time frame
- indicators used to measure performance
- work plan (activities)
- staff and stakeholders
- management structure and budget

As we saw in Part 1, every project should have a theory of action and a logical framework. These documents will, if well conceived and compiled, tell much of what you need to know about the project purpose, objectives and performance indicators, as well as the assumptions made when the project was initiated.

If the project documents you need are not there, or are incomplete, or if the project objectives have changed, you will need to discuss with the project staff and stakeholders how the objectives and indicators should be interpreted for the purpose of the evaluation. Only if this interpretation is clear will it be possible to compare expectations with actual performance.

If your information product/service is more of an ongoing activity, rather than a project, you might find it useful to reflect on the background and purpose of the product/service. This could involve asking such questions as:

- Why was the product/service initiated and what problems does it seek to address?
- What is the long-term goal of the product/service?
- What is the core assignment or purpose of the product/service?
- What are the short-term objectives to be achieved by the product/service?
- What is the main approach in delivering the product/service?
- What are the core values of the product/service?

Box 2.12
Some key points in reviewing the project concept and objectives

- Be clear about what the key issues of the project are, and how they relate to the project concept and purpose
- If some of the information you need is not available from documents, ask project staff and stakeholders
- If you are new to the project, it might be worth conducting analyses (e.g., situation analysis, SWOT analysis) to help you understand the project, its political and cultural environment and the needs and resources of the stakeholders
- Benchmarking will help you to compare the performance of the product/service with other comparable products/services, and to identify best practices. This will help in ensuring that any value judgments in your evaluation will not be arbitrary, and in formulating recommendations to improve the quality of the product/service

Determining the data needed

Identifying what data are needed and who is likely to provide them is critical to the success of an evaluation. You will need data that relate to the evaluation criteria you have identified. As discussed earlier in relation to the scope of the evaluation, these criteria could include: accessibility, impact, relevance, sustainability, usability, utility, effectiveness and efficiency.

It is important to ensure that the data collected are of good quality. Avoid the common mistake of collecting too much data, some of it of limited quality. Less good-quality data will produce a better evaluation than too much data of dubious quality.

And be flexible about what data you need. As the data collection process gets under way, you might have to revise the type of data you need.

To obtain the data required from the various stakeholders, you need to determine what questions to ask them. It is a good idea to make an inventory of these questions and then to design your selected data collection methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, focus groups) around them. An example is given in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5
Sample questions to obtain data from the key stakeholders in a newsletter

STAKEHOLDERS	QUESTIONS	POTENTIAL USE IN THE EVALUATION
Readers (primary stakeholders)	Does the newsletter meet your information needs? Is the newsletter timely?	To improve content and thematic focus To decide whether or not to recommend the newsletter to others To decide whether or not the newsletter should be continued
Editors, writers and publishers	How effective and efficient is the newsletter? Is it meeting the needs of the readers? Are the articles well written? Is it cost-effective? Can it be produced on a sustainable basis? Do staff have the capacity needed to produce the newsletter?	To identify ways in which the newsletter can be improved To identify ways in which costs could be reduced To decide whether or not the newsletter should be continued
Partners (e.g., donors, Ministry of Agriculture units, research institutes, printers, distributors)	Are the topics of the newsletter in line with your priorities? Does the newsletter reach the target groups?	To decide upon collaboration on the newsletter
Management	Is there an incentive for you to promote the newsletter? How sustainable is the newsletter given the available resources? Do staff have the capacity needed to produce the newsletter?	To determine what resources are needed to continue to produce the newsletter and/or to build capacity

Box 2.13
Some key points in determining the data needed

- In formulating the questions, consult stakeholders extensively to find out what questions are most likely to elicit quality data
- Consider all potential stakeholders, not only those with whom your project has good relationships or are easier to reach than others
- As the evaluation progresses, be prepared to adjust your assessment of data needed, to add/delete needs as appropriate
- Avoid the common mistake of collecting too much data

Determining the evaluation focus, key questions and indicators

The focus of an evaluation is a further specification of the scope. Every evaluation exercise has to be limited in focus because time, skills, and budget are limited. And it is not possible to cover all elements of the project every time you carry out an evaluation. It is therefore strategic to make a deliberate choice of the areas of focus of the evaluation.

It is useful to formulate specific questions for each of these areas of focus. Focus and questions need to be linked to indicators. A common mistake in evaluations is to compile the indicators solely on the basis of the logframe objectives, without having a clear idea about the evaluation focus and the specific questions that relate to different areas of the focus. This could lead to producing indicators that are irrelevant, unfeasible and unreliable, and therefore do not produce the data you need to conduct a useful evaluation of a project.

The steps involved in this process are:

- **Focus:** The first step is to determine the areas of focus of the evaluation. This means looking at the criteria that you are using to define the scope of the evaluation (e.g., accessibility, impact, relevance, usability, effectiveness, utility and sustainability) and getting down to more detail about these criteria. Which criteria would you prioritise? What time and budget limitations might determine how many criteria you can focus on? How do the various criteria relate to the different stakeholder groups, to the product/service, to its promotion and distribution? For example, if a service does not appear to be achieving the objectives that have been set for it, the focus will need to be on *why* this is so.

- **Questions:** The next step in the process is to identify the specific questions that relate to the different areas of focus of the evaluation. You will need to phrase key questions that are simple, that can be answered easily and that will provide the required information. This means that you need to be clear about the product/service performance and the changes that it might have brought about. For example, if the product/service is not achieving its set objective, the questions would relate mainly to the content of the service and whether or not the end-users had the skills and resources to make the best use of it.

- **Indicators:** Indicators are quantitative and/or qualitative measures that enable you to answer your key questions and help to assess the extent to which project activities and impact have been achieved. Quantitative indicators relate to changes in numbers (e.g., the number of people listening to a particular radio programme), whereas qualitative indicators relate to changes in perception (e.g., the opinion of users on the content of that programme). Indicators need to be based on a clear idea of which stakeholder group(s) they will be applied to, and to be feasible both technically and financially.

In general, you can divide indicators into:

- SMART indicators, where the quantitative component is important
- SPICED indicators, where the subjective interpretation of various different stakeholders is important

And whether your indicators are SMART or SPICED, or a mixture of the two, they should all be clear, realistic, economical, adequate and easily monitored (CREAM).

Table 2.6
Qualities of SMART and SPICED indicators

SMART			SPICED		
S	=	Specific, yet simple	S	=	Subjective
M	=	Measurable	P	=	Participatory
A	=	Achievable (sometimes, Area-specific)	I	=	Interpreted and communicable
R	=	Realistic	C	=	Cross-checked and compared
T	=	Time-bound	E	=	Empowering
			D	=	Diverse and disaggregated

Again using the example of a newsletter, Table 2.7 illustrates how focus, key questions and indicators can be determined.

Box 2.14
Some key points in determining the evaluation focus, key questions and indicators

- Ensure that the focus of your evaluation reflects the resources you have to carry out the evaluation in terms of time, skills and budget, all of which are often limited
- Check that the indicators link closely to the focus
- Check that all the relevant questions of your project plan and of your stakeholders are included in the overview and that the questions will give you the answers you need in terms of the evaluation focus and indicators
- Don't try to include everything. It would be a waste of time and money to collect, analyse and report on issues that no one is really interested in

Table 2.7
Determining the focus, key questions and indicators for evaluating a newsletter, using some standard evaluation criteria

EVALUATION CRITERIA (SCOPE)	FOCUS	KEY QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	INFORMATION SOURCES
IMPACT	Readers (primary stakeholders)	To what extent have readers successfully used the newsletter to improve their practices?	% of readers indicating benefits from reading the newsletter	Readers
RELEVANCE	Livestock farmers	To what extent are the contents of the newsletter relevant to livestock farmers?	No. of articles per issue targeting livestock farmers	Newsletter archive
ACCESSIBILITY	Reach of material	Are some livestock farmers not receiving the newsletter? If not, why?	No. of newsletters distributed to livestock farmers % of livestock farmers who don't know about newsletter or find it difficult to access Reasons for their not knowing or finding access difficult	Reader registration and statistics Readers who are livestock farmers
USABILITY	Use of material	Do the farmers understand and use the material in the newsletter? If not, why (wrong language, language too difficult, content not detailed enough, etc.)?	% of livestock farmers satisfied with the information in the newsletter % not satisfied and reasons why The reasons for their satisfaction, or lack of it	Readers who are livestock farmers
EFFECTIVENESS	Readership	To what extent do the farmers read the newsletter?	No. of farmers who say they read the newsletter No.of articles read per issue No. of farmers who share the newsletter with others	Readers
	Accuracy	Does the newsletter provide accurate information?	No. of comments/ questions per issue related to inaccuracies	Comment registration
EFFICIENCY	Article writing	How much time is spent on writing an article?	No. of hours spent per 300-word article	Time register Time estimates by staff and partners
	Contributions from partners	What contribution do partner organisations make?	No. of articles written by staff No. of articles contributed by partners	Newsletter archive
	Costs	What are the newsletter production/distribution costs?	Unit cost per newsletter	Accounts department
SUSTAINABILITY	Newsletter as a service	Will the newsletter financier be able to support the continuation of the newsletter?	Budget commitment in the coming years	Strategic plans

Designing the data collection methods

Evaluations can fail because too little or too much data were collected without the right questions being asked. It is therefore important to prepare properly for your data collection so that:

- the necessary data you need are available during the evaluation
- the data you collect do answer your key questions
- no more data than necessary are collected

As noted earlier, there are many types of data collection methods, including quantitative, qualitative, individual, group and participatory methods. Each method brings with it a selection of tools which elicit particular types of data. You need to be clear about when you want qualitative data (e.g., when you want to know how some aspect of a project is affecting primary stakeholders) and when you need quantitative data (e.g., the project donors or potential donors will want to see statistics).

In selecting the tools, you need to be clear about how they are going to be applied. For example, you need to specify:

- source of information
- major questions to be addressed
- indicators related to these questions

Having worked on the evaluation focus, key questions and indicators, providing this detail should not now be difficult. Table 2.8 provides an example of the data collection design for a newsletter. There is more detail on data collection tools in Part 3.

You should always bear in mind that apart from using the data for the evaluation, at a later date stakeholders and others (e.g., potential donors) might want to see the data.

Box 2.15
Some key points in designing the data collection

- Prepare your combination of methods well so that you don't collect more data than you need and that you don't overlook data needed for answering key questions
- Remember that analysing qualitative data can be very time-consuming. On the other hand, analysing quantitative data can often be done using statistical software packages
- At the local level, in-depth, qualitative information may be more suitable than quantitative information if the aim of the evaluation is to assess where to concentrate efforts to improve the information project, product or service
- The money, time and human resources available limit the sort of data collection tools you can use and how to use them

Designing the data analysis methods

Once all the data have been collected and collated, they need to be analysed. This means that the relationships between the data have to be clarified and conclusions drawn.

You should always be clear about how the data are going to be analysed before starting to collect them. This will help to ensure that you collect the right data and do not overlook any data you need.

Table 2.8
Data collection design for a newsletter for farmers

TOOL	INFORMATION SOURCE	KEY QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	COMMENTS AND CONCERNS
DESK STUDY .	Letters to the editor Subscriptions Recent issues of the newsletter	How satisfied are readers with the newsletter? Does the newsletter provide accurate information?	% of readers satisfied with the newsletter No. of comments/ questions per issue related to inaccuracies	Only active and/or dissatisfied readers will write a letter Will not help you to find out why people are not satisfied
	Newsletter archive	To what extent is the content of the newsletter relevant to farmers? What contribution do partner organisations make?	No. of articles per issue targeting farmers No. of articles written by staff No. of articles contributed by partners	Useful as a starting point; once you know this you can do some qualitative data gathering to find out which articles have been useful
	Subscription register	To what extent does the newsletter reach the different user groups?	No. and % of target users who are subscribers	
	Accounts department	What is the cost of producing the newsletter?	Cost per reader	Staff time on the newsletter is not adequately registered
SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE	Readers and ex-readers	Are you satisfied with the contents? How many articles per issue do you read on average? Is the newsletter easy to read? Which other topics would you like to read? How has the newsletter helped you?	% of users satisfied with the newsletter	Many readers might not return the questionnaire
INTERVIEWS	Staff and partners	How much time is spent on writing an article? How do we improve the quality, but reduce time spent?	No. of hours spent on a 300-word article	
MEETINGS	Staff and partners/ stakeholders	What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)? How can collaboration be strengthened?		Some partners may not want to participate in the meeting
WORKSHOPS	Primary stakeholders – representative sample of individuals Groups of primary stakeholders, if possible	Are you satisfied with the newsletter contents? How many articles per issue do you read on average? Is the newsletter easy to read? Which other topics would you like to read about? How has the newsletter helped you?	No. of readers satisfied and using information	Will give you reasons why things are working or not May be difficult to get groups together, but small groups will do (3-4 people) even if all are from the same organisation

When you are designing your data analysis methods, you need to answer these questions:

- Which tools can be used to analyse the data?
- Which data collection methods will provide the data for these tools?
- What types of observations and recommendations can be made from each tool?
- How will the analysis be verified?

Quantitative data are often analysed with the aid of a computer using a spreadsheet and/or a statistical software package. These analyses can be presented in tables, graphs, bar charts or pie charts. Qualitative data are often best analysed using tools such as a problem tree or a SWOT analysis. All these tools are described in more detail in Part 3.

An example of the data analysis design for a newsletter is provided in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9
Data analysis design for a newsletter

ANALYTICAL TOOLS	COLLECTION METHOD	TYPE OF OBSERVATIONS	TYPE OF CONCLUSIONS
Statistical analysis	Desk study Questionnaire	Increase/decrease in number of readers in different categories	Target groups that need more attention
Statistical analysis for formal qualitative part of questionnaire	Questionnaire, face-to-face with readers	General satisfaction	General conclusions on content, presentation, language, etc. and on distribution
Costs and income	Desk study Accounts	Increase/decrease in costs/revenue	Where to reduce costs? How to increase revenue?
SWOT analysis	Meeting(s) with partner(s) and users (primary stakeholders) Readers' letters	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) regarding the use and sustainability of the newsletter (e.g.: - usefulness - timeliness - easy to read - subjects of interest - subjects that don't interest readers)	Strategies for improvement Opportunities for collaboration (e.g., topics to include or avoid, topics to highlight)

Designing the communication strategy

The communication strategy for critically reviewing and reporting findings was formulated in Phase 1. Now it is time to develop a more detailed communication plan. Preparing an effective mix of communication methods is an important factor in ensuring a common understanding and commitment among stakeholders. These methods include workshops, meetings, articles and reports. The communication plan is also likely to influence your data collection and analysis activities.

Initially, you need to answer the question: What do you want to achieve through the critical review and reporting processes?

Box 2.16
Some key points in designing the data analysis

- Ensure that enough resources are allocated to data analysis. Sometimes, a lot of time and effort is spent collecting data that are never properly analysed because of a lack of resources
- Allow plenty of time to analyse qualitative data. Although software is available to help in the analysis of qualitative data, considerable human effort is needed to understand what has been collected
- Keep looking for data that contradict your assumptions, so that they are fully tested. Test out alternative explanations. Bear in mind that the purpose of analysing data is to understand
- Stay focused on the objectives of the evaluation
- Don't attempt complex statistical analyses unless you have a good knowledge of the statistical analysis process
- Don't overdo the analyses
- Include in the data analysis process the people who took part in data collection

Having answered the question, you then need to focus on the two areas of the communication plan:

- **Critical review:** Questions to ask when selecting the critical review methods include: Who will be included in reviews? What will be the main focus of the reviews? Which communication methods best suit the different groups involved?

  When designing the critical review plan, it is important to note the basic questions that lead to critical review, such as: What is happening? Why is it happening? What are the implications for the project? What do we do next?

- **Reporting:** Questions to ask when selecting the reporting methods include: Who are the target groups for reports? What will be the main focus of the findings? Should some parts of the findings be omitted from the report, depending on the target group? Which communication methods best suit these target groups (e.g., oral presentations, articles, videos, brochures, reports)?

  When designing the reporting plan, you should ensure that the message being delivered is clear (in terms of content, language, graphic illustrations, etc.) and timely (at agreed times and while the momentum is there).

An example of a communication plan drawn up for the evaluation of a newsletter evaluation is given in Table 2.10.

Evaluation findings can lead to an increase in knowledge and skills, as well as a change in attitudes that can influence the way people behave within the organisation. The tendency is to assume that evaluation results will be used to guide decision-making and improve the project. But this is not always the case. To stand a far greater chance of being acted upon positively, the findings should be analysed with the primary and secondary stakeholders.

Table 2.10
A communication plan for a newsletter evaluation

COMMUNICATION METHOD	STAKEHOLDERS TO REPORT TO	MAIN ISSUES TO DISCUSS / REPORT ON
Workshop on SWOT analysis of key findings and ways forward	Representatives of primary stakeholders (farmers/readers) and newsletter staff	Critical reflection on the results from the data collection
Workshop to brainstorm key findings and ways forward	Staff and management of the newsletter and selected stakeholders	Creative solutions to problems identified
Full report, including executive summary	Funding agency Partners Staff and management	Readers' development Readers' satisfaction Topics Costs and income Conclusions and recommendations
Face-to-face meeting	Management	Conclusions and recommendations Feedback on individual staff members
Article in newsletter asking for readers' comments	General readership	Major findings and ways forward

Box 2.17
Some key points in designing the communication plan

- An effective plan should contain a mix of communication methods, to ensure all stakeholders are reached in ways that best suit them
- Special emphasis needs to be placed on the critical review and feedback as part of the communication plan. This is key to ensuring quality of the results and their acceptance by stakeholders
- Involve management, colleagues and other key stakeholders in the critical review process, to maximise the learning from the evaluation
- Although not all the results can be shared or will be acceptable to all stakeholders, try to take on board the key recommendations and find ways to put them into action

Integrating group dynamics issues

When organising and interacting with groups during an evaluation, you need to be aware of group dynamics issues and how to integrate them into the evaluation design. How well the groups involved work together will have an influence on the value of the findings.

The way in which groups work together and develop is known as 'group development'. All groups working together face a number of problems, defined within the context of phases of development.

The phases are:

- **Inclusion:** This relates to the need to belong and be accepted. This phase is characterised by a lot of 'small talk'. Group members observe whether they are important to the group leaders, and the degree of involvement of the leaders strongly influences members' behaviour. Once the members have assessed the leaders' involvement, they turn to each other to assess their commitment to and participation in the group.

- **Control:** In this phase, group members seek the level of influence they are used to having. They become concerned with power and test other members of the group. If a group has control problems, there will be endless conflict and shifting loyalties, with some members avoiding responsibility and others wanting it all. In this phase it is best not to rush to accept the views or opinions of any member, as this might exacerbate the problem.

- **Affection:** As group cohesion develops, members are more willing to co-operate with each other, using the words, 'we' and 'our group' and becoming interested in each other at the personal level. The danger here is that negative feelings get hidden, which may hinder the work. Also, subgroups often form, threatening group co-operation. There is a need for clarity regarding where loyalty to the group ends and personal autonomy begins. Cultural differences in terms of such factors as openness and sharing personal information can also cause problems.

You must recognise that although there could be conflict in a group, not all conflict should be considered as 'bad'. A positive effect of conflict is that it can lead to the group performing better if they are able to explore the issues fully and openly. Table 2.11 lists sources of conflict that could be regarded as positive and others that might have negative effects.

If you are the group facilitator, you need to ask yourself these questions:

- What keeps the group from functioning well?
- Is the group behaviour at this moment a problem, or is it part of healthy group development?
- What can you do to help the group to go through this phase? Would an assignment in which certain behaviour is allowed help them to get past the identified problem and develop further?

Table 2.11
Sources of conflict in groups

POSITIVE	Focused on task issues
	Legitimate differences of opinion about the task
	Difference in values and perspectives
	Different expectations about the impact of decisions
NEGATIVE	Competition over power, resources, rewards (in the control phase this may be healthy, but in other phases it can be unhealthy)
	Conflict between individual and group goals
	Poorly run meetings
	Personal grudges from the past
	Faulty communication

You also need to be aware of how to promote the healthy development of the group, by:

- providing favourable conditions (e.g., voluntary membership, setting clear goals)
- recognising the group development phases and stimulating the group to look at their behaviour
- having a good mix of skills to support the group
- having a working environment conducive to members working together as a group
- creating a sense of unity within the group
- modelling and supporting relevant processes (e.g., if involvement is required, show involvement yourself)

In the event of conflict in groups involved in your evaluation, there are five possible routes (Levi, 2001): avoidance; accommodation; confrontation; compromise; or collaboration. Although avoidance, accommodation and confrontation can resolve the conflict, they can also create winners and losers. In brokering compromise, everyone wins a little and loses a little; this is not an ideal situation. Collaboration is time-consuming but allows everyone to win, and encourages creativity and performance.

In essence, you should try to create an environment that promotes affection, inclusiveness and room for each member of the group to participate equally and openly.

Implementing the evaluation

Having prepared the evaluation terms of reference and designed the evaluation process, the evaluation should now be implemented. If you have given enough attention to the design, implementation will be much easier.

The main steps in the implementation process are:

- collecting the data
- analysing the data
- critically reviewing and reporting the findings

Collecting the data

It is useful to start by collecting all the relevant data available, and this is best done via a desk study. This exercise might also highlight areas where more primary data are needed, and it could involve checking available data with stakeholders.

Once the secondary data have been collected, you need to start collecting the primary data, using the tools you selected in Phase 2. This involves:

- designing the tools (e.g., a questionnaire, an interview checklist)
- training interviewers, if necessary, to ensure a common approach
- identifying and motivating your respondents
- testing the tools with selected respondents
- developing a time schedule and organising logistics (e.g., transport)
- applying the tools
- reviewing experiences with interviewers

You need to be aware of the sort of problems that can occur with the data from questionnaires and interviews. Pre-testing your questionnaire and training your interviewers can help to overcome these problems. This will show you where, for example, it is necessary to rephrase questions, or to choose to use a questionnaire rather than an interview.

Common problems with data collection tools are:

- **Lack of clarity:** This is probably the area that causes the greatest source of error in questionnaires and interviews. Questions need to be clear, short, simple and unambiguous. The aim is to eliminate the chance that the question will mean different things to different people. If the questionnaire designer does not do this, then essentially participants will be answering different questions. The problem can be exacerbated if there are different interviewers.

- **Use of jargon:** Jargon (including technical terms) and colloquial expressions might not be used and understood by all participants.

- **Leading questions:** A leading question is one that encourages a certain type of answer. Leading questions should always be avoided, as they produce unreliable data.

- **Words or phrases with positive or negative connotations:** Two words that sound similar might have quite different connotations (e.g., 'childlike' is a positive, affectionate term that can be applied to men and women, and young and old; 'childish', however, has negative connotations – no one wants to be thought of as childish).

- **Embarrassing questions:** These can make respondents uncomfortable, and close a potentially useful source of information.

- **Hypothetical questions:** These tend to be based on conjecture (e.g., 'If you were governor, what would you do to stop crime?'). They should be avoided as they do not produce consistent data representing real opinions.

- **Prestige bias:** There can be a tendency for respondents to answer in a way that makes them feel better and puts them in a better light.

Box 2.18
Some key points in collecting the data

- Do not assume your questions are clear and unambiguous. Pay attention to pre-testing and to training your interviewers
- Review the initial results of the data collection with other interviewers, in order to identify any problems quickly
- Change a data collection tool if it does not appear to be generating adequate, useful and good-quality data
- Be prepared to organise additional data collection if the initial results indicate that there is a need for more data
- Always keep your ToR in mind

Analysing the data

Once you have collected all your primary and secondary data, you can start analysing it. There are two approaches you can adopt:

- **Quantitative analysis**
  - Make relevant calculations (totals, averages, spread)
  - Analyse the statistical significance
  - Present the data in suitable formats (e.g., tables, graphs)

- **Qualitative analysis** (and critical review)
  - Organise the relevant results
  - Identify the stakeholders to involve
  - Organise a meeting or workshop to analyse the findings
  - Prepare a report on the meeting or workshop outcome

After you have analysed your quantitative and qualitative data, you need to check if the findings are credible. This has implications for the quality of the evaluation report and whether or not it is accepted. To verify the findings, you could:

- talk to people who know about the product/service (expert views)
- compare your data with those of other surveys
- include a verification method in your data collection design (e.g., a control group)
- compare findings from different methods used to collect data (triangulation)

Box 2.19
Some key points in analysing the data

- Consider verifying your data analysis design
- Use a statistician to see if any differences are significant. Interpreting the relevance of significant difference is not a task for people with no statistical background
- Involve stakeholders in analysing and interpreting the data
- Combine data analysis and verification with a first critical review involving stakeholders

Critically reviewing and reporting the findings

The communication process can be seen as a sequence of events, each of them with its own objectives, target groups and characteristics aimed at ensuring that the evaluation findings are critically reviewed and effectively reported to stakeholders.

You will have established in your communication strategy what events and tools you're going to use to review and report findings. Implementing this strategy involves:

- preparing a **presentation** of the final findings from the data analysis
- preparing an **event** at which the findings will be presented

- formulating **questions and assumptions** related to these findings
- formulating the expected **outcome** of the event
- identifying **participants** in this event
- developing the **programme** to address the questions and assumptions
- organising the **event**
- addressing the questions and assumptions, and agreeing upon the **recommendations**
- **reporting** on the findings and recommendations for improving the project, product or service

Box 2.20
Some key points in critically reviewing and reporting evaluation findings

- Participants in communication events might have different interests; be aware of where bias prevents open, objective discussion; create an atmosphere of openness by being open yourself
- Be aware of which stakeholders are likely to be most affected by the evaluation findings
- Make the event action oriented, so that the next stage becomes implementing the findings
- Be flexible in your communication plan. You should always leave space in the plan for any changes based on the early results of the data collection
- Write up the report in a timely fashion and as soon after the event as possible, while the enthusiasm and momentum is still there
- Avoid writing too lengthy a report because you think it carries more weight. It is the content that matters. Most people would rather read less than more

Following up the evaluation

Too often, an evaluation report is produced but, for various reasons, little or no action is taken to implement its recommendations. It is important to build the follow-up action plan into the overall work plan and to ensure that it includes consideration of how the action plan is to be monitored and how the changes it brings to the project are to be managed.

The main post-evaluation activities, therefore, are:

- formulating the action plan
- monitoring the implementation of the action plan
- managing the resulting project changes

Formulating the action plan

Formulating the action plan should start from the time you discuss the evaluation findings. Specific manageable actions (matching existing skills and budget) need to be agreed, responsibilities defined and a time frame developed for these actions.

Important elements of an action plan should include:

- a clear goal (what do we want to achieve)
- a clear description of activities (what are we going to do)
- clear deadlines (when should the activities be done)
- clear responsibilities (who is responsible for implementing the plan)

When formulating an action plan you should ensure that:

- the stakeholders involved are committed to carrying out the plan
- the plan is realistic and manageable, and not just a wish list
- it includes short-term wins as well as long-term gains, so that stakeholders see improvements quickly
- it is implemented without delay, so as to keep up the momentum of the evaluation

Box 2.21
Some key points in formulating the action plan

- Ensure that major elements of the action plan are included in the organisational strategy
- Use a pilot approach to test planned actions that might meet with resistance
- Make sure your key stakeholders are committed to the action plan, so that any major changes to the project do not later meet with resistance to these changes
- Communicate the action plan and its goals through various channels

Monitoring the implementation of the action plan

The implementation of the action plan should be monitored in order to see if the recommended changes are being made and are improving project performance and impact. Monitoring the implementation, following the standard monitoring process (as described in Part 1, pages 16-18) will also contribute to learning for future evaluations.

Monitoring the implementation of the plan will involve setting out the planned actions and the changes they should lead to (the indicators for success). It is only in this way that an assessment can be made as to whether or not the change contributed to improvements in the project. If the changes are substantial, it might be useful to set up a steering committee consisting of different stakeholders who can monitor progress.

Box 2.22
Some key points in monitoring the implementation of the action plan

- Do not monitor everything. Concentrate on the most important actions
- To avoid losing momentum, react quickly if actions are not being implemented according to the action plan
- Be ready to change the action plan if it becomes clear that some actions will not generate the desired results

Managing change

Evaluation is all about improving the performance and impact of your information project, product or service. This improvement means changes. And changes mean that the stakeholders might need to adapt their behaviour. Different stakeholders have different positions and might not agree on some of the evaluation findings. They might also have had different levels of involvement in the evaluation.

The implementation of the action plan therefore needs to take into account the different reactions that stakeholders might have to the findings of the evaluation. Possible reactions include:

- **Accepting the findings and recommendations, and ready to act upon them.** This is the easiest situation. Nevertheless, there may still be various barriers to implementation (e.g., other people might resist changes in the way they need to work).

- **Accepting the findings and recommendations, and willing to see them implemented, but unable to act upon them.** In this case, you will need to find out what the obstacles are. They might include a lack of necessary skills, staff or financial resources. If these problems can't be dealt with, implementation of the action plan is unlikely to succeed.

- **Accepting the findings, but not the recommendations, and not willing to act upon them.** This can happen when the recommendations appear to create more negative effects (extra time and costs) for this stakeholder than positive improvements. Negotiation might be needed to minimise the negative effects and enhance the positive ones. This can also happen when a stakeholder is unable to see the benefits of implementing the recommendations and therefore hesitates to support them. In this case, more information and exposure to successful examples might be required.

- **Rejecting the findings and the recommendations.** It is likely that this reaction is based on the relationship the stakeholder has with the evaluators and/or the information project, rather than on the report itself (assuming the evaluation and the report were adequate). Other reasons for this reaction could be that the stakeholder was not involved in the evaluation, that there are personality clashes or that there is disagreement between the stakeholder and the unit implementing the project. In these cases, relationships need to be improved before any co-operation from the stakeholder can be expected in the implementation process.

To anticipate how a stakeholder might react to the evaluation findings and recommendations, you could do a new stakeholder analysis. The focus would be on assessing the benefits and contributions of the recommended changes.

A useful tool for assessing the willingness and ability of stakeholders to change is the ADKAR model (Hiatt, 2006). This model lists five factors for successful change at an individual level:

- **Awareness** of why the change is needed
- **Desire** to support and participate in the change
- **Knowledge** of how to change
- **Ability** to implement the change
- **Reinforcement** to keep the change in place

The model can be used to find out why a stakeholder is resisting change and to help the stakeholder move through the change process. It can also be used to create an action plan for

personal and professional advancement during change, and to develop a change management plan for your stakeholders.

Managing change successfully requires keeping these factors in mind:

- different people react differently to change
- everyone has fundamental needs that have to be met
- change often involves loss, and people facing changes might feel a sense of loss
- expectations need to be managed realistically
- fears need to be dealt with

If the evaluation recommendations call for a fairly complex set of changes involving various stakeholders, it might be worthwhile considering using the services of a change agent who can guide and lead the change process. It should be someone who is committed to the change process, has the capacity to lead it and has good relationships with the stakeholders.

Box 2.23
Some key points in managing change

- Use a communication strategy that ensures that stakeholders are kept informed efficiently and comprehensively; don't let the grapevine take over. In this strategy, include individual interviews with stakeholders to guide them through changes that will affect them personally
- Be open and honest about the facts. Avoid creating unrealistic expectations
- Give stakeholders choices to make, and be clear about the possible consequences of those choices
- Give stakeholders time to express their views and concerns. Support their decision-making process, and provide any reassurance, guidance or information they might need
- Where the changes involve loss, identify what could replace that loss. This will help assuage potential fears
- Where the change process is complex, consider using a change agent. If the evaluation was conducted by an external evaluator, experience has shown that it is not a good idea to use the same evaluator to manage the project changes