

# **Results-based Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation 1**

## **By Françoise Coupal**

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The adoption of Results-based Management provides an opportunity to explore different approaches and methods which involve stakeholders more directly in building sustainable development results through their active participation in all dimensions of the project cycle.

This article explores specifically, Results-based Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and answers some of the following basic questions:

- **What is the difference between conventional monitoring and evaluation and Results-based Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**
- **What is the purpose of PM&E?**
- **How do I go about undertaking a PM&E?**

#### **What is Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation?**

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

Some Differences		
	Conventional M&E	Participatory M&E
<b>Who Initiates?</b>	The donor	The donor + project stakeholders
<b>Purpose</b>	Donor Accountability	Capacity-building, increase ownership over results, multi-stakeholder accountability
<b>Who Evaluates?</b>	External evaluator	Project stakeholders assisted by a PM&E Facilitator
<b>TOR</b>	Designed by Donor with limited input from project.	Designed by project stakeholders
<b>Methods</b>	Survey, Questionnaire, Semi-structured Interviewing, Focus Groups.	Range of methods such as Participatory Learning and Action, Appreciative Inquiry, Testimonials.
<b>Outcome</b>	Final report circulated in-house.	Better understanding of local realities, stakeholders involved in decision-making around analysis and what to do with information to adjust project strategies and activities to better meet results.

1 . A modified version of this article was published in 2001 by CIDA's Performance Review Branch as part of a special series on Participatory Evaluation.

PM&E should be results-based in that close attention is paid to monitoring & evaluating the achievement of results vs activities. Adjusting project strategies and activities in order to better meet project results is a critical outcome of PM&E.

## **PM&E Philosophical Underpinnings**

Over the past 10 years PM&E has gained increased prominence over more conventional approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Much monitoring and evaluation in the past has been judgmental with outsiders determining the state of a project and proposing recommendations from an outsider perspective. Project stakeholders are most often the objects of monitoring or evaluation rather than the key actors of the M&E process.

In contrast, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation seeks to involve all key stakeholders in the process of developing a framework for measuring results and reflecting on the project=s achievements and proposing solutions based on local realities.

Stakeholders are involved in defining what will be evaluated, who will be involved, when it will take place, the participatory methods for collecting information and analysis to be used and how findings are consolidated.

Random sampling and triangulation are integral to PM&E to ensure that the findings are valid and reliable.

Stakeholders drawn from the project may need to be trained to act as PM&E facilitators.

Learning, proposing solutions and acting on them are also an important part of participation, learning and action.

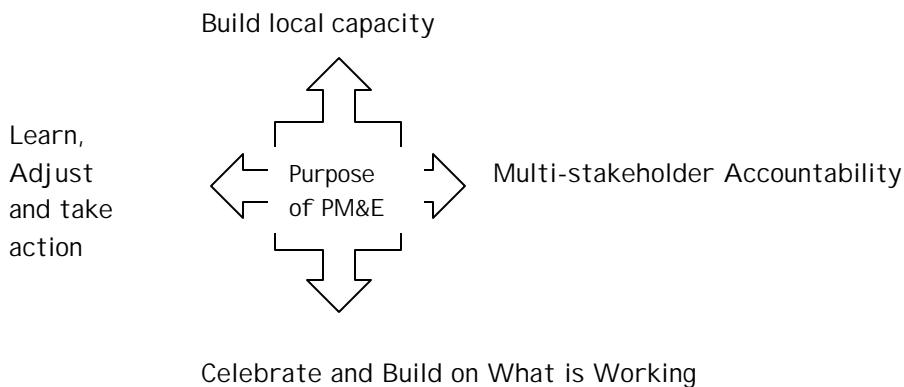
### **Key Principles of PM&E Include:**

- letting go of your own preconceived ideas and viewpoints;
- the importance of "handing over the stick" and creating the space for respect and participation;
- PM&E should not be an extractive process of information gathering;
- PM&E leads to reflection on the achievement of results in order to effect positive and constructive change;
- respecting local customs, languages and experiences;
- believing in and seeking the knowledge that marginalized or illiterate people have of their environment;
- facilitating a process of learning, change and action vs prescribing, judging or punishing;
- living with the people and integrating oneself with local customs and traditions;
- people will open-up if they are allowed to participate;
- emphasizing listening skills and rapport-building;
- flexibility to adjust approach and strategies.

## The Purpose of PM&E:

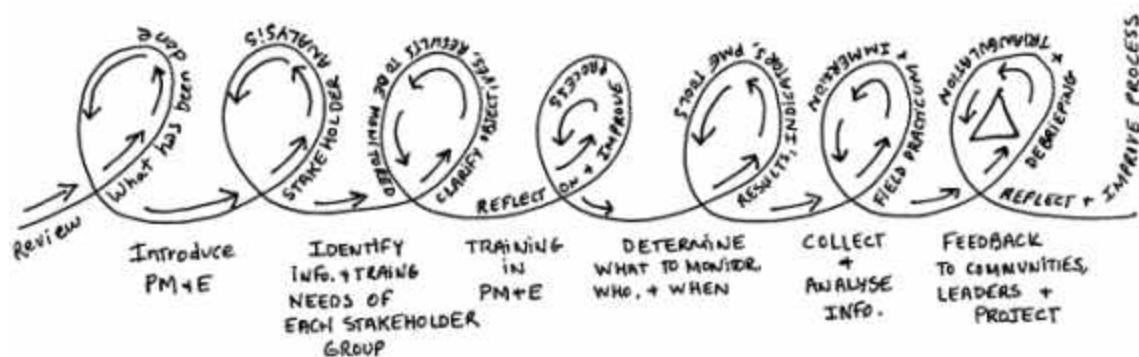
The purpose of PM&E is fourfold:

- 1) to build local capacity of project stakeholders to reflect, analyse, propose solutions and take action;
- 2) to learn, adjust and take action by taking corrective action to ensure the achievement of results such as adding or deleting activities or changing one's strategies;
- 3) to provide accountability at all levels from the community, organizational level to those responsible for the implementation and funding of the project.
- 4) to celebrate and build on what is working.



Indeed PM&E can be seen as a cyclical process of overlapping circles where participants determine, refine and verify the results, reflect on achievements, build on what is working, identify lessons learned and obstacles, adjust and take corrective action.

### *The Participatory Monitoring + Evaluation Cycle*



This process may involve revising results, activities or even strategies to

achieve development results.

Building on what works and celebrating strengths and achievements are essential to PM&E.

### **Salient feature of PM&E include:**

- The PM&E framework for a project should be simple, affordable and sustainable given the human and financial resources available. One should resist creating a monster or a system that is too complex or unwieldy.
- PM&E tools are not an end onto itself, but a vehicle for group discussion, analysis, problem-solving and action.
- PM&E should seek to give voice to local needs, priorities, aspirations and resources.
  - PM&E builds on the participatory creation of expected results.
  - The framework and its implementation should complement existing monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- PM&E relies on local resources and materials and uses such techniques to monitor results as semi-structured interviewing, stakeholder analysis, mapping, trend analysis, drawings, flowcharts, collection of baseline, etc.
- PM&E is more than training; it is a process that is on going and continuous involving a framework for action rather than a one-off activity.
- PM&E should emphasize a positive approach to learning and improving performance recognizing commitment, innovation and flexibility vs judgement or punishment.
- Emphasis should be on action and taking the learning to achieve meaningful development results vs simply collecting information.

### **How Do I Go About Undertaking PM&E?**

"If you are really going to do Results-based Management, you can't do it in a true way unless it is participatory. Otherwise, its Canadian-driven RBM"

A CIDA Officer

Periodic monitoring and evaluation are integral parts of CIDA projects. Most often periodic monitoring is done through field visits or the hiring of an

external monitor. Evaluation is typically undertaken at the mid-point or end of the project by a third party evaluator.

Ideally, PM&E should be an integral part of a project from the early design and planning stage. PM&E is best integrated during the first year of operation so that the PM&E needs can be identified, baseline established and capacity built from the onset.

Where projects are already on going, one must discuss with the project stakeholders their interest and desire to integrate PM&E. PM&E undertaken in traditionally designed projects may help a project to identify and integrate more participatory methods in their project management.

Remember that increased investments in PM&E can be offset by long-term benefits. PM&E and Participatory RBM strengthens local capacity in participatory planning and decision-making processes and these are skills that can be adopted beyond the initial CIDA project.

### **Key Phases of PM&E**

There are at least six key phases to PM&E and a number of key steps for each phase. These are:

#### **Phase 1: Buy-in and Commitment**

- Find out what is being monitored and evaluated already and what methods and approaches are being used;
- Explore people's understanding of participation and to what degree they

#### **CIDA's PM&E experience with the Maternal and Child Health Project in China**

From the perspective of the CIDA officer responsible for the Maternal and Child Health Project in China, PM&E is a critical part of RBM as stakeholders participate in the creation of results to be achieved and then remain involved in measuring and monitoring these results. PM&E broadens accountability by involving project stakeholders in co-creating a relevant monitoring and evaluation strategy. Donor accountability is only "part of the equation. Ultimately, local accountability leads to sustainability." Involving project stakeholders in decision-making around the collection and analysis of information is more likely to generate "local ownership and lead to change since people are more likely to act on recommendations generated when people do it themselves".

In the China project, we have seen that with the introduction of PM&E how participatory methods can complement existing M&E which relies heavily on more quantitative data collection. PM&E has created openings, in a very hierarchical system among the different stakeholder levels, by creating the space for dialogue among the different levels and for reinforcing the work and views of the village doctors. For example, PM&E work undertaken in Lijiang county revealed the importance of regular physical check-ups for high risk pregnant women, a greater involvement of townships in the referral system and strengthening the network of village doctors particular in remote and isolated regions of the county.

can and want to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of their project.

- Introduce the idea of PM&E to those who are unfamiliar with it.
- If buy-in and commitment to PM&E exists, proceed to identify those to be involved in the first steps such as "beneficiaries", community representatives, intermediaries such as NGOs and even the donor.
- Identify the information needs of each stakeholder group that needs to be met by the PM&E process;
- Agree on how each of the stakeholder groups will/wishes/can be involved;
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done so far.

### Phase 2: Training in PM&E Methods

- Start small by piloting PM&E in one region before trying to cover too much;
- Train all relevant people (i.e. beneficiaries, community leaders, intermediaries, technical M&E staff, executing agency) in PM&E methods and approaches;
- Ensure that community leaders are part of the capacity building and that there is a good gender mix;
- Include a field practice with the training with participants residing in the community for a few days;
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done so far.

### Phase 3: Defining a Framework for PM&E

- Establish the level (i.e. village, township, regional or organizational level) PM&E is to operate. Keep it simple and pilot PM&E in a given region before expanding;
- Clarify the objectives, results (short, medium and long-term results) and any on-going activities to be monitored and evaluated;
- Decide how you are going to monitor the PM&E process itself;

#### Determining the Costs

1. Take stock of existing resources both human and professional;
2. Start small, piloting PM&E in one region;
3. Determine counterpart contribution;
4. Identify capacity of local stakeholders for undertaking PM&E;
5. Determine the need for hiring a PM&E facilitator experienced in PM&E methods;
6. Specify costs for training, data collection, purchase of relevant software such as NUDIS for analyzing qualitative data, fieldwork and transportation.
7. Remember that increased investments in PM&E can be offset by long-term benefits such as local capacity in M&E, increased ownership and sustainability.

- Plan how you will prioritize what to monitor and evaluate; define the most appropriate indicators, the sources of information, the methods to be used and who will be responsible;
- Clarify the rights and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the PM&E process;
- Define a locally based PM&E team that will be responsible for the PM&E;
- Determine the need for the use of specialized software such as NUDIS for tabulating data;
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done so far.

#### **Phase 4: Implementing PM&E**

- Organize logistics with communities and organizations beforehand and ensure that the timing and purpose is clear and agreeable;
- If the PM&E team is large, break down into small teams of three-four persons each to cover various communities;
- Ensure your sample is representative;
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done so far.

#### **Phase 5: Data Collection, Participatory Analysis and Action**

- Collect and analyse the information with the communities with the application of PM&E tools and methods;
- Brainstorm possible solutions and actions with the community or organization that is part of the PM&E process;
- Ensure feedback of the findings to the communities through pre-departure debriefings;
- Make decisions with the community about the implications of the analysed information for the project and the stakeholders;
- Agree on the recommendations for decision-making;
- Determine how findings will be presented (i.e. theatre, presentations, skits, video, or written report);
- Circulate and distribute any documentation arising from the PM&E to meet information needs of the different stakeholders. Always ensure that all stakeholders have copies of the information down to the grassroots level. Translation may be required.
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done

so far.

### Phase 6: Next Steps

- Determine next steps with key project stakeholders such as piloting in other regions, scaling up, creating local capacity for analysis and action;
- Follow-up recommendations and proposals to ensure that decision-making is being informed by PM&E findings;
- Ensure that there is project/programme flexibility to incorporate suggested changes;
- Reflect on and improve the PM&E process, based on what has been done so far;
- Celebrate.

### Concluding Remarks

There are no standard recipes for undertaking participatory monitoring and evaluation. PM&E involves creating a framework that suits the context of the project and the needs of the key stakeholders. As one CIDA officer pointed out:

"Just get out there and do it so you can see how different it is than conventional methods".

While CIDA officers often do not have the time to become fully involved in the implementation of PM&E, they do make critical decisions around how monitoring and evaluation will be carried out in their projects or programmes. Being aware of the advantages of PM&E, creating space for the experimentation of PM&E methods during field visits and piloting initiatives is the first step to greater participation and ownership of project results.

Comments on this paper can be sent to:

Françoise Coupal  
705 Roosevelt Ave.  
Ottawa, K2A 2A8  
Canada  
Email: [coupal@mosaic-net-intl.ca](mailto:coupal@mosaic-net-intl.ca)

## Handbooks on PM&E

**1. Participatory Learning & Action--A Trainer's Guide.**

Authors: Pretty, Jules; Guijt, Irene; Scoones, Ian; Thompson, John.

International Institute for Environment and Development  
London, 1995.

This manual provides a step by step approach to participatory learning and action methodologies. It is an excellent resource material for trainers and practitioners interested in participatory development.

**2. Understanding and Practicing Participatory Evaluation.**

Author: Elizabeth Whitmore, ed.

**New Directions for Evaluation, American Evaluation Association**, Number 80, Winter 1998.

The book provides critical reflection on both the theory and practice of Participatory Evaluation by using diverse case examples.

**3. Participatory Monitoring and Impact Assessment of Sustainable Agriculture Initiatives,** SARD Discussion Paper

No.1 July 1998

Author: Irene Guijt

**Changing Views on Change: Participatory Approaches to Monitoring the Environment,** SARD Discussion Paper No.2, July 1998

Author: Joanne Abbott and Irene Guijt

These two documents provide policy makers, managers, planning and evaluation staff with ideas about participatory processes and indicators that can be used to involve stakeholders in program monitoring.

**4. Partners in Evaluation--Evaluating Development and Community Programmes with Participants.**

Author: Marie-Thérèse Feuerstein

Contact: Teaching Aids at Low Cost, PO Box 49, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 4AX, UK.

This pioneering work provides the reader with a thorough step-by-step approach to participatory evaluation. Excellent graphics and

drawings accompany the text. A must read for PE facilitators and anyone interested in participatory evaluation.

##### **5. Who are the Question-Makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook**

Authors: Campos, Jennie; Coupal, Françoise

UNDP, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Unit, One United Nations Plaza,  
New York, New York, 10017, 1997.

This handbook designed for UNDP staff explores key concepts, tools and application of participatory evaluation from an organizational perspective. A case study is included as well as information on the activities of other donors in the area of participatory development and evaluation.

#### **Relevant Web Sites and List-Serves**

##### **Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- [www.web.net/pdforum](http://www.web.net/pdforum)
- [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip)
- [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/eldis](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/eldis)
- [www.nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks](http://www.nrm.massey.ac.nz/changelinks)

##### **List-serves on Participation:**

- Guelph: [pra@listserve.uoguelph.ca](mailto:pra@listserve.uoguelph.ca)
- PD Forum: [pdforum@web.net](mailto:pdforum@web.net)

##### **Indicators:**

Social Indicators Launchpad: <http://www.ccsd.ca/lp.html>

Sustainable Development Indicators: <http://iisd.ca/measure/complist.asp>

Eco-knowledge: [www.taiga.net/coup/indics](http://www.taiga.net/coup/indics)