

PARTICIPANT RESOURCE

Evaluation Scenario 1

In 1994 Rick Davies was faced with the job of assessing the impact of an aid project on 16,500 people in the Rajshahi zone of western of Bangladesh (6). The idea of getting everyone to agree on a set of indicators was quickly dismissed as there was just too much diversity and conflicting views. Instead Rick devised an evaluation method which relied on people retelling their stories of what they had witnessed as a result of the project. Furthermore, the storytellers explained why they thought their story was important. If Rick had left it there the project would have had a nice collection of stories but the key stakeholders' appreciation for the impact of the project would have been minimal. Rick needed to engage the stakeholders, primarily the region's decision-makers and the ultimate project funders, in a process that would help them see (and maybe even feel) the impact. His solution was to get groups of people at different levels of the project's hierarchy to select the stories which they thought were most important and explain why they made that selection.

Each of the 4 project offices collected a number of stories and were asked to submit one story in each of the four areas of interest to the head office in Dhaka. The Dhaka head office staff then selected one story from the 16 submitted. The selected stories and reasons for selection were communicated back to the level below and the original storytellers. Over time the stakeholders began to understand the impact they were having and the project's beneficiaries began to understand what the stakeholders believed was important. People were learning from each other.

Rick's method was highly successful: participation in the project increased; the assumptions and world views surfaced, helping in one case resolve an intra-family conflict over contraceptive use; the stories were extensively used in publications, educational material and videos; and, the positive outcomes were identified and reinforced."

Evaluation Scenario 2

At Search for Common Ground (Search), this evaluation methodology has been an especially useful tool, often as a fallback plan and supplement to traditional linear results-based models such as the logical framework. In Uganda, we adopted it for the Supporting Access to Justice, Fostering Equity and Peace project focused on strengthening peacebuilding and conflict mitigation by improving access to justice in land matters and promoting peace and reconciliation. The logical framework no longer reflected the reality of the context or project activities, both of which had evolved over time and the flexibility afforded by this methodology ensured that the evaluation was responsive to the changing nature of the project.

Search also introduced an adapted approach to create a space for reflection in its ongoing collaborative project with Humanity United in South Sudan. As part of this initiative, peacebuilding scholars and experienced practitioners accompany young South Sudanese leaders as the latter collectively innovate and act to transform conflicts in their community. Since the project did not have a predetermined set of objectives or goals from the outset, this evaluation methodology has been an ideal tool to capture the emergent changes over the duration of the project.

An important component of the monitoring, evaluation, and learning strategy have been the monthly conversations with the peacebuilding experts and practitioners about the changes that they are observing and hearing about through their work with the local peacebuilders. In the weeks leading up to the call, participants record their outcomes in a form that prompts analysis at the individual level about the significance of the changes and the intervention's contribution to them. The monthly conversations then create an opportunity for implementing partners and donors to come together to pause, discuss their observations at length, and discern the implications for program strategy moving forward.

The findings are substantiated using additional tools like surveys and are reflected back to the young peacebuilders on the ground. The design of the process and its scope of enquiry has been shaped by the changing needs of the project and its participants.

Evaluation Scenario 3

Step 1 -The first step in this process was to review the logic underlying the Fiji Education Sector Program (FESP) that had been documented in a program logical framework matrix. The links between each level in the hierarchy of this matrix were analysed and clarified. Performance indicators were revised in the logical framework matrix to reflect the Ministry's targets.

Preparation for Steps 2 to 4 - The previous focus had only extended to an output level, now the assessment of evidence for results also took place at a higher level of the results chain, that is, outcomes and impacts. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating achievements at each level identified within the program logic were also clearly established. The team member supporting a specific area of the FESP was responsible at program output and intermediate outcomes level, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser at objective and outcomes level. The Terms of Reference provided to Advisers were restructured to clearly reflect the relevant results chain and included indicators, for each level, to initiate early thinking about alternative explanations for achievement of outcomes. Each team member made several visits to support the Ministry to implement the program. During their first input, each team member was required to develop a plan for monitoring and evaluating the achievement of the indicators specified in their Terms of Reference. They also identified potential alternative explanations for the achievement of outcomes and gathered evidence to demonstrate or discount these.

Implementation of Steps 2 to 6 - At the completion of each input, each team member assessed the evidence and alternative explanations and updated their performance story. As its name suggests, a performance story provides a description of a program's achievements and details of how these were achieved. The updated performance story then fed into a team member's next input, resulting in (and promoting) a monitoring and evaluation cycle. Next, the Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser reviewed each team member's performance story. During this review, the need for additional evidence was identified by the team member and also by the Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser. This additional information was then collected by the team member during subsequent inputs. With these activities completed, the Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser prepared a performance story at the Ministry of Education outcomes level.

Scenario 3 drawn from: https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/mod17_ausaid_fiji_case_article.pdf