DOSSIER #2

DECEMBER 2024

THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

OPERATIONAL APPROACHES AND TOOLS
PUBLIC POLICIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY
CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES
MEANINGFUL LEARNINGS

PETAS
RESEARCH PROGRAM ON EMPLOYMENT, ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

Tapella, Esteban
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Introduction

EvalParticipativa is a joint research and outreach initiative that has been undertaken since 2019 by Social and Environmental Labour Studies Program (PETAS), part of the National University of San Juan (Argentina), and the Focelac+ project for the development of capacities and the coordination of evaluation stakeholders in Latin America, run by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval). The collaboration between these two entities has allowed them to combine and integrate their respective characteristics and potentialities in an original effort of reflection and practice on participatory evaluation in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Since its inception, EvalParticipativa aimed to be a community of practice and learning that would bring together all individuals and organisations interested in social participation approaches to evaluation, provided they felt motivated and were willing to share their practice and learn in a horizontal and collective manner. This engagement has taken various forms, from simply sharing a publication for our resource bank to specific involvement in organising local, national, or regional workshops, developing webinars, or other training opportunities.

One of the most significant events in the history of EvalParticipativa was the development of the first First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Quito (Ecuador) at the end of 2019. This event allowed for an in-depth reflection on many of the topics shared on the platform to date. The attendees shared their knowledge and contributed inputs that culminated in Sowing & Harvesting. Participatory Evaluation Handbook, a widely used and consulted material both in the region and globally, following its English version.

One of the privileged forms of communication and exchange, and with the greatest impact on the EvalParticipativa community of practice and learning, has been the contributions of cases, experiences, and reflective articles on our web platform. These have showcased the richness and diversity of social participation evaluation practices in the region, with occasional contributions from colleagues from other contexts. It was from these original materials that the idea emerged to compile them into a Dossier such as this, making them available in an easily accessible and unified format.

The articles in this Dossier are organised into four main sections. The first section, Public Policies and Civil Society, presents contributions that emphasise reflection and experiences regarding the involvement of social actors in public policy evaluation processes. The second section, Conceptual Perspectives, brings together contributions

that combine epistemological, historical, and contextual insights, allowing for the exploration of the plurality (and sometimes controversy) among the authors and their perspectives. The third section, Meaningful Learnings, reflects on experiences and, above all, on the lessons learned from field practice in evaluation and social participation. Finally, the fourth section presents Operational Approaches and Tools, a space for reflection on the potentialities and limitations of concrete tools designed to actively involve people in the context of an evaluation.

This Dossier #2 seeks to convey our commitment to bringing together voices and experiences concerning participatory evaluation in the Latin American and Caribbean region. We hope it will serve as a resource for consultation and discussion for public institutions, foundations, NGOs and young evaluators. Each of them is also invited to join in this call expressed by the Dossier's title: to think together about participatory evaluation. We encourage you to explore the contributions included here, as well as those we continue to add to the *EvalParticipativa* platform and share on our social networks.

Pablo Rodríguez-Bilella
Esteban Tapella

on behalf of the
EvalParticipativa coordination team

PUBLIC POLICIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Democracy and Citizen Participation, Keys to a Fairer and More Inclusive Society

by *Leonardo Drazic*

Today we would like to share an article by Leonardo Drazic (*) with the EvalParticipativa community. He is one of our friends and colleagues at the National University of San Juan and has supported this initiative in various ways since it began. Leo shares with us some thoughts that we consider relevant for the approach to participatory evaluation that we promote. An approach that holds the democratic ideal at its core and that focuses on the importance of citizens being the political reason behind every evaluation. Particular emphasis is placed on the higher education system and the need for it to connect to reality at different levels.

Every society that is victim to successive moments of crisis is severely marked and affected by previous ruptures to the terms of basic social contracts, whether economic, political or legal. In many Latin American and Caribbean countries, political institutionality is largely discredited due to the questions that surround it. Public opinion in general clearly rejects the current, past and future ruling classes. This communicates a lack of trust in political representatives and especially toward democratic institutional mechanisms that organise public activity.

Such uncertainty is due primarily to a citizen participation "crisis". Citizen participation should be a relevant instrument for improving the population's living conditions. Instead, decisions are made by bureaucratic governments that are distanced from citizens and that regularly dismiss providing opportunities for civil society to have control over public mandates. Given the above, society is only democratic to a certain extent. Democracy has

appeared to be the model that humanity has most often chosen to promote a fairer society and a more equal distribution of income. However, moving in this direction requires a complete redesign of how the state operates (Kliksberg, 2006: 820).

In order to fully open up the role to be played by citizens, it is necessary to create transparency in public acts, remove bureaucracy, prioritise all forms of citizen co-management and activate institutions for permanent participation (Brugué, 2009: 55).

To this end, citizen participation should be promoted in public affairs through institutional mechanisms. It should be an unavoidable and non-delegable government obligation to guarantee civil society has opportunities to affect the way the collective destiny is defined. The permanent inclusion of society in all formal decision-making moments that define the public agenda should neither be left to a small group of economic stakeholders, nor to market desires.

Citizen participation is understood as a value-based social and historical construction that guarantees rights and duties with a state that is capable of putting in place inclusive policies. In this regard, government organisations should drive public debate and provide information channels and spaces for consultation that lead to a more effective, innovative and responsible public management that holistically fulfils society's basic needs (Ramírez and Dassen, 2012: 51). Citizen participation should be integrated into the different levels of government (municipal, provincial and national) as an effective right and its legal framework should be explicitly defined as beyond any political transitions.

Education in general and the institutions that make up the higher education system in particular, should be clearly committed to generating and transmitting knowledge for society. Sovereign, independent and fair nations are built on a democratising education system that provides ample space for the development of free, responsible citizens that are committed to improving local, national and international realities.

Leonardo Drazic is a writer and sociologist. He graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the National University of San Juan (UNSJ), where he now works as a lecturer and researcher. He is Coordinator of International Relations at UNSJ, and has served as Deputy Director and Director of the Institute of

Socioeconomic Research for the periods 2013-2017 and 2017-2021 respectively. He participates in the PETAS team for the Eval Participativa initiative.

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Participatory Evaluation: An Opportunity to Advance in Human Rights, Inclusion and Equity

by *Julia Espinosa Fajardo*

In participatory evaluation, people and their diverse needs are put at the centre of evaluation processes, and consequently, public policies and programmes. The active inclusion of the different voices throughout the whole evaluative exercise opens up a space to highlight the violation of rights, processes of social exclusion and the structural inequalities that exist in each context.

In this sense, it is an opportunity to make visible the different situations of discrimination and vulnerability, and move towards public actions that address these realities to a greater extent and have more transformative power. In this way, participation in evaluation is a key aspect in the process of deepening democracy and ensuring rights, while at the same time, leaving no one behind.

What does EvalParticipativa reveal to us about the Latin American experience in this regard? How can we promote evaluation practices that have a positive impact on rights, inclusion and equity? What challenges are posed in the region?

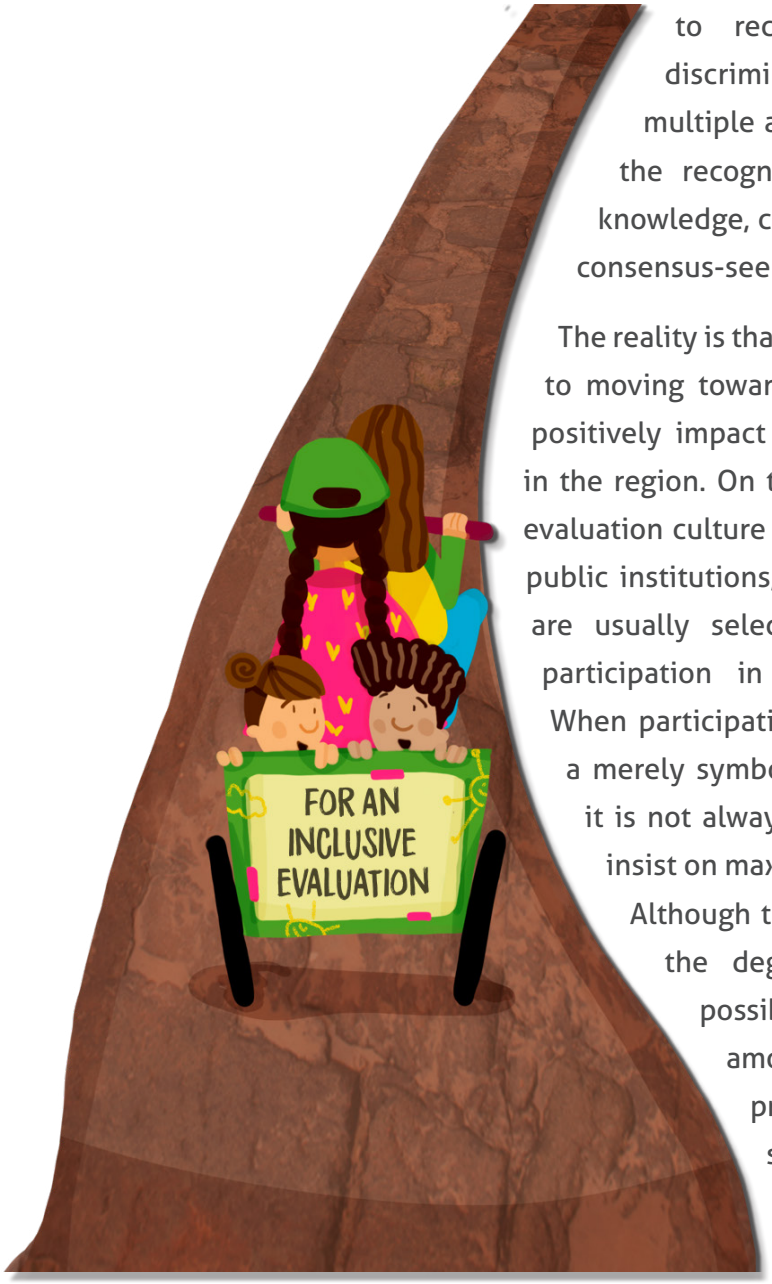
EvalParticipativa employs evaluation practices that reflect the transformative potential of participatory evaluation. With regard to advancing towards evaluations that positively impact rights, inclusion and equity, these practices underline the need to treat participants as full subjects of rights, and not as objects in need of protection or mere beneficiaries. Participation is related to the democratic function of evaluating public policies (Plottu

& Plottu, 2009; Cornwall, 2008; Monnier & Conan, 1995) and recognises people as individuals that can speak and think critically, make decisions and act independently. It also recognises that they have their own interests, expectations and priorities. Therefore, this concept of participation fosters the active involvement of different actors throughout the evaluation process, from the design stage to the sharing of results (Sanz et al., 2019). This active involvement means that those who make the decision to carry out a participatory evaluation have to accept that it means sharing decision making, especially with regard to the evaluation process. In other words, it involves giving up power. At the same time, viewing participants as subjects with full rights also implies recognising their responsibilities.

One particular concern in Latin America aims to separate participatory evaluation from "technicist" visions which tend to reduce the entire approach and purpose to a focus on the tools used to encourage participation. When used in this way, evaluation runs the risk of being reduced to merely symbolic simulacra, as it fails to challenge the status quo and redistribute power (Chambers, 2003).

Indeed, not using participatory tools could even be positive if they are only being used as alternative, "enjoyable" ways to impose content and direct evaluation efforts, while only pretending to incorporate the perspectives of local actors. However, tools, workshops and games are central and very important parts of the participatory processes. It is thanks to them that learning emerges from the collective task of "doing together" and of participants committing their "whole self" (not just their thoughts) to the learning process. What is more, this "committing of the whole self" is a strongly Latin American trait, which is seldom valued in evaluation models based on other rationales.

Therefore, participation is understood to be a process that must be both empowering and transformative. The diverse positions and visions held in the evaluation process should be considered and addressed in such a way that the actors are empowered and power relationships transformed. To do this, it is vitally important



to recognise the situations of discrimination present (at times, multiple and interlinked) and promote the recognition of different forms of knowledge, critical reflection, negotiation, consensus-seeking, flexibility and creativity.

The reality is that there are several challenges to moving towards evaluation practices that positively impact rights, inclusion and equity in the region. On the one hand, with regard to evaluation culture and policy in Latin American public institutions, classical evaluation models are usually selected and the relevance of participation in evaluation is questioned. When participation is included, it is often in a merely symbolic way. On the other hand, it is not always possible or appropriate to insist on maximum levels of participation. Although this may be a long-term goal, the degree of participation it is possible to achieve often depends, among other factors, on the programme in question, the specific context in which it has been implemented, and on the evaluation team.

In this regard, it is always important to remain aware of who is participating, how they are participating, in what activities, what the real participation potential is in each specific case, and how to keep promoting it in order to ensure that human rights, inclusion and equity are upheld. Public institutions must demonstrate an active commitment to this process and also to addressing how the different forms of discrimination, whether socio-economic status, gender, ethnic origin, age etc., intersect in every programme and specific policy, as well as in the evaluation itself.

Julia Espinosa Fajardo is a Sociologist, with a PhD. in Political Sciences from Complutense University in Madrid (Spain). An expert in evaluation, gender, intersectionality and development, she also works as a full-time professor and researcher in the Sociology department at the University of Seville where she

coordinates the Ibero-American Network of Researchers on Work, Gender and Daily Life's Observatory of Public Policies for Equality and Gender. She is an independent consultant in the field of evaluation and equality policies and a member of the global initiative EvalGender+, ReLAC (Evaluation Network for Latin America and the Caribbean), the EES (European Evaluation Society) and AproEval (Iberian Association of Professional Evaluators). She is associate researcher at the Social and Environmental Labour Studies Program (PETAS) and participates in the EvalParticipativa initiative.

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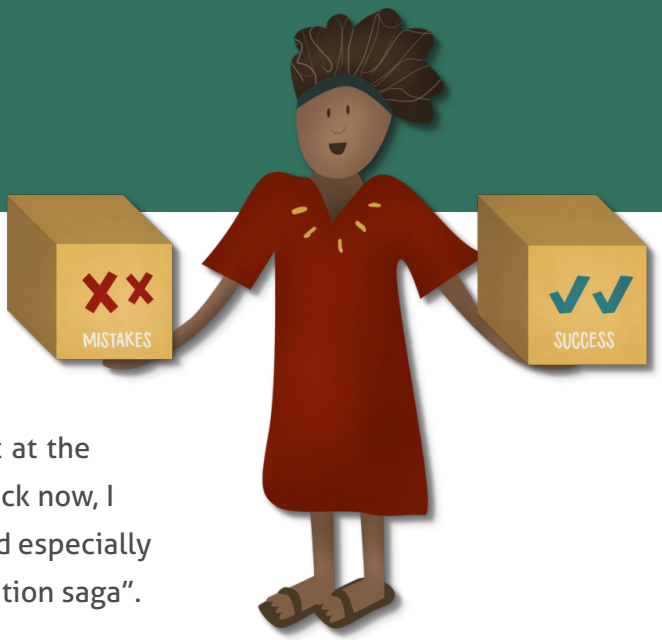
And We Carry on Learning... This Time Visiting a Partcipatory Evaluation of Health Services Provided by a Latin American NGO (Argentina)



by *Olga Nirenberg*

Prologue

Here I'm going to share an experience that at the time I found negative but which, looking back now, I think was a good lesson for me, the team and especially the women who participated in this "evaluation saga".

I think that evaluation often clearly portrays differences in stakeholder perspectives and the importance of having their interests and influences mapped out. Furthermore, all stakeholders should always be fully involved. In other words, there should be a multi-stakeholder focus with clear decisions around which voices will be given priority.

The recommendation that arises from the experience that will be shared below touches on the ethical issues involved in participatory evaluation. This means that those of us who are evaluation professionals and who know about methodological issues, have the moral obligation to amplify the quietest voices and those that are not always heard, especially when it is claimed that these same people are the "recipients" of the initiative in question.

Another issue that is highlighted by this experience is that the people who approach us and contract our services, may think that they have privileges and control or can even manipulate the conclusions. This was the case of the NGO provincial leadership in question. Moreover, in my opinion it's important to negotiate the terms of the report with those who contract the evaluation especially regarding the tone or ways of expressing certain elements. But this does not mean that you should leave out things that need saying.

This experience demonstrates some of the conflicts that can arise when those who contract us to facilitate evaluation think that they have absolute right to veto. It also demonstrates how powerful evaluation can be in bringing about changes.

Evaluation characteristics and context [1]

The evaluation took place (from 2010 to 2011) in two provincial capital cities in Northeast Argentina at the request of a Latin American NGO which aimed to improve access for women with low income to financial services, human development and primary health care.[2]

The NGO works in each province and there is Provincial Health Coordination and several Focal Points which guide its service users in areas related to the three components mentioned. Each Focal Point has several Community Health Contacts, each in charge of a group of female service users. The Community Health Contacts are specifically trained to guide the women in terms of accessing and using health services as well as sharing information and preventative measures. They are volunteers, also service users, chosen by their peers. They receive some incentives from the NGO and can be changed each year, although they can also be re-elected.

The evaluation focused on the Primary Health Care component. It explored the needs and demands, how services were used, as well as service user compliance, preferences and proposals. It also analysed the local availability of First Level of Care and Primary Health Care services. It triangulated qualitative and quantitative techniques and included participation from different stakeholders especially the NGO service users which includes the Community Health Contacts.

Preliminary visits were made to each province in order to contact the NGO's provincial workers as well as health professionals and service user leaders (the Provincial Heal2. In order to preserve confidentiality, neither the NGO nor the provinces involved are named. In addition, only indirect or general references are made to evaluative findings. th Coordination for the NGO and the Community Health Contacts). We also requested pre-existing information (which turned out to be insufficient). In this way, we tried

1 Some of the details on this evaluation including the instruments used can be found in: Nirenberg, O. 2015. Evaluación diagnóstica sobre servicios de salud de una organización no gubernamental para sus asociadas (Diagnostic evaluation on health services provided by an NGO for its service users) In: Cardarelli, G "La Evaluación cualitativa: Una oportunidad de aprendizaje social". Ed. NOVEDUC. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
2. In order to preserve confidentiality, neither the NGO nor the provinces involved are named. In addition, only indirect or general references are made to evaluative findings.

to understand as well as possible the contexts, establish basic agreements on the evaluative design, know which dimensions should be considered and what requirements were needed to make the fieldwork viable. This inroad was useful for mapping out the stakeholders in each province and was embellished during the fieldwork.

Main lessons

The stakeholder perceptions and explanations of the problems differ according to each stakeholder's position in each specific context in addition to cultural, ethnic, generational and gender factors etc. For this reason, absolute consensus is unrealistic for describing, explaining and prioritising problems as it is for proposals for how to overcome them.

The important thing in these evaluations is bringing together stakeholders, generating spaces for discussion, confrontation and joint reflection so that basic agreements can be reached – rather than consensus – for various aspects especially in the final stages including conclusions (reasoned evaluative judgements) and recommendations.

Furthermore, in the evaluations on access and quality of services, the service user perspective should be given priority, in this case, the NGO female service users. Although this was agreed at the beginning with the NGO provincial leaders, a conflict arose when they questioned the conclusions in the evaluative report and went on to question the participatory method that had been agreed, requesting an epidemiological study. Confronted with this stance, the Community Health Contacts requested intervention from the InterAmerican Development Bank, the NGO's main funder.

From the perspective of the female service users, it was confirmed that evaluative initiatives work best when they combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, when they are multi-stakeholder and participatory and when they include moments of learning and empowerment, in this case something that they benefitted from themselves. Their testimonies affirmed that the different evaluative instances enabled them to::

- learn from their peers;
- reflect on the survey questions and the discussion guidelines;
- learn more about their own situations and abilities;
- channel their complaints more efficiently;
- find new paths to continue advancing.

The evaluation enabled them to change the NGO's provincial leadership and redirect the health care model so that it would meet the needs and preferences of the service users and be applicable within the local context due to the availability of services.

Ways of overcoming conflicts and obstacles

The first obstacle was the total lack of connection between the NGO and the Provincial Health Ministry. This was a problem due to the fact that they contracted both private and public health centres. This made it difficult for us to visit the public Primary Health Care Centres where the majority of service users traditionally preferred to go and who questioned the care given in these contracted centres. The evaluators managed to get the Provincial Health Ministry to authorise us to visit and observe the centres in order to evaluate the public Primary Health Care Centres too.

A second obstacle arose due to the fact that several agreements that had been reached to make the fieldwork possible were not enacted by the NGO. For example, finding appropriate places for group activities, making photocopies of material, buying flipchart paper and markers, inviting the service users to the meetings. In summary, little support was provided by the NGO leadership to make the fieldwork viable. This was attributed to the fact that the evaluation was more a requirement from the InterAmerican Development Bank rather than motivated by the NGO itself.

In order to overcome these obstacles, the fieldwork took double the amount of time expected. The conflict with the NGO's provincial leadership was overcome with the intervention of the InterAmerican Development Bank which supported the evaluative report and promoted changes to the leadership and the model used for Primary Health Care services in the two cities.

Olga Nirenberg is from Argentina and has a PhD in Social Sciences (UBA, 2005) and a diploma in Public Health (UBA, 1976). She is an executive member of the Local Development Support Centre (CEADEL) and has developed the Self-Assessment Tool for Education Quality (IACE) for public schools (UNICEF-CEADEL). She was a programme consultant at UNICEF, the ARCOR Foundation and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, Argentina). At PAHO Washington, she evaluated the Comprehensive Adolescent Health Plan of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the programmes "Reduction of Health Care Disparities in HIV Prevention and Treatment in LAC" and "Prevention of HIV in Adolescents and the Youth in LAC with a Focus on Human Rights". She was a World Health Organization (Geneva) consultant on participatory programmes on adolescence and an evaluator at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in LAC. She is a lecturer and a theses and extension projects evaluator for universities in Argentina and Latin America. She writes on social planning and evaluation.

Evaluation Team: Dra. Olga Nirenberg (Leadership), Lic. Marilú González de Ganem (Fieldwork coordinator), Lic. Graciela Cardarelli (Systemisation of qualitative information), Lic. Federico Sedano Acosta (IT support).

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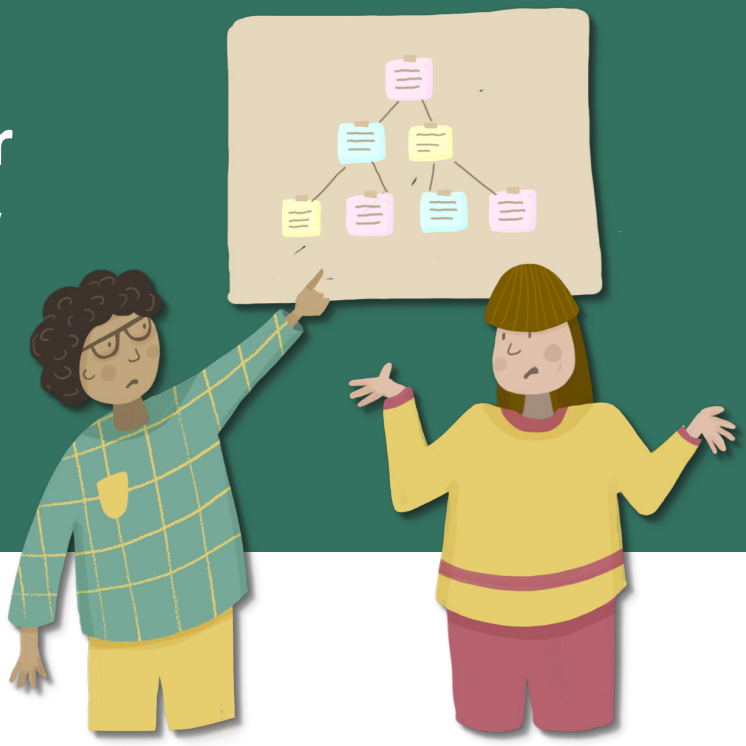
CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES

Applying Inclusive Rigour to Participatory Evaluation



by *Marina Apgar*

While celebrating a greater openness toward participatory evaluation (PE), many evaluators continue to adhere to traditional ways of understanding "rigour". Within these frameworks, quality standards are based on the supposed existence of a methodological hierarchy, in which objective and quantitative methods are placed higher than others, considered to be less "rigorous".

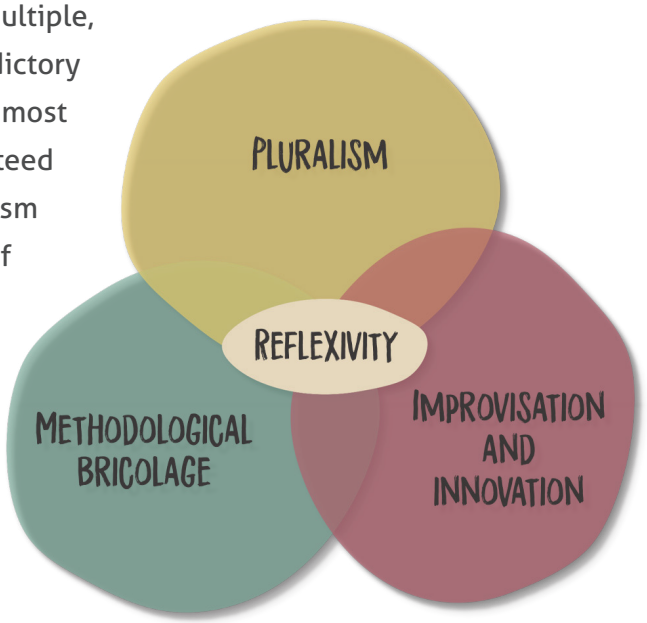
These traditional approaches to rigour are manifested in evaluation designs that select one central method —which may be quantitative or qualitative— and add other less important methods if required, creating a mixed methods approach. If we follow this approach, our role as evaluators is to faithfully and strictly apply a protocol based on the standards established by our central methodology. In this context, participatory methods are considered to be weak, lacking in rigour and prone to bias. The only way to overcome their perceived weakness is to add "objective" methods to increase the "rigour" of the participatory design and so minimise its bias.

This traditional way of looking at rigour does not allow for a true and useful exploration of quality in a PE process. But, fortunately, there are alternatives! Robert Chambers created one which he called "inclusive rigour", and which was intended to build a more inclusive research practice in conditions of complexity.

If we adapt the work of Chambers, we can identify four principles that form a radically different vision of rigour in the PE context.

Pluralism. The equality of the evaluation should be based on making the best use of a broad range of knowledges. In this way, the process of change (and the results obtained)

can be understood from the multiple, different and sometimes contradictory perspectives of stakeholders, and the most marginalised stakeholders are guaranteed the opportunity to contribute. Pluralism necessitates the use of a variety of collective analytical methodologies to facilitate a collective understanding of the results that emerge..



Improvisation and innovation. Fostering a truly participatory process with key stakeholders implies embracing uncertainty in order to be relevant to any particular context in which various versions of reality are expressed. Relevant measures of success are discovered through a process that is open to uncertainty, utilising improvisation and innovation with stakeholders along the way.

Methodological bricolage. When the above two principles are followed, there surfaces the need to combine different methods in a creative way and improvise collectively within the context. This means mixing methods in order to find the best combination rather than simply adding one to another.

Reflexivity. With this principle, the quality of the process is determined by who we are as evaluators when we implement PE. Our own ways of thinking and working allow (or do not allow) us to understand and manage power dynamics. The capacity to use reflexivity is built through experience —it is a praxis.

Inclusive rigour in practice

The CLARISSA programme is implemented by a consortium of partners who are experts on child labour and youth, adolescent and child participation in Bangladesh and Nepal. It is a systemic action research programme that facilitates participatory action research with children involved in the worst forms of child labour (in the leather industry in Bangladesh and the adult entertainment sector in Nepal). The children analyse their own situations and seek solutions to the systemic dynamics that generate conditions of exploitation. The focus of the programme —the worst forms of child labour— is a complex problem. We do not understand the systemic dynamics that drive child labour and so we cannot know *a priori* what the solutions will be. These solutions emerge from the participatory implementation process.

The principles of inclusive rigour are put into practice in CLARISSA through a participatory adaptive approach. The adaptive management of development programmes is not a new concept, but CLARISSA goes beyond common 'problem driven' approaches towards 'people driven' approaches focused on the participation and inclusion of marginalised people.

When we use this participatory approach, evaluation becomes a central part of the intervention itself: we evaluate from the inside, not from the outside. As evaluators, we become part of the implementation team and foster **pluralism** as we walk alongside the participants, and analyse their experiences and knowledge.

We did not use a logical framework in our monitoring and evaluation system so we could remain open to uncertainty. We agreed on an approach with the donor that allowed us to design the evaluation as we went along, based on a **reflexive** use of the theory of change. As we work with the key stakeholders and understand the particularities of their realities, we develop more specific theories of change to evaluate how the change we seek is being achieved and respond to our main evaluation question, namely: 'What contribution are we making to finding solutions to the worst forms of child labour?'
This sometimes requires us to make radical adaptations. For example, we began with the intention of focusing on the "supply chains" and we assumed this meant working with multinational companies and well-known brands. However, we soon discovered that most child labour in the *leather industry* in Bangladesh takes place in informal, hidden spaces where small family-run businesses employ children. This required a re-design and, as a result, building more detailed theories of change and working with small-business owners. This significant adaptation at the beginning of the programme was only possible because we were not following a logical framework with success measures or predefined indicators.

Methodological bricolage

It is facilitated by the use of Contribution Analysis —an evaluation approach whose theory permits the use of participatory methods. For example, we have carried out a rapid

realist review in order to understand how participatory action and research generate innovation from a realist perspective.

Following the literature review, we are now using participatory methods to investigate the process from the inside, with the key stakeholders as participants. Furthermore, in order to detect and investigate changes emerging beyond the participatory action and research groups —for example, in the production sectors— we will combine Outcome Harvesting with Process Tracing to deepen our understanding of the project's contribution to broader changes.

Finally, we are intentionally cultivating the principle of reflexivity by facilitating collective and individual moments of reflection and learning along the way. We, therefore, facilitate after action reviews every six months to institutionalise and foster a culture of reflexivity.

To apply inclusive rigour, the evaluation design must be integrated into the development intervention so that we are not tied too quickly to a static results framework. We must also seek to use a combination of methods, based on both theory and experience.

This contribution was presented at the session organised by EvalParticipativa for the Participatory Action Research and Evaluation Conference (PAREC) in April 2022.

Marina Apgar is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, UK. She has edited and co- coordinated the section on "Participatory Methodologies for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning" in the book Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry (Sage, 2021). Marina has facilitated participatory action research processes as well as the thoughtful use of the theory of change for the evaluation of results with vulnerable communities in Latin America and other parts of the world.

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Participatory Evaluation and Rigour

by *Osvaldo Néstor Feinstein*

Participatory Evaluation (PE) gives voice to stakeholder perspectives on policy, programme or project processes and results in order to limit or avoid technocratic bias. Furthermore, it promotes ownership of the evaluative process and results which makes the evaluation more widely accepted. These are two of the arguments in support of PE.

On the other hand, PE has been criticised by the argument that it is not a rigorous approach due to its qualitative methods which capture "impressions" and anecdotes but do not provide rigorous quantitative procedures. Sometimes random control trials (RCTs) are used as an example of rigour in evaluation.

But using RCTs does not guarantee that an evaluation is rigorous. Nor do participatory evaluations have to be qualitative and lack rigour. RCTs are useful for obtaining valid conclusions in very specific contexts and for certain types of interventions that are compatible with this kind of approach.

However, when these results are generalised to other contexts, it becomes problematic. Often, this generalisation or extrapolation of results is carried out flippantly with no rigour whatsoever. In these situations, using RCTs generates only the illusion of rigour. It focuses on the internal validity, which is the result of concentrated efforts, and presumes it also has external validity leading to the non-rigorous generalisation of results which only really correspond to a specific context.

Returning to the PEs, here is a real example of how you can make a PE more rigorous and turn it into a valuable instrument for both accountability and learning.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of evaluating a rural development programme in India. In this programme, an NGO played an important role in training groups of women and awarding them credits.

In the first few meetings with the NGO, its director, a charismatic leader, known both in India and internationally, argued that the project's main problem was that the government insisted on working with goals and that this negatively affected the results because the groups formed were not solid or consolidated enough and so they failed. As a consequence, he recommended getting rid of the goals.

But, this recommendation was not viable because this is the way the public sector works in India. Furthermore, as talks continued with the NGO, the evaluation team observed that the organisation had identified required conditions for "consolidated groups".

They could, therefore, create an indicator for "consolidated groups" and carry out an analysis of the relationship between group expansion and its effect on the "consolidated groups", providing evidence of the trade-off between progress in the organisation, measured in terms of the *number of groups formed* and the consolidation of these groups through the indicator of *number of consolidated groups*. This made it possible to set goals in terms of *"consolidated groups"*, opening up a dialogue with the government, using the evaluation results which showed the negative consequences of managing the programme based exclusively on goals in terms of the *number of groups formed.*

This way, whilst at the beginning of the participatory evaluation, group consolidation appeared to be an exclusively qualitative matter, a "consolidated groups" indicator added rigour to the approach, based on the information generated through the evaluative process. This not only made the participatory evaluation more rigorous, but also improved

future activity planning. It is important to distinguish between "unquantifiable" and "unquantified". The line between them can be grey as it depends on a deep understanding of the specific reality, creativity and the determination to evaluate in a participatory manner as rigorously as possible.

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Knowledge and Social Representations in Participatory Evaluation

by *Sergio Martinic*

Participatory Evaluation experiences value and validate the interpretations of participants concerning the projects, policies and interventions that are being analysed (Fetterman, 2005). These experiences create space for participants to share their knowledge and particular ways of looking at the real-life situations and problems that the interventions under evaluation are seeking to address (Gil & Heras, 2010; Menéndez, Torralbo & Luque, 2021; Paño, Rébola, & Suarez, 2019).

This constitutes one of the principal contributions of this evaluative approach: knowing and understanding the actions from the point of view of the other allows for a deeper and more realistic examination of the results and impacts of the programme or action under evaluation.

The integration of participant perspectives brings with it significant conceptual and methodological challenges. This article argues that the opinions of participants should be analysed on the understanding that they are part of broader social representations of the culture to which the subjects belong. From a methodological point of view, qualitative data and discourse analysis strategies are good tools for analysing interpretations and knowledge expressed during a participatory process.

Levels of knowledge and interpretation analysis

The local knowledge, interpretations and insights expressed by participants constitute a gateway to a broader vision of reality, steeped in culture, that can be analysed with different levels of depth. In other words, they constitute the tip of the iceberg.

The first level is descriptive, and consists of accounting for and comparing the discourse of actors as they respond to the questions and issues raised. Usually, their opinions are presented and analysed textually using excerpts grouped into categories and presented in matrices or tables, to facilitate comparison.

The second level focuses on the associations or meanings evoked by the texts that have been collected. These meanings —which allude to the semantics of the texts— link the opinions to the traditions and culture from which they emerge. This level of analysis refers, among other things, to the distinctions, classifications and principles learned from everyday life, which subjects select and use to elaborate opinions and interpretations and to guide their actions in different situations. For example, critical views of sex education projects, or resistance to them, may be associated with the religious beliefs of their families. Likewise, certain technological innovations in Andean communities may impact beliefs and rituals associated with respect and care for Mother Earth (Pachamama).

These two levels are closely related. An individual's discourse is always influenced by shared distinctions and principles that come into play when a particular opinion is produced. These principles shape peoples' thinking and highlight the limitations and possibilities established by the culture to which they belong.

In any area of social life, be it work, health, political life, social organisation or daily interaction, individuals deploy ways of understanding and interpreting reality according to this framework and to the system of distinctions and classifications provided by the culture of which they form a part.

Thus, the challenge of participatory evaluation is not only to describe

the thinking and local knowledge of the actors involved, but also to understand the underlying cultural principles and the particular ways these are associated with the texts and records that are produced. Ultimately, it is a question of understanding how individual opinions are produced within a broader perspective that is influenced by the history, experience and culture of the community they belong to.

Social representations

Serge Moscovici (1979), a French social psychologist, introduced the concept of social representations to address issues associated with common sense thinking in everyday life. For Moscovici, representations constitute socially constructed practical knowledge acquired through common experiences, education and social interactions. This knowledge gives meaning to, and helps to interpret, shared facts and actions.

Social representations constitute reference systems that give a sense of logic and coherence to the world by structuring the different ways facts are explained and the relationships between these explanations. They are not a mere reflection of something external, but rather constructions that give meaning to, and make sense of, the object or reference point in question.

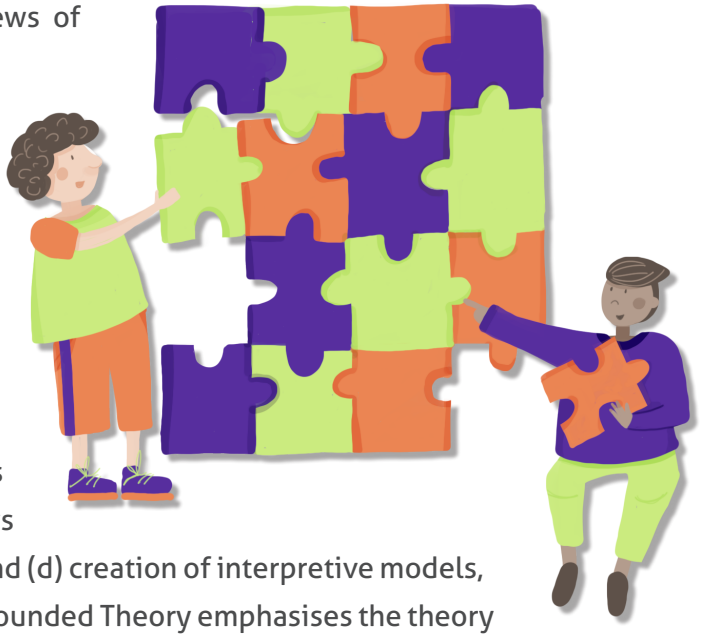
Social representations have three dimensions that are key to this discussion. Firstly, the informational dimension that informs the cognitive distinctions, concepts and terms used to interpret and make sense of the reality under examination. Secondly, the structural dimension, which provides ways of ordering and organising the ways in which the units or parts of any social representation relate to each other. Thirdly, the normative ethical dimension, which determines how valid, desirable or legitimate these distinctions and connections are. Subjects participate in the systems of ideas and will therefore value as positive or good whatever the representations in which they participate define or value (Moscovici, S, 1979).

Ultimately, social representations constitute socio-cognitive systems in which stereotypes, opinions, beliefs, knowledge, values and norms tend to invoke positive or negative attitudes. These representations act as a classificatory system and as the guiding principles governing the practices and interactions of the subjects. They constitute shared principles, codes and blueprints of thought, which regulate everyday interpretations and interactions by defining the limits and possibilities affecting the lives of particular groups and cultures (Araya, 2002; González Rey, 2008).

In a participatory evaluation, it is important to analyse the opinions of the participating actors within a broader framework that reflects the way they represent the problem or the strategy that is being implemented by projects and social interventions.

Methodological proposal

A range of different strategies exist for analysing qualitative data, all of which insist that this analysis does not consist simply of a "textual" and descriptive presentation of information. On the contrary, this kind of analysis seeks to illustrate the principles of distinction and of cultural grammar that organise and give meaning to the views of actors concerning the issues or problems raised.



These methodological strategies include Grounded Theory (Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. 1992) and Semantic Structure Analysis (see Rémy, 1991; Hiernaux,). The two strategies follow similar steps: (a) data mining; (b) construction of classification categories or codes; (c) understanding the ways these categories relate to each other; and (d) creation of interpretive models, using central or selective categories. Grounded Theory emphasises the theory or narrative created by the subjects, while Semantic Structure Analysis focuses on the principles used to organise the analysed texts.

Semantic Structure Analysis is also useful for exploring the distinctions and classification systems that are expressed in the opinions of participants. The theoretical antecedents of this approach are found in structural semantics and, in particular, in the work of A.J. Greimas (1966), which has been used extensively in the analysis of representations and the symbolic models that influence the production of such discourses in the field of social sciences, particularly in the French tradition (Hiernaux, 1977, 2009). In Latin America, the method has been applied in a variety of cultural studies that include Martinic (2006) and Suarez (2008).

This method of discourse analysis is closely related to the question of representations raised by Moscovici. It is, precisely, a method that seeks to analyse the three dimensions mentioned above, characteristic of any representation, namely: the cognitive, structural or organisational and finally, ethical and normative dimensions. Once the object of the evaluation has been defined and the necessary material has been gathered, an initial descriptive analysis is carried out which focuses on the units of meaning that make up the texts or corpus under analysis (composition). The minimum units of meaning are the codes, constructed using the oppositional principle. In other words, concept "A" is

opposed to or distinguished from concept "B". Thus, the code reflects a relationship between concepts or categories, and accounts for classifications and distinctions that are explicit or implicit in the discourse of the subject (Martinic, 2006).

Once the codes and their categories have been defined, the next stage advanced by this method is to identify the relationships that exist between these units or categories (combination). This constitutes a second interpretive stage, intended to describe the ways the categories relate to each other in the context of the material under examination. During this stage, the opinions of different subjects are compared and those that are close or similar in meaning are incorporated into the same code. The analysis thus moves from individual distinctions or classifications to others that are shared by the group of actors under consideration.

The results of this analysis are presented in diagrams or structures that illustrate the ways the codes relate to each other. For example, they might be presented as parallel lists (e.g. identifying the positive or negative aspects of a project's impact on the quality of learning in rural schools). Or they might adopt a more complex approach, presenting comparative results or double-entry tables: an approach that is more complex but which makes it possible to account for the nuances or variations that may exist in the distinctions expressed by the different members of a group. For example, positive and negative opinions may be held about the same topic, both of which are equally valid.

The codes constructed in this way, and the relationships established between them, enable systems of shared categories and classifications to be defined that are related to the knowledge, values and contents of the culture to which they belong. An understanding of these systems of distinctions recovers a particular way of classifying and ordering experiences, from the point of view of the participants. This highlights the limits that, in the form of local knowledge or principles of action, guide the interpretations and practical actions of subjects in relation to the real-life problems they face.

Conclusions

In summary, Participatory Evaluation presents an opportunity to gather participant knowledge and insights that are rooted in their cultures and identities. As we seek to better understand these perspectives, the proposal is to go beyond the textual recording of opinions. This is a first level of analysis that accounts for the individual opinions of subjects, in a context of participatory dialogue. But the important thing is to understand the meaning of the text, and its associations with shared meanings that are a part of the local culture's traditions of thought and action. From the methodological point of view, strategies based on Grounded Theory and Semantic Structure Analysis constitute

rigorous and validated procedures for the comparative study and interpretation of knowledge, insights and social representations of participants.

This contribution was presented at the session organized by EvalParticipativa for the Participatory Action Research and Evaluation Conference (PAREC) in April 2022.

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Building and Sustaining Meaningful Engagement of Youth in Evaluation

by *Marco Segone*

The deadline to deliver the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is approaching fast. The world is challenged and struggling to gain a foothold with the COVID-19 crisis still looming large. Bold, ambitious and inclusive actions can turn it around for the people and the planet. At the same time, solutions that have the highest transformative power to change people's lives must be scaled up. With a world population younger than ever before, engaging with youth in development processes, including in evaluation, can provide the impetus and the multiplier effect to get the Sustainable Development Goals back to course.

"Young people are an enormous asset to our societies. We must cherish them, invest in them and empower them...."

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

The imperative

Inclusive and meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation provides an unparalleled opportunity to make development programmes responsive to the needs and demands of the youth. It raises youth voices and agency and recognises them as active leaders and contributors in building a sustainable world. When the power of youth is harnessed in evaluation through meaningful ways, it can bring innovation, increase evaluation quality, enhance the relevance and the transformational power of evaluation.

There are several ways youth can engage in evaluation: as part of evaluation data collection, providing insight to the evaluation; as young evaluators; as co-creators and co-managers of the evaluation process, involved in the evaluation conceptualisation to its dissemination, and as young evaluation advocates.

Harnessing the power of youth engagement in evaluation

In recent times, several agencies and networks are engaging with youth in evaluation, however many times as one-off or short term initiatives. A more holistic approach is needed to amplify this momentum and sustain it in the long haul. So, what can organisations and networks do to promote and sustain meaningful youth engagement in evaluation?

It starts with leadership. Making an institutional commitment to engage with young people in evaluation. At UNFPA, the Evaluation Policy institutionalises for the first time, a clear and long term commitment of the organisation to invest and nurture the engagement of youth in evaluation.

It requires a multi-dimensional approach. Sustaining the meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation requires efforts and resources on three interconnected levels. First, build an enabling environment to increase the meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation. Second, strengthen the demand for young evaluators by increasing institutional capacities and facilitate access to the labour market. Third, strengthen the supply of professional young evaluators by building their individual technical capacities and skills.

It requires innovation. Innovation in systems, spaces and approaches in engaging with youth in evaluation is key to translate the intention into real action. At UNFPA, the evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth engages with youth in all phases of the evaluation as key informants, young evaluators, co-advisors and co-decision-makers. To enable this, a pioneering space has been set up, notably a Youth Steering Committee that co-leads the evaluation process along with the UNFPA Evaluation Office.

It should be a mutually respectful and inclusive partnership. Create spaces for youth to lead/co-lead decisions, processes and advocacy in the evaluation field.

The Eval4Action campaign - which is co-led by the UNFPA Evaluation Office, the EvalYouth Global Network and the Global Parliamentarians for Evaluation - captures this essence. At the global level, young evaluators co-lead, shape and implement the evaluation advocacy agenda, and at regional and national levels, young evaluators are working together with Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) to draw up and implement regional evaluation action plans for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It should nurture diversity. For youth engagement in evaluation to be meaningful and to leave no one behind, the evaluation field should embrace the diversity of youth e.g. indigenous youth, disabled youth and others from marginalised backgrounds, providing them opportunity and voice to engage in evaluation. Special efforts are required to ensure the engagement of young women evaluators.

It requires a synergy of efforts. To avoid duplication of efforts among the several agencies and networks that are supporting youth engagement in evaluation, greater synergy and pooling of resources is required. The new multi-stakeholder partnership among the UNFPA Evaluation Office, EvalYouth Global Network and the World Bank IEG in the context of the Global Evaluation Initiative is a step in that direction.

In conclusion, meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation is a two-way and committed relationship. Recognising the value of youth's ideas, perspectives, skills, strength and contribution to evaluation is the first step. It also requires a clear resolve and a cultural shift that benefits everyone involved. To do it well, networks and agencies must put in place systems, structures and resources, and should also enable youth to engage meaningfully in evaluation, by building their skills and giving them the space to lead from the front. This approach is a transformative solution that can harness the power of young women and men in evaluation, which in turn can contribute to building a sustainable future for all.

Marco Segone is Director of the Evaluation Office, at UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Previously, he was director of the Evaluation Office at UN Women; Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the network of Evaluation Offices of 46 UN agencies; co-founder and co-chair of EvalPartners - the global

partnership for national evaluation capacities – and EvalGender+. Before that, Marco was responsible for the decentralised evaluation function as well as the national evaluation capacity development portfolios at the UNICEF Evaluation Office; Regional Chief of Monitoring and Evaluation in the UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia; Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; Brazil Country Office, and Niger Country Office. Marco also worked in international NGOs in Albania, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand and Uganda. He has authored dozens of publications including: Evaluating the SDGs with a 'no one left behind lens'; Evaluation for Equitable Development Results; and How to Design and Manage Equity-Focused Evaluations.

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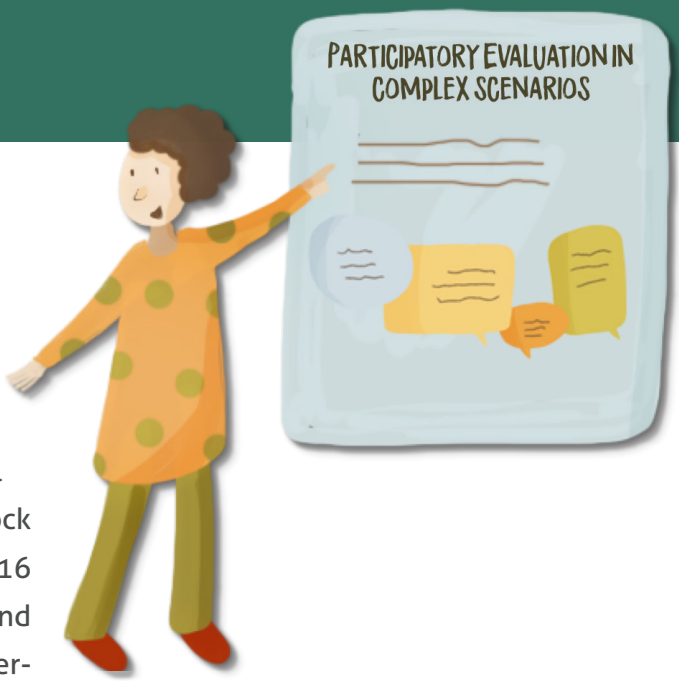
MEANINGFUL LEARNINGS

The Benefits of a Participatory Approach in a Complex Context: The Interim Evaluation of the CRIA Program (Guatemala)

by *Joaquín Navas, Claudia Calderón* and *Ricardo Ramírez.*



Context

CRIA stands for Consorcios Regionales de Investigación Agropecuaria (Regional Consortia for Agricultural and Livestock Research). The CRIA program began in 2016 with the goal of improving agricultural and livestock research capacity across inter-organizational consortia in Guatemala. The program has been funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in (IICA).

Two Canadian-based independent consultants – Joaquín Navas and Ricardo Ramírez – completed the mid-term evaluation of CRIA between November 2018 and February 2019. They leaned on their experience with the DECI Project [1] in Latin America, which builds on Michael Quinn Patton's Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) (2008) [2]. This approach calls for the engagement of a team of primary intended users that take on the design of the evaluation and commit to making use of its findings. This is a participatory aspect of U-FE, where the primary users elicit the purpose and intended uses expected from the evaluation. This in turn enables them to take ownership of the evaluation design.

In the case of CRIA, the group of primary users included representatives of IICA, USDA (funder), the MAGA, the Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA), and various universities associated with the program. The evaluation uses that were agreed upon for the mid-term evaluation of the program included:

- Program improvement
- Updating the program strategy
- Accountability (financial and results based)

These three intended uses helped organize and prioritize the key evaluation questions.

Challenges and innovations

A major challenge in the mid-term evaluation of CRIA was the fact that its stakeholders had not grasped nor shared the level of complexity involved in the program. Without this shared awareness, the program delivery had led to uncertainty and discouragement. A further challenge was the lack of a baseline against which to compare outcomes. CRIA was supported by international development funding, where a conventional evaluation would have been the norm. Therefore, a significant innovation was the introduction of a participatory approach that demonstrated rigor while documenting program achievements.

The direct engagement of primary evaluation users allowed them to appreciate the source of the evidence that was collected. This in turn allowed them the opportunity to discuss the findings and find a space for reflection that allowed them to appreciate the program from a new perspective.

A third innovation that was very enriching was a workshop to facilitate the use of the findings, and to involve the primary users in the design of Theories of Change for the main program components. The participatory design of Theories of Change contrasted with other cases where they are developed by external consultants rather than by the program stakeholders who are able to provide follow-up to the recommendations.

Evaluation outcomes and utilization

The main outcome of the mid-term evaluation of CRIA was to encourage the people in charge of implementing the Program, as well as some of the other stakeholders involved. Another important result was the identification and documentation of unexpected outcomes that were absent from the original logical framework. A third result worth mentioning was the reallocation of resources and activities based on the findings.

A central premise of the U-FE approach is that the success of the evaluation is based on the level of use given to its findings. This prompts one to ask: Was the mid-term evaluation of the CRIA Program useful? The answer to this question in that the evidence provided by the evaluation contributed to the following:

1. The funder granted two extensions, each of two years in duration, so that instead of ending in 2020, the Program will continue until June 2024 in order to achieve 100% of the expected objectives, increase the number of participants, and expand the dissemination of validated technology. Moreover, the extension of the program came with an additional US$14M, which surpassed the original US$12M that were allocated during the initial phase.

2. There was a relaxing of tensions between the Program decision-makers and the representatives of the different institutions, as prior to the evaluation they had contrasting opinions about outcomes, achievements and challenges. The improved harmony in turn increased the trust among the Technical Committee, decision-makers, and the Regional Research Consortia.

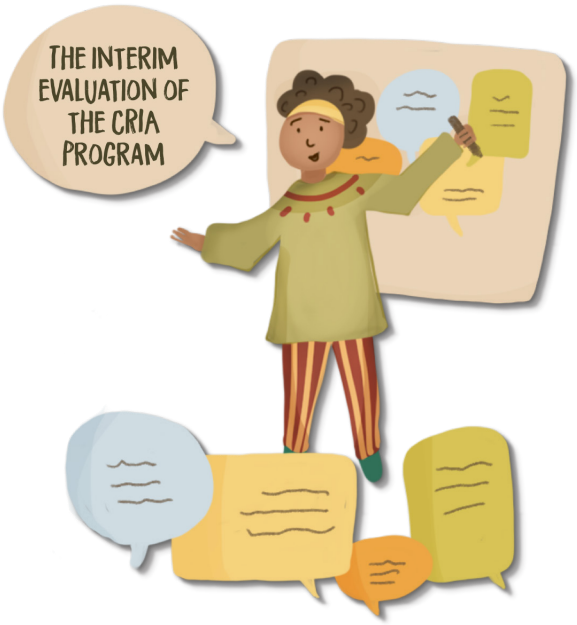
3. The Program decision-makers were able to update the overall strategy. The workshop held to facilitate the use of the findings allowed the users to flag and eliminate several activities and outputs from the logic framework that were no longer relevant, and would have taken up time and resources without contributing to the overall goal.

4. The Program decision-makers became aware that the major challenge facing the Program was its administration. Following the recommendations, they simplified the procedures to allow for more efficient disbursements. In addition, some gaps were addressed, including the question of sustainability.

5. The Program became more adaptive in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It broadened the use of ICTs to reach program participants and share those technologies that had been validated through research.

Conclusions

There are an increasing number of programs that are complex, with some outcomes that are difficult to predict. This happens when it is necessary to coordinate work among multiple organizations, each with their unique commitments and governing systems. The nature of the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Central America calls for systemic approaches. A property of complex systems is emergent change, which is difficult to accommodate with conventional planning tools.



The CRIA Program exhibited such conditions, which require approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning that accommodate that reality. The participation by primary evaluation users, as owners of the process, allowed them to witness the nature of the Program collectively. This then allowed the evaluation to be the means of updating its strategy and streamlining its implementation.

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[1] DECI is a project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) that provides capacity building in evaluation and communication to support research projects. The projects develop evaluation and communication strategies that allow them to gather data systematically to track their performance, and improve impact at the policy level.
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Joaquín Navas is an independent consultant specialised in evaluating research projects for social development. He works with the utilization- focused evaluation approach and has collaborated with the DECI project and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) since 2009. He currently lives in Montreal..

Claudia Lucía Calderón López is an agricultural engineer and has a Master's degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management. She has experience in the creation of agricultural networks, nodes and consortia for the design of agricultural research projects for the generation and dissemination of technologies. She is currently working at IICA in Guatemala, as a monitoring specialist for the Regional Agricultural Research Consortia Programme (CRIA), funded by USDA.

Ricardo Ramírez was born in Mexico and now resides in Canada. He began his professional life as an agriculturalist and extensionist. Today he is an independent researcher and consultant. He is adjunct professor of Capacity Development and Extension at the University of Guelph, Ontario. He worked for a few years with the FAO's Communication for Development group. He went on to be involved in participatory planning and evaluation for telecommunication projects with indigenous groups in Northern Ontario. His professional passion is in integrating communication for development with participatory evaluation and capacity building. He is professionally accredited as an evaluator through the Canadian Evaluation Society. He is currently one of the co-leads for the action-research DECI-4 project.

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Community Ownership in Evaluation. The Experience of Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA)

by *Rituu B. Nanda* and *Randika de Mel*

Let us join hands EvalParticipativa!
Greetings from India!
Congratulations on the brilliant work you have been doing on promoting participation of communities in evaluation.
We are of the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) action group on Community Ownership in Evaluation. We held an online Consultation in July 2021 in which 90 people participated from different parts of the world to create awareness of the importance of strengthening community ownership in evaluation and to develop an action plan for community ownership in evaluation in the Asia Pacific Region.
The highlight was participation of communities in the consultation. Two indigenous youth from India (supported by Faith Foundation) accepted the Evaluation torch. A young youth leader presented her experience in girl-led research from EMpower.

What does authentic ownership actually look like?

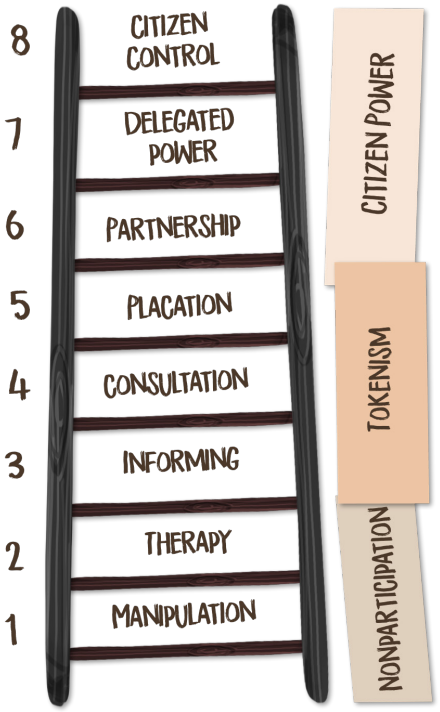
We felt that participation is a spectrum and reflected on models like Arnstein's ladder of participation and dimensions of collaborative inquiry from Weaver & Cousins .

Participants agreed that community ownership of evaluation is about the total involvement of the community in all stages of evaluation, from planning to data collection, analysis, dissemination and decision-making.

The idea is that the community, through its representatives of various social groups and classes in the community, knows the purpose of evaluation, how it would be conducted and how they would help define and implement it, and analyse the findings and ensure their use.

Who is the 'community' in community ownership?

"Power dynamics, including inequities, race, gender, ethnicity, class, rank, and privilege exist in communities". Arnstein wrote in 1969 that participation without redistribution of power "allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit". For the powerless it is an "empty and frustrating process". Therefore, evaluation professionals need to take note of these power structures and carefully facilitate who speaks for the community when the approach is participatory. This is the case when even the youngest and the oldest, indigenous or of any race, or a LGBTI person, or one living with disability are able to share their opinion, said a young evaluator.



Sherry R. Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.

Why community ownership in evaluation?

Participants felt that the meaningful involvement of community creates transparency, trust, and ownership of evaluation. As expressed by Marco Segone: "When communities and citizens take ownership of development programmes and their evaluation, it empowers them, strengthens equality and sustainability".

Accountability from the community is equally important: they measure their own progress as a collective. When the community is involved right from the inception of the programme through to evaluation, they take responsibility for their dreams and their problems, said Ruchira Neog. They assess where they stand, act and then re-evaluate themselves.

Embed community ownership in the system. With short evaluation time frames, in-depth community ownership is not feasible. Jayanthi Pushkaran from EMpower mentioned that increased pressure on funding recipients for outcomes has led to a greater emphasis on results pushing implementers and evaluators away from participatory approaches. Therefore, most felt that participation has to be institutionalized in the system.

What is the role of Evaluators and development practitioners?

The didactic approach from a knowing/knowledgeable subject to a supposedly ignorant 'target audience' should go. Participatory tools will be mere tools if we do not shift our mindset to a strength-based thinking that communities understand are capable of evaluating and finding their own solutions.

We have to change our role, from tradition evaluator to a facilitator of evaluation. "We should not define their problems at all; we are facilitators", underlined another participant.

Community dialogues are held in an evaluation without any pressure. When community has the confidence to express their ideas and feelings... a learning environment emerges. We have to enable spaces where voices are considered regardless of status.

Strengthen community capacity so that they can evaluate anytime with little or no support from outsiders. We need to change the jargon in the language we use as evaluators. "Strengthen empowerment and transformative approaches to evaluation which keep communities at the centre of evaluation", said Marco Segone, from UNFPA.

Evaluators have to make a case for social justice and a fair allocation of resources, opportunities and bargaining power for communities. "As a first step towards this, we must raise the importance of communities amongst broader evaluation circles, evaluation community, policymakers, funding agencies, and most importantly, amongst the communities themselves", noted Marco Segone.

Changes in people's lives happen at the community level. The COVID-19 pandemic has wiped out decades of global development with greatest impact on vulnerable populations and hence derailing the delivery of SDGs. A critical way to set course again is to put communities and citizen participation at the centre of development, including in evaluation as a way to "leave no one behind' in SDGs.

Examples and resources shared during the consultation

- Girl-led research facilitated by EMpower.
- Voluntary Health Association of Assam and Constellation: community ownership in the programme on routine immunisation.
- Social media campaign for a community of volunteers in the Philippines that seeks to amplify the community initiatives planned and implemented by themselves.
- Project funded by Humedica International and implemented by a local partner in district Sanghar in Sindh province Pakistan.

- Outcome Harvesting as a participatory methodology. Wilson-Grau, Ricardo. 2018. *Outcome Harvesting: Principles, Steps and Evaluation Applications. IAP.*

A call to re-distribute power

If we want our future generations to thrive, and undo the damage to our planet, we need an entirely different approach to problem-solving. We need to challenge our assumptions about power and re-examine who has a voice in making decisions. Ian Davies, evaluator, commented that "we in fact take power away, and we have taken power away. This is the societal 'we'. So, it is not so much about empowering stakeholders, but it is about giving back the power that was taken from them and more specifically from right holders".

Rituu B Nanda works for the Global Fund for Children and the Institute of Social Studies Trust and coordinates the Asia Pacific Regional Evaluation's action group on Community Ownership in Evaluation. She is a founding member of the evaluation community of India EvalGender+ Management Group.

Randika de Mel is an evaluator and researcher focusing on international development and social justice. He is a director of Family Plantation Company. He is a board member of the Evaluation Association of Sri Lanka. He is also co-leader of Eval Youth Asia and EvalYouth Sri Lanka.

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A Participatory Process in the New Methodology for Spanish Cooperation Country Partnership Framework Evaluation

Unit of Evaluation for Spanish Cooperation

The Country Partnership Framework, hereafter CPF, (MAP in Spanish) is the tool used by Spanish Cooperation, hereafter SC, for bilateral geographic strategic planning to ensure that SC actions contribute to sustainable development. Through the CPFs, dialogue is established between SC and the partner countries to benefit the development strategies and plans of these countries.

With this tool, the SC contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and in particular, SDG 17 Partnership for the Goals, promoting synergies and building partnerships at all levels, both with the partner country and among the SC actors. The CPF seeks to obtain a strategic, global and coherent vision of the Spanish Cooperation as a whole, and seeks to avoid merely compiling a list of interests held by the different actors. It is precisely the strategic approach that differentiates this tool and provides an interesting added value to CPF evaluation.

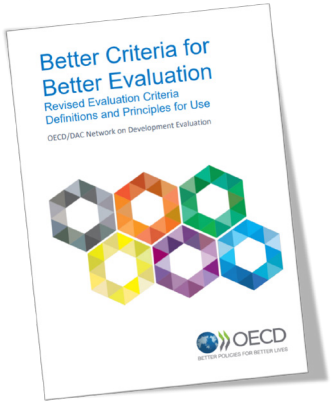
In late 2021, the Directorate-General for Sustainable Development Policies at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation (hereafter, DGPOLDES, MAUC) initiated a participatory process by offering a draft proposal as a basis for reflection and discussion with the end goal of collectively creating the CPF Evaluation Methodology.

The scope of the CPF evaluations incorporates the overall assessment of the Spanish Cooperation as a whole, taken from the sum of actions carried out by all SC actors present on the ground. Results from the CPF evaluations contribute to learning that improves the effectiveness and quality of the SC; aids decision-making required during the design of a new planning cycle; and provides elements for transparency and accountability purposes.

Its subsequent use is not necessarily limited to the country in which the evaluation is carried out, but rather, the lessons generated from one CPF may be demonstrative and applicable to other contexts and territories.

The evaluation methodology proposes a set of simple and useful tools that guide the evaluation process: templates for drafting the evaluation plan and the Terms of Reference; a suggested evaluation matrix that includes questions designed to identify lessons learned and good practices; and templates for drafting the initial and final evaluation reports and the improvement plan that gathers the recommendations for each of the SC actors involved in the CPF process and the measures that are to be established.

All the tools proposed through the methodology comply with the Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, created by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the revised evaluation criteria, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, by the same Committee.



This process was initiated in response to the need expressed by the Spanish Technical Cooperation Offices (hereafter, TCOs) for a simple and operational methodology that could be used when carrying out CPF evaluations to simplify the work of the evaluation managers and maximise the results/effort, with a view to improving the quality of the evaluation process. On the contrary, evaluations carried out previously used heterogeneous evaluation matrices and this has complicated subsequent comparative studies and the process of extracting lessons regarding CPFs.

The first phase of the participatory process consisted in carrying out a preliminary workshop with a pilot group. In this workshop, a suggested evaluation methodology was shared as a starting point for group reflection and contributions with the end goal of producing an agreed and achievable document based on the experiences of the workshop participants.

When selecting the pilot group, an effort was made to ensure that the pilot group sample was representative of the actors involved in the CPF planning and implementation processes. Assistance was provided in this respect by the Evaluation Department of DGPOLDES MAUC, members of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECID), in particular the Unit of Planning, Effectiveness and Quality (UPEC) and coordinators and technical staff from some of the TCOs. The TCO representatives reflected a broad range

of different contexts and countries with different capacity levels in terms of available human resources.

The contributions made in the initial workshop were incorporated into the preliminary document which was shared in a second workshop with the rest of the TCOs and AECID, as well as the Autonomous Communities that were carrying out the same process of discussing the proposal and making contributions. This second workshop produced an agreed final document.

In terms of the outputs proposed by the new methodology, it is worth highlighting the inclusion of a template that sets out certain CPF characteristics that are deemed suitable for inclusion in the evaluation process. This prior reflection and the anticipation of evaluation questions will facilitate the scope and ownership of evaluation results by the different actors involved.

Different Spanish Cooperation actors will participate in the process of evaluating the CPFs in different roles. The first governance level for the evaluation will constitute an evaluation management committee formed by the TCO, who will lead the process, and the Evaluation Department, who will support and accompany the TCO. Depending on the country in question, this level of governance may also include institutional representatives from the partner country.

The second governance level consists of members of the Permanent Coordination Group, hereafter PCG (GEC in Spanish), formed by Spanish Cooperation actors working on the ground (representatives of autonomous communities, municipalities, development NGOs, foundations, unions and universities, AECID). The PCG provides information for the monitoring of the CPF and these elements will provide key information for the evaluation process. Furthermore, they will also provide feedback on the Terms of Reference so their informational needs are integrated, and on reports generated by the evaluation team. Representatives from institutions in the

partner country will also participate in this second level of governance, constituting key informants that will also provide feedback on any reports generated.

The third governance level is formed by Spanish Cooperation actors that are not present on the ground who could be key informants and provide feedback on the reports generated in the process. The participation of the actors in the different levels of governance will facilitate the ownership of the results of the evaluation and the incorporation of the recommendations proposed in the final report. Taking into account the importance of transparency, accountability and the sharing of lessons, the methodology foresees the dissemination of the results of the evaluation to partner institutions and organisations in the countries, SC actors and the general public.

The participatory nature of the process has been fundamental to ensuring that the resulting methodology has produced an agreed and useful document that is tailored to the expressed needs of all the actors involved. This guarantees that CPF evaluation will be improved and more effective.

We are the Unit of Evaluation for Spanish Cooperation (SC), entrusted to issue recommendations for our cooperation's strategic programmes, plans and documents; to ensure the strengthening of the SC evaluation system; and to promote the implementation of SC evaluation. If you want to know more about us, please visit our website www.cooperacionespanola.es

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Evaluating 15 Years of Experiencia Sur

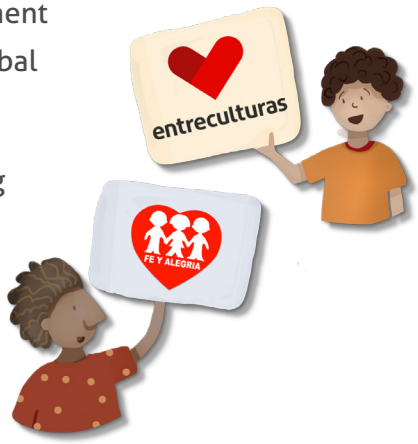
by *Belén Rodríguez Navas*
and *Juan José Clavaín Nuño*

Entreculturas is a Jesuit-sponsored international cooperation NGO that works to promote justice and social transformation. It defends education as a human right and upholds the right to a dignified life for migrants and refugees. It also seeks to construct committed global citizenship, gender equality and the reconciling of humans with nature. It seeks to contribute to the development of the most vulnerable communities, appealing to values such as solidarity and equal rights, and involving all types of stakeholders (citizens, companies, governments etc.) that share the responsibility of tackling these global challenges.

It has 27 branches in Spain and works with 63 local partners in 38 countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. Relationships with these partner organisations are based on stable, equal, peer-to-peer partnerships, founded on mutual enrichment. It has a special relationship with *Fe y Alegría* (an international Popular Education movement that promotes high quality and transformative education that builds fair, democratic and participatory societies) and the Jesuit Refugee Service (an international organisation with a mission to support, serve and defend the rights of refugees and displaced peoples). Entreculturas is part of both these networks and clearly identifies with their missions.

It believes that international volunteering plays a significant role in raising awareness in society and helping highlight those realities of poverty and exclusion that receive little media coverage and are often ignored. Entreculturas promotes a model of transformative volunteering, understood as a way of narrowing the gap between the global "North" and "South" and breaking with dynamics that encourage skewed visions of both realities. It fosters high quality training for the volunteers, strengthens their commitment to

solidarity and social justice, promotes their development as agents of change, and reinforces their sense of global citizenship.



Experiencia Sur, the short-term international volunteering project launched by Entreculturas, is a training and awareness-raising programme that entails four to five weeks of collaboration and experience in one of the locations where *Fe y Alegría*, the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Jesuit Migrant Service or another sister institution to Entreculturas is working.

The programme encourages its participants to step out of their reality, and by means of immersions, learn, see and feel how other people and communities live, establishing links that help better to understand and to become themselves global citizens.

Fifteen years after the birth of *Experiencia Sur*, Entreculturas decided to celebrate its journey and learn more by evaluating it, so as to be able to::

- reflect in depth on what the programme is, and has been over recent years, through the voice of its protagonists;
- assess the contribution the experience has had for the people involved; and
- have at their disposal a critical analysis that includes achievements and identifies lessons so that *Experiencia Sur* is further strengthened and improved.

The programme's management team initiated this evaluation. Their main concerns centred around the desire to discover what footprints the programme was leaving, what implications it had for the partner organisations, what effects had been caused by previous training and processes, what results they had achieved, etc.

The evaluation was directed at understanding the programme, identifying the causal relationships that have been established to respond to its aims. This task is based on the

programme's logic, its theory of change, as a way of revealing what works and what does not, determining improvements that could be made, and guiding future decision-making and planning.

It had an eminently formative approach with the view to expand understanding among involved individuals, especially partner organisations, the Entreculturas team and future volunteers. Moreover, a great deal of effort was made to include the participation of everyone involved so that the evaluation gathered the information it needed from them and could constitute a tool to give voice to their ideas.

The evaluation was welcomed by all, and this facilitated the channelling of information, revealing *Experiencia Sur*'s journey up to the present day and emphasising diverse experiences.

A triangulation methodology was chosen that made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. This involved surveying 130 participants, interviewing 36 key stakeholders, discussion groups and non-participant observation of volunteer events.

As a result, the evaluation revealed lessons on each of the programme's processes and structure, and assessed what the volunteers, partner organisations and the Entreculturas team had gained from the experience.

It revealed the existence of three major differentiating features that enable a change pathway that is focused on understanding itself and building bridges of understanding. These three areas are:

- training as a prior tool to experience;
- access to more human-centred education, popular education; and
- work carried out on return once the experience had come to an end.

Many of the participants noted that this experience had changed them; it had made them more aware and showed them how to view reality with a more critical perspective. The evaluation showed that *Experiencia Sur* clearly contributes to building global citizenship, helping people discover and continue their personal journey of local commitment.

After this process, in June 2021, an online results feedback session was organised for volunteers, partner organisations, collaborators and the general public. 65 people attended and programme participants shared testimonies that focused on different outcomes.

The evaluation also revealed areas for improvement that need to be turned into actions by Entreculturas in future versions of their programme. During the COVID-19 pandemic, *Experiencia Sur* has been forced to pause its programme and so the team have spent the time designing responses to these improvement areas. In addition to producing lessons, the evaluation has led us to feel a great sense of gratitude to all those individuals and organisations that have made the work possible in several places around the world over the last fifteen years.

Belén Rodríguez Navas is Head of the Evaluation Unit at Entreculturas. She is a sociologist specialising in social research methods and social policy and programme evaluation, with a particular focus on development cooperation.

Juan José Clavaín Nuño is a sociology graduate and Masters in Public Policy and Programme Evaluation from the Carlos III University in Madrid. He has professional experience in applying social research qualitative and quantitative methods as well as designing, monitoring and evaluating programmes of social intervention and international development cooperation.

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Servicio País: Meaningful Learning from the Experience of Riñinahue, in Los Ríos Region, Chile

by *Dayan Yusef Lincopan, Nicolás Berríos Cáceres* and *Daniela Miranda Prado.*

The activity's context

The Servicio País (SP) programme carries out community action in mainly rural and often quite isolated areas throughout the country.

In 2019, the programme worked on 124 initiatives. One of these activities was located in Riñinahue and, to begin with, its first aim was to improve the production and marketing processes of three organisations working in the tourism, small family agriculture and craftwork sectors.

Since 2015, SP has implemented participatory evaluations in its activities as a way of learning about ways they could bring about improvements in the following phases of the initiative. Most of their initiatives have four phases (each lasting one or two years).

When evaluating the first phase of the work carried out in Riñinahue, a "community evaluation board" was set up integrating the programme's regional team, a participant from the area and representatives from the following social organisations: Las Hormiguitas de Riñinahue (craftwork), Feria Libre de Riñinahue (small family agriculture) and Conociendo Riñinahue (tourism).

After the committee was set up, an evaluation workshop was established where the lessons revealed here were discovered.

A meaningful lesson

The lesson shared here is related to the way language is used and how it should be adjusted to its context. In the words of the facilitators themselves: "The biggest lesson was related to the type of question we ask and how it is formulated. It has to fit well into the context".

More specifically, when the workshop was in its planning stages, the community evaluation board put considerable emphasis on creating a fun, entertaining and didactic tool. To do this, they adapted a popular game called "Jenga" and added questions to the pieces so that the participants answered the questions posed by the board as they removed the Jenga pieces. Whilst the game was a success, the language used in the questions was at times difficult for the participants to understand.

For example, one of the pieces said "What action has SP implemented to improve production and marketing of products from the area? Has this been useful for our work in the future? Why?"

In this specific case, the word "action" really confused the workshop participants and in the end, the facilitator reinterpreted the question as "What has SP done? What work has it done?".

In this case the facilitators identified that there were certain words that both the programme team and the community evaluation board thought were easy to understand but in practice needed to be reinterpreted into more colloquial language (for example, skills/abilities/knowledge, words which SP uses day-to-day). This lesson is applicable to other instances related to the social action work and not just the participatory evaluation.

The moral of the story

The moral of the story can be understood in two ways. Firstly, there is the obvious lesson of improving the use of language, adapting it to include more common words and examples from everyday life. But the other lesson recognised by the facilitators was the challenge and need to plan every single stage of the participatory evaluation in detail. In this example, lots of attention was paid to creating a fun and motivating tool but little attention was given to adapting the way the questions were formulated so that all participants could easily understand.

As they explain "We put lots of focus on planning an entertaining learning tool, each stage, the game itself, the technique. And this all went well. But we didn't spend as

much time on thinking through the questions". When using participatory techniques, the content is just as important as the way it is communicated.

Dayan Yusef Lincopan (Graduate in Visual Arts) and **Nicolás Berrios** (Agricultural engineer) are the area directors of the Servicio País programme in the Los Ríos region of Chile. They facilitated the Participatory Evaluation workshops in the area.

Daniela Miranda Prado (Sociologist) is an evaluation professional for the Servicio País Programme.

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OPERATIONAL APPROACHES AND TOOLS

The Tools, on Their Own, Do Not Make the Difference

by *Dagny Skarwan*

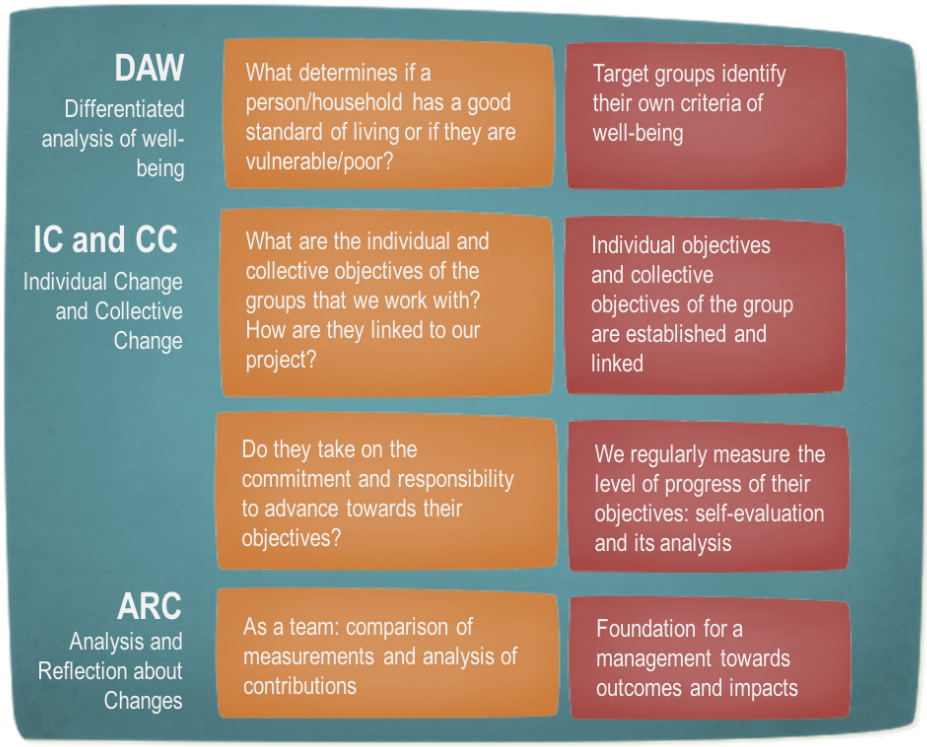
The need to carry out an evaluation in order to discover what results have been achieved by an intervention is appreciated by organisations, projects and the teams responsible for implementing them. In turn, monitoring is often linked to accountability, generally through a weekly or annual report.

Moreover, in the field of NGOs, monitoring is usually understood as reporting activities, in other words, accounting for everything that has been done, within a set period, in relation to the operational plan.

Even when projects have a logical framework or results matrix, and even when they have developed a theory of change, it is not unusual for organisations and local teams to be surprised by the instruments they come across when they start getting involved in participatory monitoring of outcomes and impacts. In this type of monitoring, I usually help teams reflect on how outcomes are measured, how impacts can be recognised and measured, and -from there- recognise the different contributions of the project. Questions also arise concerning the purposes of monitoring that go beyond the need of a project coordinator to provide accountability, and include questions such as where to start when monitoring a project and how to know when it is the right moment to do so.

In my work with NGO technical teams, we discuss how monitoring has to signify more than just accountability and reporting to donors. Its core purpose has to entail learning through generating, analysing and comparing information and data for decision-making.

When I share with them that monitoring should also be participatory, they generally agree on a conceptual level. However, when I suggest that participatory monitoring



begins at the planning stage, I usually receive looks of astonishment. If teams are to carry out participatory monitoring of outcomes and impacts in a meaningful way, we have to start with the premise that in participatory monitoring, the participation begins with each person committing to the process and taking on a role, rather than leaving it up to a monitoring specialist or coordinator.

The "participatory" aspect therefore refers to the technical staff of the project exercising their capacity to facilitate processes of reflection with communities, groups and individuals so that these are the ones who determine the objectives. In my understanding, participatory monitoring is monitoring that empowers and should therefore be standard in all organisations, or at the very least in those that are created with, and practise, a rights-based approach and who are keen to foster new qualities of dialogue and democratic interaction. In the same vein, we can ask ourselves if it is even possible to achieve individual or social structure empowerment if the NGOs and their projects, rather than the involved actors, make all the decisions starting from the initial project planning, through to its evaluation. How can this empowerment happen if the NGOs are the ones to decide what changes should be made within the target groups.

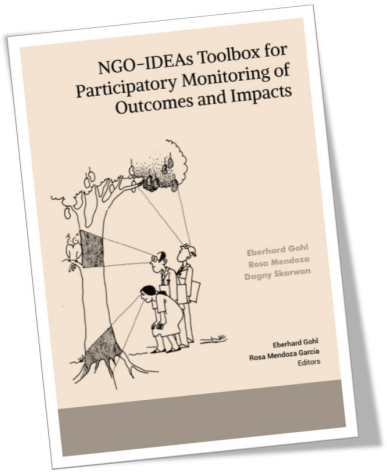
Participatory monitoring encourages democratic relationships and a culture of reflection. For the target groups and involved actors, the information generated is useful for self-evaluation and decision-making concerning changes that they hope to achieve. It also

includes learning to make decisions and committing oneself to action either alone or together with members of a group.

Developing a baseline can be something of an awakening for a project team, it is a good way to validate a project strategy and lay the foundations of a participatory monitoring of outcomes and impacts system. An important conceptual aspect is the integration of the "grassroots" perspective in the logical framework and in the organisation's monitoring system.

Now that we have discussed the concept and the agreements on the principles of the participatory monitoring approach, we can move on to present some specific tools included in the NGO-IDEAs Toolbox.

These tools can be adapted to the topic, context and group of actors, helping the same target groups, partners or beneficiaries take an active role in planning and formulating their objectives, as well as regularly measuring and analysing if they have met their own goals.

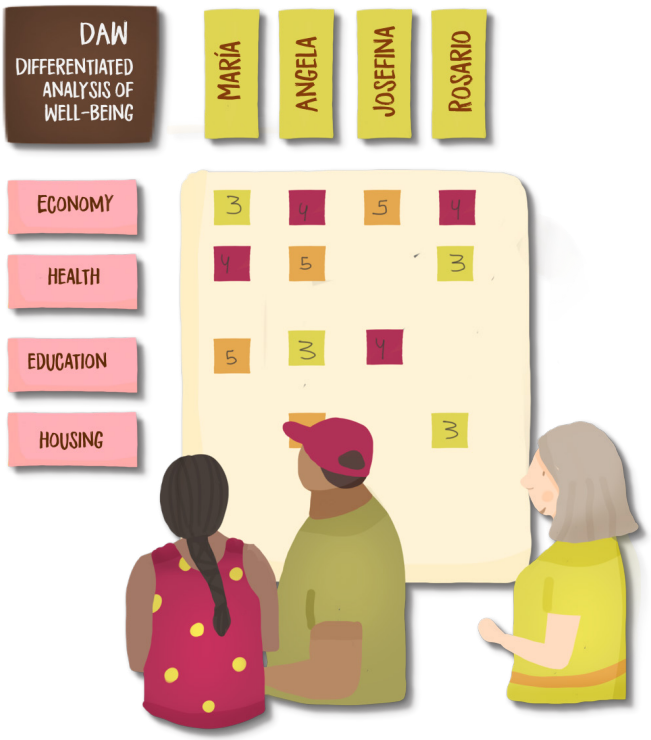


Methodologically and operationally, monitoring can become a valuable tool to complement daily work processes. People discover this when they are introduced to the tools and also to questions that seek to clarify the type of skills that we need in order to be able to facilitate these processes. Here, an increase of self-evaluation among the actors is key as monitoring is no longer just another project function, but is rather part of our responsibility before our donors and target groups to achieve objectives.

It is a significant moment when we move from an initial reaction of astonishment to practise using and applying some of the tools, such as the Collective Change tool. This tool helps people arrive at their own horizons of change with -and in- a group, within a collective that shares some common features.

The underlying reason for this tool is that often in projects, we work in groups, we put groups together, we divide larger groups into smaller ones, and yet, the people in these groups may well not get the opportunity to discover what aims or interests they have in

common, and neither do they get the chance to establish objectives for change.



Participatory monitoring begins right there with the members of a group reflecting on that which they have in common and so there is a certain interest in pursuing a goal, in harnessing the energy of the group to bring about some changes, starting from a common vision and setting objectives.

On their own, the tools do not make the difference. Another time, I would like to share more with you about the tools, the ways they can be used, their versatility and the results that can make the difference for change management.

Dagny Skarwan is Austrian by nationality and has lived more than half her life in Guatemala, Latin America. She has a PhD in social economics, post- graduate studies in political sciences and a masters in 'Local Development and Decentralisation' (Ecuador) with a specialisation in ecological economy. She has extensive experience as an international consultant in planning, consulting and evaluation of international cooperation projects and in monitoring systems with an outcome-based management approach. She coordinated the NGO-IDEAs cooperation project with both German and Latin American NGOs, aimed at facilitating the implementation and adaptation of a participatory monitoring approach.

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A Methodology That Fosters a Participatory Approach

by *Viola Cassetti* and *Joan J. Paredes-Carbonell*

Our professional paths crossed in Valencia in 2016, when Viola was finishing her European Master in Public Health (EuroPubHealth) and about to start her PhD at the University of Sheffield (UK) and Joan was working as Deputy Director General of Health Promotion at the Valencia regional health authority.

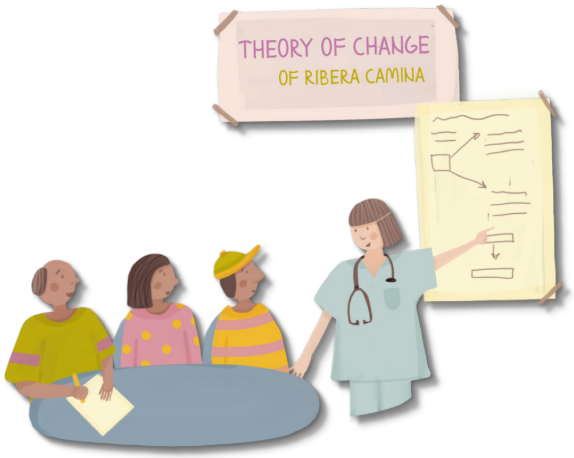
Our first project was to adapt the NICE guidelines on community involvement to the Spanish context using a collaborative approach. We spent two years co-coordinating a group of more than 80 professionals who actively participated in the project. You can access the guide (only in Spanish) by clicking on it (Cassetti et al., 2018).

Since then, we have continued to work towards the same goal -both together and on parallel projects- of encouraging community participation at every stage of health programmes. Our shared knowledge and experience led us to embark on our first participatory evaluation of a health promotion initiative, the 'La Ribera Camina' programme, which promotes physical activity through group walks with the accompaniment of health and physical activity professionals.

La Ribera Camina was piloted in 2019 in two municipalities in the province of Valencia (Spain). Today, the programme runs in 11 health districts and 23 municipalities of La Ribera administrative division, south of the city of Valencia (Egea Ronda et al., 2022). Initially, the programme's structure was largely defined by officials in a top-down decision-making process, but Joan and other colleagues suggested a redesign of the programme to incorporate a bottom-up approach informed by perspectives that emerge from community participation.

As we discussed in our recently published chapter in the Global Handbook of Health Promotion, Vol. 1: Mapping Health Promotion Research (Cassetti and Paredes-Carbonell, 2022), the evaluation of intersectoral actions and community health programmes is particularly challenging due to the complexity involved in both. There are multiple stakeholders who interact with one another in different ways. These interactions generate various dynamics and outcomes that are difficult to anticipate or predict. This is why we comment on the importance of adopting a systems thinking approach. Systems thinking helps us understand initiatives as embedded in their contexts, rather than as a set of isolated activities. In other words, systems thinking helps us analyse the complexity involved in initiatives and how they interact with the contexts in which they are implemented, which are -in their own right- complex. Hence the importance of the participatory approach, because when we involve the beneficiaries in the evaluation of a programme, it allows us to capture the different dynamics the programme is generating in each context, and to see how the programme interrelates with these contexts.

Thus, we employed both a participatory and systems thinking approach during the process of designing the theory of change. In the theory of change method, we create a highly visual diagram for participatory planning and evaluation. The diagram is the output resulting from dialogue between the different stakeholders and it should explain why and how they believe the intervention can be successful (Cassetti y Paredes-Carbonell, 2020).



A theory of change visually represents how a programme works. It identifies the different components and how they relate to one another, the aims and desired outcomes of each component and the actions with which they hope to achieve them. It is similar to -but goes beyond- the logical framework, which also invites participants to reflect on why they expect to achieve these changes and the factors that can help or hinder these processes.

Four theory of change sessions were organised with the aim of outlining the theory implicit in the La Ribera Camina programme and identifying how it was performing, areas for improvement and the results it was intended to obtain, so that decisions could then be made on which results should be measured and how. The sessions were directed at different focus groups: health professionals, local government representatives and two sessions for people in the community who take part in the walks. They were recorded with the participants' consent and analysed using a qualitative method of thematic analysis. A follow-up event was organised to share the results and participants engaged in workshops to prioritise improvement measures for the programme, its evaluation, and the participation process.

This methodological approach -a combination of participatory and qualitative methods and systems thinking- has yielded many unanticipated results. While, as expected, the programme itself was evaluated as the participants commented on what was going well and what needed to be improved (Egea-Ronda et al., 2022), it also went beyond that to identify all the expected change, not only in terms of health but also in terms of organisational and institutional relationships, changes in the programme itself and in the physical environment. For example, on the subject of organisational changes, the three focus groups all agreed the programme had generated an intersectoral dynamic, interinstitutional collaboration and citizen participation.

Moreover, the evaluation process itself became a source of knowledge production. Each participant offered their vision of the programme during the process and all these perspectives were gathered in the final version which set out a new vision for La Ribera Camina, what it involves and how it impacts both the beneficiaries and the individuals working in the programme (Cassetti y Paredes-Carbonell, 2022). For their part, the individuals who participated in the workshops learned a great deal, acquiring a more complete understanding of what the programme involves, helping to produce the theories of change and participating in the final sessions. Each person offered their perspective on the programme and -through dialogue with the other participants- expanded their understanding of La Ribera Camina and its potential impact in the community.

Furthermore, agreements were reached between all the parties involved on the programme's areas for improvement. These include enhancing and extending the current routes, incorporating complementary activities to the walks such as healthy nutrition workshops, yoga/relaxation techniques, raising the profile of the programme and investing in publicity.

As part of the evaluation, the participants also shared their experiences of how local dynamics inherent to each context impact the implementation of the programme. This generated 'data' that fostered a systems thinking perspective when analysing the programme and the areas where it is implemented.

The process required back-and-forth communications between the 'local' component (the programme in each municipal area) and the 'global' element (the overall health programme). It involved exchanges between professionals and participants, and the results provided evidence that was then used to redesign an improved initiative, which was co-created both in its programme planning and implementation (Cassetti y Paredes-Carbonell, 2022).

To conclude, while the process was lengthy, and had to be interrupted several times because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was an enriching experience for the researchers and for the programme professionals and participants. It signalled a new way of embarking on an evaluation and we hope it can be replicated in other contexts and scenarios.

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Participation, a Key Focus in Outcome Harvesting: Lessons from Chile

by *Andrea Peroni Fiscarelli*

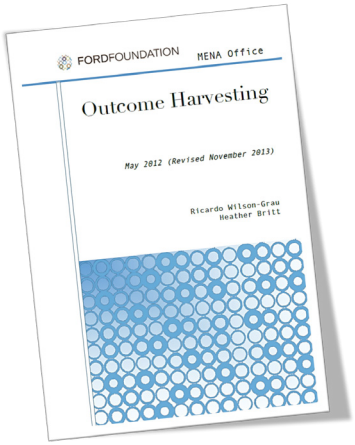
Homogenous evaluations vs differentiated evaluations

In order to build a solid framework and evidence, state-led evaluations have become more standardised over time, and are thus increasingly gaining in credibility.
The problem that remains is the need to recognise that not all public programmes share the same characteristics, and therefore differentiated types of evaluations should be considered.

This is evident in programmes that centre around the delivery of goods with no interaction with the beneficiaries (such as in the case of subsidies, plans and vouchers), and others that seek to provide tools and/or develop competencies and skills aimed at increasing the social inclusion of individuals, especially from vulnerable sectors.

For these types of programmes, traditional evaluation methodologies have proved to be insufficient as they only seek to assess the level of effectiveness or efficiency and do not manage to capture the complex and diverse reality, practice and results that are present. Furthermore, as the programmes deal with human and social behaviours, the complexity of their contexts should also be recognised.

Outcome Harvesting is a viable, innovative and useful evaluation methodology for carrying out evaluations of capacity-building public sector programmes as it enables behavioural changes in skills development and social inclusion projects to be explored in a highly participatory manner.



In their book, Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt describe Outcome Harvesting as *"a method that enables evaluators, grant makers, and managers to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes. The method was inspired by the definition of outcome as a change in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organisation, or institution"* (Wilson-Grau y Britt, 2012).

Outcome Harvesting, created by Ricardo Wilson-Grau[1], is a suitable methodology for complex programme contexts where the relationships of cause and effect are not clear and so the aims and ways of achieving them remain fairly unpredictable, in turn necessitating predefined objectives and theories of change to be modified over time in order to respond to contextual changes. It is particularly useful when the outcomes, (and even the inputs, activities and outputs), are not specific, not defined quantitively at the planning stage, and/or not sufficiently measurable in the evaluation.

Harvesting Outcomes in Evaluation

In early 2016, a team of professionals and academics, members of the Chilean Evaluation Network, on behalf of Isónoma Consultorías Sociales Ltda., used this methodology to evaluate the programme "Yo Emprendo en Comunidad" (I am a Community Entrepreneur), designed and implemented by the Solidarity and Social Investment Fund (hereafter, FOSIS) of the Chilean Ministry of Social Development.

This programme seeks to enable workers in worker-owned cooperatives to develop economic activities in order to increase their income and improve their living standards and the context in which they carry out their activities, thus promoting cooperative work and constituting a programme which features complex characteristics due to levels of flexibility required and uncertainty present.

The evaluation included:

- A characterisation of the beneficiary organisations and their productive activities.
- The evaluation of the "Yo Emprendo en Comunidad" programme based on a traditional quantitative approach. This was carried out by comparing the baseline

with the output line on variables such as income, sales, production costs etc. with the aim of evaluating to what extent the programme objectives had been achieved.

- The qualitative evaluation of processes, based on individual and group interviews with teams and regional managers.
- The evaluation of a selection of ten projects in northern, central and southern Chile using the "Outcome Harvesting" methodology, through which we sought to highlight the participation of the members of the beneficiary organisations, and to identify possible unexpected effects that the baseline and output line indicators had not considered; these were mainly results linked to worker-owned models of business and changes in the quality of life experienced by the beneficiaries.

Harvesting Lessons

The first lesson we learnt was to dare to propose a methodology that had not been requested by FOSIS and that was unknown by the state counterpart, making it a risky proposal "outside the Requirements". This did not hinder us as we were prepared to implement the requested evaluation and also include a participatory methodology, in this case, Outcome Harvesting.

We were determined to show that social programmes are diverse, and highlight that they are developed in complex contexts and that if these programmes focus on developing individual and community skills and capacities, they require a different approach in the evaluation.

Thus, we carried out a" homogenous evaluation" and a "differentiated evaluation" in parallel. This meant that the evaluation could generate two types of results: on the one hand, the traditional use of the findings (effectiveness, efficiency, results) and on the other, a dialogue-based learning exercise for programme staff and beneficiaries, which allowed them to learn to reflect and engage with each other from a participatory evaluation perspective. This perspective seeks to involve the actors in the same process and together, develop a process to reflect on the use of this evaluation, given that they designed and participated in the evaluation themselves. This represents an opportunity to strengthen the deliberate exercise of democracy at local and national level.

The second lesson we learned was that most innovative methodologies come from other contexts and this means that several adjustments need to be made when they are applied to the national context. All in all, despite the considerable differences among the implemented projects, both in terms of the projects themselves and the territorial

contexts where they were based, the defined methodology worked well. However, we will now describe a series of difficulties that arose:

- There were times when the key institutional actors did not have the required depth of knowledge concerning the outcomes of the evaluated projects and so were not ideal informants. This made defining the outcomes at the beginning of the process considerably difficult for some of the projects.
- Detecting the third key actor[2] varied from project to project, especially as there were projects that could not name a key actor external to the organisation with knowledge on the projects and their outcomes. This meant that this figure was omitted in several projects, making the process of defining the outcomes and validating them more difficult.
- The time restriction for surveying the outcomes on the ground made this process difficult. It also made the description and validation of the outcomes with the required depth complicated. This was not a cross-cutting difficulty among all the projects but rather relevant in cases where it was difficult to gain open access to participants from the organisation in question.
- The process of validating the outcomes was highly complicated in all the projects. Even though it had been established that the outcomes would be validated by the key institutional actors and the key informant detected on the ground, it was not possible to implement this stage of the project adequately due to the low levels of knowledge possessed by the selected informants concerning the projects.

An important lesson learned concerning the methodology of the workshops was the use of the didactic material used to represent abstract concepts[3], which proved to be a valuable facilitator when working with vulnerable groups of people with low educational levels that varied in age and gender.

The material was adapted by the research team and was used successfully with groups such as female potters in geographically isolated rural areas, groups of men in prisons, groups of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen, groups of beekeepers in rural areas. However, it was difficult for the representatives of the participating organisations to work independently in groups

and respond in writing to the information requested due to language difficulties and the fact that a significant number of people were not able to read or write.

As seen above, the Outcomes Harvesting methodology could not be fully applied due to some difficulties encountered in the fieldwork. Nevertheless, it contributed to evaluating and understanding the processes related to each of the implemented projects, providing significant results for the "Yo Emprendo en Comunidad" programme decision-makers. It also demonstrated that it is possible to carry out this type of participatory evaluation even when the state does not (initially) contemplate it in its evaluation requests.

Evaluation Team: Andrea Peroni F., Patricia Varela, Cecilia Robayo, Claudia Olavarria. For more background and detail, see the paper in Spanish presented at the 2016 CLAD Conference in Santiago de Chile, El Uso de Metodologías Innovadoras en la Evaluación de Programas Sociales: El Caso de la "Cosecha de Alcances".

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[1] The method known as Outcome Harvesting was developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau with the help of his colleagues Barbara Klugman, Claudia Fontes, David Wilson-Sánchez, Fe Briones Garcia, Gabriela Sánchez, Goele Scheers, Heather Britt, Jennifer Vincent, Julie Lafreniere, Juliette Majot, Marcie Mersky, Martha Nuñez, Mary Jane Real, Natalia Ortiz and Wolfgang Richert. Over the past eight years, the Outcome Harvest has been used to monitor and evaluate the achievements of hundreds of networks, non-governmental organisations, research centres, think tanks and grassroots organisations around the world (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2013).
[2] The first type of actor was the public official/worker, the second type of actor was the beneficiaries (or vice versa), and the third type of actor refers to actors not directly involved in the programme but who can testify to the outcomes achieved or not, for example, local municipal authority.
[3] In this case, the didactic material used was: (1) Star cut-outs to represent the dreams or expectations of the project beneficiaries; (2) Cloud cut-outs to represent difficulties encountered and negative outcomes; (3) Cut-outs of fruit to represent positive outcomes from the project; (4) Cut-outs of nuts and bolts to represent the main contributions to the processes; and (5) cut-outs of lightbulbs were added to represent contributions from the actors that made the programme successful.

Andrea Peroni Fiscarelli studied History and Sociology before gaining her PhD in American Studies with a specialization in Social and Political Studies. She has worked as an academic in the Sociology department at the University of Chile for more than 15 years and as a national and international consultant in social policies, planning, monitoring and evaluation. She co-founded the Chilean Evaluation Network (EvalChile), coordinates the Interdisciplinary Nucleus of Evaluative Research focused on Public Decision-Making, at the University of Chile. She has also served as vice-President and Treasurer for the Executive Committee of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC).

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The 'Chiva', a Useful Participatory Tool for Evaluation Processes: Lessons from Colombia

by *Carmen Lucía Jaramillo*

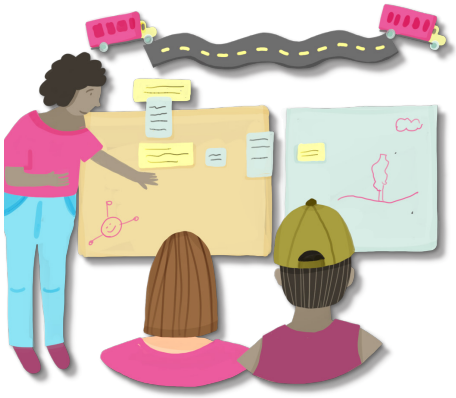
Creating spaces where -regardless of their levels of education- people feel they can truly participate in planning and evaluation processes, in an informed and active way, has been a principal methodological concern during my work with communities, particularly in rural areas.

Beyond discourses on empowerment, horizontal relationships and recognition of the value of the knowledge and experience of local actors, it is always challenging to combine the demands of methodological rigour (structures, formats and technical language) and the need for fluent communication with protagonists in the transformation of the challenging realities they face in their territories. Generally speaking, structural socio-economic problems and indifference on the part of those in power are standard features in such environments. That is why it is always a challenge to *"[...] create a space for debate, that is, a truly respectful space. Not the simple tolerance derived from indifference and scepticism, but a positive appreciation of differences"* (Zuleta, 1985).

For this reason, in this continual pursuit of in-depth analysis and debate based on the use of simple language, I often opt for methods rooted in analogies that are familiar to the contexts and daily lives of the people with whom I carry out participatory planning or evaluation. One of the analogies that I have been able to adapt to multiple situations is that of a journey in a *chiva*, a form of transport used in rural Colombia to carry both passengers and goods. The image of the chiva is also very useful, because each one is a unique representation of what its owners want to say about their region. This is why they are covered in colourful images as a hallmark of pride and identity.

The tool and its use

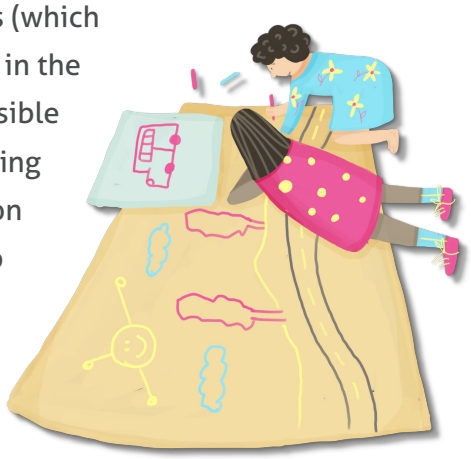
First used in a planning exercise in 2009, this image was an idea that emerged from a collective process in the Colombian Ministry of Agriculture's *Oportunidades Rurales* (Rural Opportunities) programme. On this occasion, we needed to reach concrete agreements with rural small business owners on strengthening projects for whose design, financial management and evaluation they themselves would be responsible for. A few years later, with the knowledge that it had worked well before, I proposed adapting the exercise for the Colombian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation's *A Ciencia Cierta* programme, which continues to use it in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.



In planning exercises, it is easy to elicit a collective, familiar and heartfelt reflection by comparing the chiva with the community organisation, and the road or track it travels along with the path that is expected to be followed in the implementation process, where specific stops are required for refuelling (funding disbursements). A participatory process decides who will be the drivers (responsible for the implementation), which bodies will provide support (a chiva always has an assistant), who should "get on the bus", what state the chiva is in and what repairs are required before departure, such as administrative strengthening or changes to organisational functions. It also enables reflection on the place of departure (results of previous projects) and the vision for the future, as the journey will continue beyond institutional interventions, given that the challenges faced, and the work of the organisations, will not cease when project funding comes to an end.

These are some examples of how we have used these analogies to encourage collective reflection in a creative and profound way. Discussions based on these images facilitate the use of shared language based on the lived experiences of all participants. Rather than educational background, it is clarity about what it is hoped to achieve that matters: familiarity with the territory and experience in community work and in working jointly with institutions. The comparison also permits reflection on the importance of maintaining control over the project, as the institutions are only there to provide support: a fundamental but temporary role. The real protagonists in their own development -and the ones who will "suffer" the concrete results that may or may not be obtained- are the local inhabitants and organisations.

This graphic representation of the planning process (which allows key ideas to be put on small posters) lodges in the memories of participants, who can display it in a visible place in their organisation. It also serves as a starting point for subsequent monitoring and evaluation exercises. The information can then be used to translate the outcome of the joint agreements into technical and institutional language, ensuring participants have an experienced-based understanding and are clear about hoped-for achievements. This facilitates horizontal dialogue and the meaningful participation of a large number of people who might otherwise feel inhibited from contributing because of their lack of formal education, despite the fact they have the wisdom derived from experience and from work they have done with commitment and dedication.



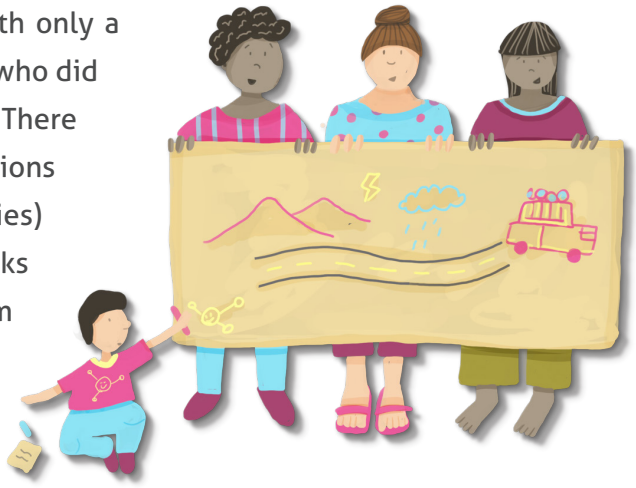
The analogy of the vehicle and road also proves useful in another experience: participatory evaluation. In the next example, it was not specifically suggested to use the image of the chiva. Instead, participants were given the freedom to make their own choice of vehicle and describe the road on which they had travelled. This evaluation assessed the work carried out by five organisations in Caquetá (Colombia) as part of the *ProPaz* (ForPeace) programme (financed by GIZ), which sought to strengthen civil society capacities to improve governance.

A workshop was held with the five organisations and each was asked to use drawings to reconstruct the implementation process of the project and the particularities of each organisation. The instructions specified that the road represented the context, the vehicle the organisation, and that along the way, they were to draw plants to symbolise the results that had been made available to other people in the territory.

Thus, in an enjoyable collective exercise, the participants were free to let their imaginations run wild and they created images that represented their perceptions and feelings about the project's journey. These are some of their reflections that captured, clearly and in concrete terms, the progress, difficulties and changes that occurred.

One of the organisations involved was a Community Action Board (JAC) in the locality of Cristo Rey, a civic, social and community organisation, which had been inactive for many years, mainly as a result of the armed conflict. They depicted the organisation as a vehicle from 1974 that was in disrepair and whose documentation was out of date due to lack

of use. The road (the context) was represented as a poorly maintained, isolated road, with only a few scattered people walking along it, who did not dare to "jump on the JAC vehicle". There were also no garages or service stations along the road (hardly any state entities) and they had to stop to remove rocks (obstacles) that prevented them from moving forward.



Despite these difficulties, as members of the Cristo Rey JAC, they planted the seeds of long-term processes, such as organising access to electricity supplies and opening a new road. This was represented by fields of crops of medium- and long-term yield such as cacao and rubber. With the implementation of the project and the support of more than nine institutions, they managed to "repair the vehicle". In other words, they rejuvenated the JAC by updating its formal documentation, so they could sign contracts for work to benefit the community and manage new projects, convincing 25 families to work together.

Gradually, the road improved (the context began to change) and it was possible to travel together in a better vehicle that found places to refuel, as well as other people to share with at stops along the way. The achievements obtained as a result of their efforts were depicted in the drawing (represented by the fruits from the trees included in the drawing), highlighting that 14 families had been connected to the electricity supply, 4.7 km of new roads had been opened and the work on the community water supply had begun. Today, Cristo Rey is a model community in terms of strength and unity, with the capacity to develop social and productive projects.

Another organisation consisted of 16 women with a garment business, located in an urban area. They had received a lot of institutional support in terms of their productive activity, but the project introduced them for the first time to issues related to claiming rights.

They represented the initial period with a small vehicle with no lights, thus symbolising the lack of organisational vision, despite the fact they had the means of production. A "pothole" in the road was the low levels of training of women, to which was added the "broken bridge" of machismo. Despite the many difficulties, they decided to "board the strengthening processes bus" and seek collective transformations, which they depicted

as the planting of a forest. A vehicle with new tyres appropriate to different terrains (actions) symbolised this organisational change. They also "spruced up the car", saying that they are now women who have a clear direction and are more empowered. In their drawing, they represented the strength they feel and the fact that they now have knowledge that is important to their role, not only in the productive sphere (with their new designs) but also for their social demands. They represented their achievements by drawing a field of flowers.

The exercise carried out by this group of women allowed them not only to identify the achievements of the project and the difficulties encountered during its implementation, but also to recognise their own transformation as a group. They highlighted the value of incorporating advocacy for women's rights in their productive activity, thus shifting the focus of their work as an organisation to a more holistic approach, expressing a sense of renewal as they brought together economic and socio-political elements.

Lessons from this tool

These examples show the potential of using analogies that are familiar to people's everyday experiences to spark reflection, generate debate and reach agreements. It might be said that the approach is based on the same premises as lateral thinking, where established patterns of thought are broken and new alternatives sought to analyse reality and find novel, creative responses to challenges. It also helps to break down rigid, polarised ideas that can become established in human groups by forcing people to step out of their roles and think creatively.

Practical tools for participatory processes of planning and evaluation with communities offer opportunities to facilitate their active involvement in decision-making about the direction interventions should take. As Grundmann, G. and Stahl, J. (2002, p.8) state, "[...] *methodological procedures express predispositions and positions: when we decide on the application of a certain procedure, we simultaneously hinder or promote participation, equity, empowerment, sustainability. The tool or procedure we choose guides us in our basic attitudes towards recognising and negotiating the diversity of interests."*

The following testimonial video (in Spanish with English subtitles) provides a description of the tool and its use in participatory approaches.

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Experience Capitalisation: Learning by Doing

by *Jorge Chavez-Tafur*

The term "experience capitalisation" is increasingly used to refer to the process of describing and analysing a project, programme or specific experience in detail, and producing lessons that can be shared and used to improve development interventions.

As in a systematisation process, this approach is believed to help identify specific innovations and practices, and -above all- to understand the reasons behind their successes or failures. One of the major benefits of an experience capitalisation process is that it involves all those who are -or were- part of the experience.

But how do we promote such a process, and what are the steps to be followed? And once we have decided to go ahead, how do we facilitate the participation of different people? These were some of the questions that we asked ourselves at the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) about five years ago, prompting us to initiate a project together with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Financial support was provided by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). From 2016 to the end of 2019, the project responded to the need to develop specific skills for describing and analysing specific experiences, identifying and disseminating lessons and recommendations, and putting these to use. Working in different parts of the world and focusing on analysing the steps that should be taken in processes of this kind, the project sought to encourage the adoption of a capitalisation process at different levels. To this end, we sought to capitalise on the experience we had embarked upon, to learn lessons about the process itself and to validate the approach followed.

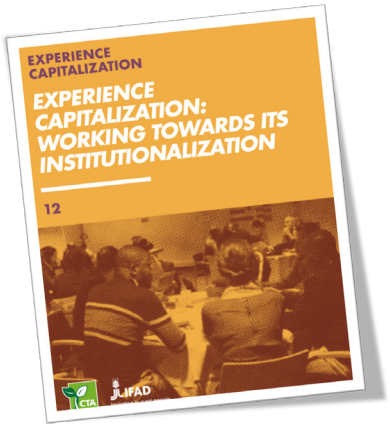
What we did

Initially, our activity focused on East Africa, before expanding to Asia and Latin America. In each region, we organised several processes in which we followed the "learning by doing" approach rather than merely talking about experience capitalisation. Thus, alongside multiple capacity-development workshops, one of the strategies involved the formation of a community of practice, involving everyone who participated in the courses and workshops. We were interested in complementing the face-to-face discussions that took place in the workshops and enabling an exchange of information between participants from different regions. In this community of practice, a sub-group was created for the exchange of ideas and information in Spanish.

Discussions focused on the need for detailed descriptions and the importance of analysis, and exploring the reasons behind the results (or their absence). But we did not concentrate only on looking back: one aspect reiterated throughout the project was the need to pay special attention to the adoption or "use" of the results of a process of this kind. Both the workshops and the online discussions revealed the importance of developing action plans and sharing lessons learnt along the way with a specific target audience. A communication expert helped us create a system for identifying target groups and selecting the best products and methods to reach them.

In turn, the identification of lessons learnt also involved consideration of the way the process had been institutionalised, while the workshops and capacity-development processes analysed the conditions required for this institutionalisation to take place, including the necessary policies or practices and the (external and internal) factors that should be taken into account.

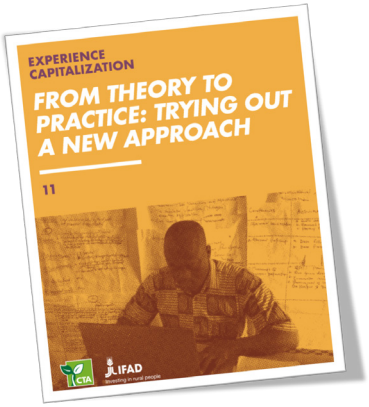
Next, a detailed plan was prepared that included specific activities, the names and responsibilities of everyone involved, and the resources required. Many participants put their plans into action, and the results were presented in one of the project's final activities: the book *"Experience capitalization: Working towards its institutionalization"*, which features 25 case studies and describes what was done and what was achieved.



Validating a methodology

As with any project, the CTA commissioned an external evaluation process which sought to measure activities and results, and extract specific lessons that might serve as concrete recommendations. However, the most interesting process was the ongoing analysis of the activities and immediate results. The idea of capitalising on our experience capitalisation processes (a kind of "meta-capitalisation") allowed us to identify the similarities and differences between the different groups involved.

The participants themselves were the most important source when it came to extracting lessons, with interviews being used throughout the project to record their opinions and ideas. This information was posted on the internet in the form of short articles, following the same steps or stages involved in a capitalisation process. These articles were written by those directly involved in the different stages of the project with the result that the different case studies served as inputs for the discussions and capacity-development workshops that we organised. Some were included in a publication entitled "From theory to practice: trying out a new approach".



Naturally, the case studies indicated that each process was different, depending to a large extent on the specific context in which each workshop was held and the individuals who took part. Yet the principal elements of the approach were evident in each case, and a process of reflection helped the participants identify steps or ideas to facilitate the description and analysis of a particular experience in detail. More importantly still, they helped identify why these steps or ideas worked. We discovered, for example, that organising face-to-face workshops in each region is not always efficient (and is at times impossible). Another common difficulty was the length of the documentation and publication process, which further delayed the activities planned to boost the adoption and institutionalisation of the process.

One of our greatest difficulties was in identifying people who could facilitate the different processes. This is why we had to change the order of activities to focus first on developing general capacity, in order to be able to identify people who could take on facilitator roles. It was with the idea of supporting these new facilitators that the project set out to develop online courses (webinars) and disseminate information in different ways.

Facilitating online discussions introduced another challenge. Even though we had over five hundred people listed as members of the community of practice, most discussion centred around the preparation of face-to-face workshops. It was often difficult to get members to participate more actively, even though we tried to address this by organising a course for online facilitators and by identifying "lead facilitators" in the different regions.

Results

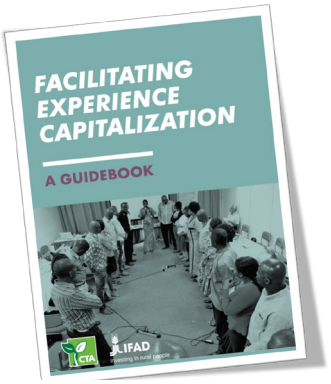
While it is difficult to demonstrate the results of a project after a relatively short period of time, three years on we can already say that the project is displaying positive results: we were able to complete more than 120 experience capitalisation processes with more than 450 participants.

The results of these different processes have been presented at different events including an international conference organised by Wageningen University (Abril 2018); the IFAD regional consultation meeting for West Africa in Mauritania, and the African Evaluation Association's biennial conference in Abidjan.

Most significantly, the experience has validated the approach taken and confirmed the need to follow specific steps. The process we followed showed that we should continue to support and strengthen the community of practice and support the champions who are now responsible for facilitating processes in the different regions, and that we need to improve the links with existing monitoring and evaluation processes already used by projects or organisations. More broadly, it revealed what works and what does not in the facilitation of an experience capitalisation process. On this basis, we were able to make specific recommendations.

All of this was recorded in a guide that was published in English and French. As the principal fruit of our efforts to validate our approach, the guide reveals what we have learnt and what we would recommend to others seeking to organise and support an experience capitalisation process: how to prepare it; how to help others interested in the approach to become involved; what to pay attention to during the face-to-face

and online capacity-development sessions; how to boost the adoption of the key ideas of the process; and how to support the institutionalisation of the approach.



The principal lesson, however, is that "learning by doing" is far from being an approach that must be followed to the letter. Each process will be different and facilitators should adapt their work to the context and participants in question. This requires in-depth prior preparation, but also the ability to continually improvise and adapt plans. Only in this way will it be possible to ensure the involvement of all participants, develop their capacity, and provide support and motivation -all aspects that are crucial if the work is to produce helpful results. It is vital that "learning by doing" processes continue and that they generate new lessons and recommendations that will inspire other facilitators. Our job now is to continue to document and share all this.

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Games as a Participatory Tool in Evaluation. A Reflection from the Systematisation of the Guinea Pig Production Experience (Peru).

by *Ana Tumi Guzmán*

In this article, I'm going to share some thoughts concerning a systematisation experience that involved stakeholders with varying degrees of training. I will draw particular attention to the engaging tools used to promote analysis and reflection.

The provinces of Jaén and San Ignacio, in the department of Cajamarca, are renowned in Peru for producing high-quality coffee that is exported to several international markets. Most inhabitants in these areas farm this seasonal crop and their work is particularly intensive during the harvest period between April and September when labour is most demanded. The staggered sale of their harvest is reflected in the income they receive.

Within this context, a development organisation working in the area embarked on a business diversification project to provide producers with additional sustained income as a way of reducing their dependence on coffee production. A participatory consultation process with the coffee growers led to the decision to implement various business types that included the technical production of guinea pigs, to be reared for the local market where there is a high demand that is largely unsatisfied. The guinea pigs, also known as cavy, or *cuy/cuyes* in Spanish, is a domestic rodent species, the result of a millennia of cross-breeding several species in the Andean region of South America.

After the project had been running for two years, the development organisation suggested carrying out a systematisation of the experience of producing guinea pigs in

order to extract the main lessons learned from the experience of these coffee producers who were now also guinea pig producers, having transitioned from family rearing to commercial family rearing.

The systematisation was led by an external facilitator, who used different tools to reproduce and order the experience, its achievements and difficulties, deepening the analysis of the processes behind the results. This required the use of different tools that were specific to the different stakeholders involved: members of the technical team, authorities, producers, etc., encouraging a critical, and in particular, self-critical, analysis of the process experienced. In addition, the institution had a special interest in analysing the impact of the business on the family economy and the sustainability of the initiative.

Prior to the field work, initial meetings were held with the person in charge of the project and it became clear that the business had not met the objectives set out in terms of the number of producers that should benefit from the business. Furthermore, due to the pandemic situation that significantly affected the area and paralysed the institution's activities, the producers had only just started to use their sheds the month before the project end, and this meant that marketing-related information could not be analysed.

For this reason, it was decided that the impact analysis would not be limited to analysing only the commercial success of the business, but also the changes to social dynamics in the group. It would also focus on qualitative changes which are not always taken into account but which can be key to achieving the desired sustainability. A tool shared by peers from Techo Ecuador at the First Gathering of Participatory Evaluation Experiences in Latin America, held in Quito in November 2019, was therefore adapted and used with these families.

The participants were presented with a board featuring a race track and had to choose a figure that represented them at the beginning of the experience (initial situation) and another to represent them at the end of the project (current situation).

They also had to position this latter figure at the place in the race where they considered themselves to be currently in relation to the goal. These figures were diverse and included animals and means of transport. The tool was also adapted by asking them to place dark markers to symbolise problems or stumbling blocks along the way and bright markers to represent the achievements or 'gold nuggets' they discovered despite the obstacles.

While it was clear that there was still a long way to go in this 'race', *'...because we are not selling yet, we will reach our goal when we make money from our guinea pigs'*, we were able to source strong reasons for the setbacks in the 'race'. Rich experiences were extracted from the experience, providing hope for future rearing once the project ends. These included friendship ties and cooperation in the group; reliable technical support; the feeling of satisfaction for having kept going in spite of the setbacks; the feeling of belonging to a trailblazing group pioneering the technical raising of guinea pigs in their district; and being references for other breeders, even beyond the boundaries of their district.

All this was shared among laughter, jokes and plenty of idea exchange, encouraged by an engaging tool that helped break the ice and that, by emulating reality, reconstructed the process experienced, critically analysing it, and obtaining lessons that came from exchanging views and discussion. It should be stressed that the tool was especially suitable for people from rural areas that are not used to writing and do not need to for any of the technical work or logistics involved.

We also invited some people to the workshop who were involved at the start of the project but had not continued. Their opinions were highly important so the supposed reduced scope of the project could be better understood. Although they actively participated in the exercise, we have later wondered if it would have worked better had they carried out the activity separately, with their own board and figures.

Finally, we want to highlight how difficult it can often be to remove ourselves from a purely technical way of perceiving a project. I, in particular, as a zootechnician, held a very critical perception of the model put forward by the institution to start this business. Had it been a traditional evaluation and not a systematisation with high levels of stakeholder participation, we would have focused on comparing indicators and quantitative goals, and the rich experiences of these families would have remained uncovered. In their own words, *'We began slowly, slowly, like a tortoise...we still have a way to go but we are on the right track now, pedalling our bikes to the top'*.

Ana Tumi Guzmán is Peruvian, founding partner of RETAR, Organisational Development Consultant. Her main experience focuses on development issues with emphasis on the design and implementation of participatory methodologies for the systematisation and evaluation of experiences, analysis of productive chains, training and organisation, at the level of professionals, technicians and producers.

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THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

EVAL PARTICIPATIVA
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE AND LEARNING FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

EvalParticipativa is the Community of Practice and Learning for Participatory Evaluation for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is the result of a joint initiative between the Social and Environmental Labour Studies Program (PETAS) at the National University of San Juan (Argentina) and Focelac , the evaluation capacity development and networking project in Latin America run by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval).

This community was born in response to increased interest and practice of evaluation both regionally and worldwide. The last few decades have seen increased contributions to evaluation theory and methodology. There has also been a surge in national evaluation policies in countries in every continent, intensified efforts to integrate evaluation in institutions and the consolidation of diverse initiatives aimed at professionalising this practice. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals set out a new global agenda of priorities for evaluation which includes making civil society the protagonist in evaluation and emphasises that participation should be central in evaluation practice. Concepts such as "participation", "support", "stakeholder perspective" and other similar phrases have therefore become frequently heard in evaluative endeavours.

EvalParticipativa seeks to encourage the inclusive involvement of civil society in evaluative processes. To this end, three main objectives have been defined: a) to strengthen and consolidate the community of practice and learning of participatory evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean; b) to facilitate the reproduction and institutionalisation of this evaluation approach by developing written and audiovisual material about the experiences and lessons learned in relation to participatory evaluation; and c) to promote training on participatory evaluation through courses for facilitators, in-person and virtual forums and seminars with representatives from organisations of the civil society from the region, public and private sectors and academia, as well as instances of academic certification on participatory evaluation.

The community has over three thousand followers on different virtual platforms. In addition, there are actions coordinated with the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC), the organisation TECHO, the Foundation for Overcoming Poverty and the Servicio País programme (Chile), and the Local Development Support Centre (CEADEL) from Argentina.

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