Monitoring and Evaluating

Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes

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The present handbook was developed in consultation with many community-based organizations and youth groups around the world. Thanks go primarily to them for their work and their dedication. In particular, thanks to all those who answered questionnaires and participated in meetings; without them, the handbook could not have been completed.

Richard Ives of the consultant firm *educari* (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) prepared an electronic mail (e-mail) questionnaire, which was sent to a wide number of groups participating in two different prevention projects of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): the Global Youth Network and the Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse. The questionnaire requested information on the groups' experience in monitoring and evaluating their activities. On the basis of that information and the available literature, Mr. Ives then prepared a draft. Some of the groups that had sent input were then invited to a four-day meeting in Vienna at which the draft was comprehensively critiqued and major amendments made. Mr. Ives produced a second draft, taking account of the comments made. The participants of the Global Initiative also provided information through a "self-evaluation instrument" and through a series of meetings in which they shared their experience in monitoring and evaluation. Giovanna Campello, UNODC coordinator of the Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse, included this material and then substantively revised and edited the draft.

Gautam Babbar, coordinator of the Global Youth Network, provided substantive input and editing throughout the process, which also benefited from the substantive and practical inputs of colleagues at the headquarters and field offices of the World Health Organization (WHO), joint executing agency of the Global Initiative, most notably Mwansa Nkowane, WHO coordinator of the Global Initiative, and Shekhar Saxena, coordinator of the Mental Health: Evidence and Research Unit of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of WHO in Geneva.

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1. Introduction

Key ideas

- This handbook is an introduction for practitioners who want to monitor and evaluate their prevention activities.
- Monitoring and evaluation terminology might be used differently in another context. We propose terminology that we have found helpful and are using in our work.

This handbook on monitoring and evaluating youth substance abuse prevention programmes has been prepared as part of two global prevention projects of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): the Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse (jointly implemented with the World Health Organization) and the Global Youth Network. It draws on information provided by youth groups, community-based organizations and youth workers associated with the two projects and on their experience in monitoring and evaluating their own programmes. It also makes use of the available literature in the substance abuse prevention field and related areas, such as health promotion.

All our civil society partners, who are really the authors of this publication, are listed in the annex. Their contact details are available on our online database at **http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/pdf/database.pdf.**

We have tried to make the handbook relevant to a wide range of prevention activities (for example, provision of information, awareness-raising, peer education, life skills development, promotion of alternative activities, development of vocational skills) and to various staff and volunteers working in the area of substance abuse prevention, helping them assess the effectiveness of what they do. This includes health, youth and social workers, educators and others. It will also be of use to the people who fund projects, enabling them to identify what project staff can do to monitor and evaluate their work.

This handbook is not a complete guide—the topic of monitoring and evaluation is too big for that. It is an introduction to this complex area. It can be used to build on what is already being done and to train staff. Another very important thing to keep in mind is that much has already been written about monitoring and evaluation. The definitions employed are those we have found helpful and use in our work. We hope that by providing a clear explanation of what we mean by each term and using it consistently throughout the handbook, you will be able to recognize the concept even when it is labelled differently in another context.

In chapter 2, we try to make the case for monitoring and evaluation. We felt that everyone agreed that they were important, but few applied them in practice. Thus we tried to give you specific reasons for embracing this process. In chapter 3, we discuss the differences between monitoring and evaluating and the different kinds of evaluation. Definitions ... boring, but necessary! In chapter 4, we discuss what should be monitored and evaluated. Essentially, we discuss what information should be collected when monitoring and evaluating. For example, this is where you will find a discussion of indicators.

This brings us to the next part of the handbook, which is more on “how to do” monitoring and evaluation. For example, chapter 5 is about who should be involved (staff? volunteers? participants? an external evaluator?), and chapter 6 looks at monitoring and evaluation in the context of the project cycle. This means that we explore the effect that monitoring and evaluation have on each stage of the project cycle, especially planning. This is where we discuss the planning of monitoring and evaluation activities in detail. Finally, chapter 7 looks at the collection of data, and chapter 8 at how to analyse them and report and use the information thus generated.

Our hope is that you will find this handbook useful. We would be happy to hear from you and any thoughts, comments or experiences would be really welcome.

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2. Why monitor and evaluate?

Key ideas

- Monitoring and evaluation provide feedback on our behaviour. They are something we do all the time, although it might not be a formal process (and we do not necessarily act on it).
- More formal and systematic monitoring and evaluation can give better feedback.
- Acting on the information from monitoring and evaluation is sometimes not easy, but it is worth it, because it means that we can improve our work and meet young people's needs more effectively.
- Results from monitoring and evaluating allow you to show the effectiveness of your project to your donors and stakeholders and thus secure more funding and collaboration.

Perhaps you are not very interested in monitoring and evaluation. Maybe it seems like an imposition and distant from your concerns. So let's start by showing how "monitoring" and "evaluation" (although we may not call them that) are things that we do as part of our everyday lives.

How do we know if what we do is effective? In our everyday life, we rely on feedback that results from our actions. A baby shakes a rattle and learns that by making certain movements with her hands, the rattle makes sounds that she finds pleasurable. Similarly, when she learns to crawl and to walk, she gets feedback from her body that teaches her what she can and cannot do in the physical world.

She also gets feedback from other people. As she learns to talk, adults praise her when she improves and correct her mistakes, and her ability to communicate increases. At school, her teacher gives her feedback through approval and disapproval and through marks for her schoolwork. In these ways—and many others—she learns to assess her own performance.

As she gets older, external assessment may become more formal. For example, if she decides to become a teacher, she must take examinations and undergo assessments of her learning and understanding before she is allowed to teach children. These formal assessments assure society that the work of professionals reaches a satisfactory standard. Once someone becomes a professional, they are also subject to monitoring to ensure that they maintain high standards. For example, teachers in many countries are monitored to make sure that the children are learning what they are supposed to learn.

In substance abuse prevention, there are few formal standards to be followed. So how do you know that what you are doing is any good? How can you ensure that the results you are achieving from your work match the intentions and objectives that you had when you started?

There is some resistance to monitoring and evaluation. Some people say that they do not need formal methods. They can judge for themselves whether or not things are going well. Yes, to some extent. Suppose you were running training courses for health workers to inform them about substance abuse. You could tell yourself that things were going well because the course participants attended, did not leave early and appeared to be enjoying the course. You could ask them what they thought of the course, and they would say that it was “great” and that they learned a lot.

This subjective feedback would be useful, but would it be sufficient? Probably not, because you would not know what they had actually learned and you would not know whether they had been able to put into practice what they had learned. It would also be easy for you to deceive yourself. The participants might seem to be learning and they might say to your face that they were learning (out of politeness—or fear), but if you asked them anonymously (for example, through a written, anonymous questionnaire or by using an independent evaluator), you might get different—and perhaps less positive—responses.

To know more, beyond your subjective views, you will need to collect information more formally and systematically. You will need to plan in advance how you will collect the information. You might want to go a step further and get someone external to evaluate your project for you. A participant in our meeting that discussed a draft of this handbook was talking about an external evaluation of her project and said: “These evaluators came in and they talked to kids—which is just what we do”. External evaluators might have more experience in evaluating than staff working in the project; they might have knowledge of evaluation techniques and tools.

But the main thing they have is that they are not part of your work—they are independent. This gives their evaluation objectivity and "distance", which makes it more authoritative. If you say your project is great—well you would, wouldn't you? If an outsider says it is great—then perhaps it really is!

Monitoring and evaluation require an appropriate attitude. A teacher will become a better teacher if she listens to the feedback she gets and acts on it. Some feedback may be uncomfortable for her—she will have to admit, "I didn't do that well". But if she can accept this temporary discomfort and use the feedback to improve her work, she will become better at doing what she does.

It's the same with our projects and activities. Monitoring and evaluation mean taking a critical look at what we are doing, asking difficult questions and being prepared to address problems. It's painful to accept that we did something badly, but only by facing up to "failures" (or let's call them "the times when we didn't achieve our objectives") can there be improvement. Sometimes the only way forward is to take a step back. This involves asking how things happened as they did, examining the values and methods of the project.

So monitoring and evaluation is a more formal and systematic way of doing what professionals do anyway. They reflect on what they have done and try to learn from it and do better next time. These subjective opinions and individual professional expertise can be combined with the more objective data obtained from formal monitoring and evaluation. It isn't that formal evaluation and monitoring is somehow "better" than individual opinions. It is another way of looking at things, a different kind of information. Using all the information appropriately gives a fuller account, a "richer picture", of what we are doing and its effects. The purpose is to improve what we do and make it more effective.

Monitoring allowed us to take corrective action

A good example was our monitoring of the implementation of the initial livelihood venture for youth (aged 18-24). This involved buying and selling clothes in the nearby market. Some of the youth requested a capital for this of 20,000 Philippine pesos (approximately 400 United States dollars). We asked them to make a simple business plan, open an account with the bank and set up a project management committee composed of three members (project chair, vice-chair and finance officer) to manage the venture. Upon completing all three, the funds were released. After a month, we conducted a feedback session with the project management committee and found that the finance officer had not followed what the group had agreed upon. Part of the funds had been released to three other individual members, who went into managing their own business. With this information, a consultative meeting with the youth group was called at which the finance officer was investigated. On her admission of guilt, she was asked to recover the funds from the three other individuals and was made to agree that she would be held liable to the group. Thus, with the feedback session and consultative meeting, we were able to get good information on the status of implementation of the project and were able to avert further misuse of the remaining funds of the group.

Addictus, the Philippines

Finally, another good reason to monitor and evaluate is that project funding may depend on it. Donors want evidence that money is being spent on work that gets results and sometimes evaluation might be a requirement of donors or potential donors. In addition, good evidence of success in your work is invaluable in gaining general support for what you are doing. Your work depends on support from other “stakeholders”—that is, both from people and organizations that might fund your work and people and organizations that are affected in some way by your work or whose support and involvement you need. Keeping these groups on your side is easier when you have evidence that what you are doing is having a positive impact.

3. What are monitoring and evaluation?

In this chapter, we will go through a perhaps boring, but very necessary task: defining our terminology. Virtually every agency, researcher and organization has its own definition of what monitoring is, what evaluation is, where to draw the line between the two and what the different kinds of evaluation are (the most common that you might have heard mentioned are process evaluation, outcome evaluation and cost evaluation). This section will look into these issues, proposing working definitions. Please note carefully: the definitions proposed below are those we have found helpful and use in our work. They are not, in any way, meant to be the way in which these terms are defined. Thus it is relatively more important that you familiarize yourself with the concepts, rather than with the actual terms, so as to be able to recognize them in the wild jungle of monitoring and evaluation terminology out there.

What is the difference?

Key ideas

- Monitoring means keeping track of what you are doing while you are doing it, so that you can take corrective action if necessary.
- Evaluation means finding out if you have achieved the effect on your target population that you said you would achieve, after you have finished implementing the activities.
- This distinction is not completely clear-cut, and a good evaluation will rely on good monitoring.

Think about cooking a meal. As you cook, you may check back with the cookbook to make sure you are following the recipe correctly and you will taste the food to see if it is cooked or if it needs some extra seasoning. You may also ask other people to taste it and give you their opinion. You do these things while you are cooking so that the meal is the best it can be. You are monitoring your cooking. Your monitoring can affect what the end result will be.

When you serve up your food to your family or friends, they'll be sure to comment and if it isn't very good, they will tell you so (unless they are very polite). They are evaluating your cooking. It is too late for the evaluation to have an effect on this meal, but it could improve your cooking in the future.

This analogy shows that monitoring looks at how your activity is being implemented while it is being implemented. It is something that is part of the activity: it goes on alongside it and contributes to its successful completion. Evaluation takes place at the end of the activity, when it is too late to have an effect on the final result, but it can be useful for future activities. Evaluation also assesses the effect of your activities: was your family happy with your meal? Has the situation of your target group changed as a result of your activities? See the box below for an example related to substance abuse prevention.

Monitoring and evaluation—the differences

The Highlife Project arranged interesting, exciting activities for local young people, in part to help them avoid drugs.

They monitored what they were doing by:

(a) *Having a brief staff/volunteers team meeting after each session to discuss what went well and what needed changing;*

(b) *Sometimes designating one team member to take on an observer role, when they were not too busy, and then discussing that feedback in the team meeting;*

(c) The team leader completing a short form, after each session, describing how many young people had been involved and what activities had taken place, and noting any other significant issues, especially issues raised by the team meeting;

(d) The team leader having regular managerial supervision sessions with her line manager at which any issues relating to the sessions could be raised and recorded.

There were monthly team meetings that included a discussion of the work. A detailed record ("minutes") of these meetings was made and the managers referred back to the minutes.

They evaluated what they were doing by:

(a) Asking the young participants to complete a questionnaire on whether they enjoyed the activities, what could be improved and some drug-related questions, such as how many close friends they had who regularly took drugs;

(b) Interviewing adults in the local community to ascertain any effects of the work on their community;

(c) Having a special team meeting at the end of each activity period to review what had happened and to compare the results with their objectives.

This distinction isn't entirely clear-cut for a number of reasons. Take process evaluation. Like monitoring, process evaluation looks at the things that have happened—the processes, how activities have been implemented. The difference between monitoring and process evaluation is that monitoring usually takes place while the activity is being undertaken, while process evaluation usually takes place at the end. In any case, a good evaluation is based on good monitoring. Evaluation looks at the effects of activities. However, to know why the effects of your project have been what they have been, you will still want to know what has happened during your activities and how they were implemented. If the effects were positive, this will also be useful in replicating the activities.

Different kinds of evaluation

Key ideas

- Process evaluation is about assessing what the project did and how it did it. It can be used to assess the fidelity of a project to its action plan. It is similar to monitoring, but takes place at the end of a project (like an evaluation).
- When we talk about evaluation (remember, this is only our working definition), what we really mean is outcome evaluation, evaluation that assesses the effects of a project.
- An outcome evaluation should normally include a component of process evaluation and a baseline assessment (which is not the same as a needs assessment).
- Cost evaluations are very difficult to do. However, a basic analysis of how much your programme cost is not too difficult and can be useful for advocacy.

Process evaluation

We have already mentioned process evaluation. Process evaluation describes what the project did and how it did it. It tries to find out if the project operated as intended. It doesn't try to measure outcomes, but looks at the fidelity of the programme in relation to its plan. In other words, process evaluation assesses whether a project did what it said it would do in terms of process.

Process evaluation is useful in taking stock of how a project went from the point of view of implementation. It is especially useful when you want to evaluate a project that replicates, in the same conditions, a project that has already been shown to be successful. If you followed the sequence of activities exactly, you can say, with a reasonable degree of certainty, that your project has been effective also. You can show that you followed the sequence of activities through a process evaluation. You should be careful, however. Even a tried and tested approach might not work in conditions different from the original ones. That is why an evaluation that looks at the effects of your project (or outcome evaluation, see below) is always useful.

Example of a process evaluation

The Drug Prevention Group decided that they would start a youth club, with the aim of keeping young people occupied with activities. They asked one member of their group to conduct a process evaluation. She looked at the minutes of the meeting in which the group had agreed to set up the club and saw that the plan was not only to provide typical youth-club activities, but also to have both formal and informal discussions about drugs with those attending. She observed the club activities and talked with young people and members of the group that organized the club. She couldn't find any evidence of drug-related discussions. In her report, she pointed out that the work of the club was not entirely in accordance with the plan.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

An audit is a special kind of process evaluation. It is essentially a quality assurance process that checks actions and procedures against established guidelines and standards. This presupposes that such guidelines and standards exist. For instance, you might have heard of a financial audit. This verifies that an organization follows established procedures in their financial dealings and is usually performed by specially qualified professionals. However, an audit can concern any kind of activity/procedure. See the example below.

Example of an audit

We wanted to make sure that our project was meeting the donor's standards. We carried out an audit using their guidelines. We discovered that we were not doing enough to make our project a safe place to be: the donor's standards said that there had to be a staff member with first aid training on duty at all times, but we didn't have this. Thus we made sure that our staff received first aid training.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation tries to discover what the effect of the work has been on its intended targets. When we speak about evaluation, we are generally referring to outcome evaluation. If you go back to the examples about the differences between monitoring and evaluation, you might already see what we mean. Here's another example of an outcome evaluation. Innovative work that hasn't been done before will be in greater need of an outcome evaluation than work that is tried and tested. Assessing the effects of prevention activities is not easy for many reasons, and we will take a more in-depth look at these reasons and what to do about them in the next sections. The following example actually has an important strength and an important weakness. Can you spot them?

Example of an outcome evaluation

The Drug Prevention Group wanted to see if the work it had been doing had actually made a difference. Some members suggested asking the young people they had been working with what they thought about the service. Other members pointed out that more than opinions were needed; the issue was whether people were less likely to use drugs. Others said that the questions ought to be much broader than this: it wasn't just about not using drugs but about how the young people felt about themselves, whether their relationships with their family had improved, if they had improved their life chances through finding work, undertaking study and so on. Some outcomes would be "intended", others would be "unintended". Some of these unintended outcomes would be welcome; others might not be so positive. After some discussion, everyone agreed that measuring outcomes was not a simple matter.

They decided to use a variety of different measures from different sources. They would collect information from the young people, themselves, about their opinions of the service, also asking them about any effects on their lives. They would also interview the volunteers working in the programme and "significant others"—parents, guardians, teachers, employers—to collect their views of the effects of the programme on the young people. In addition, because they were interested in broader effects, they would ask local people how they had been affected by the service and they would also ask some of their local partners (churches, the community association and so on) what they thought the outcomes of the service had been.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

In our opinion, the great thing about this example is the range of information that the group decided to collect from a range of sources. This will put them in a good position to understand what happened. However, they are missing a baseline assessment. The evaluation of the Drug Prevention Group is going to be rather weak without information on how the life of their target group was before they started to work with them. You need a starting point from which to measure progress towards the project's objectives. Without this it is difficult to answer the question "Has it made a difference?" A starting point is a baseline assessment. Such an assessment will tell you what the situation is, at or before the start of your work. Here's an example.

Example of a baseline assessment

Jadranka was setting up a new project to support young people in the local school through information and counselling. Her donors had set her some targets to achieve, for example, an increase in the students' awareness of the local substance abuse service. Before she started her work, she decided to measure the young people's awareness of the service, so she prepared a questionnaire and distributed it to a sample of the school's students. It also asked about some other things she was required to target, such as awareness of the effects of different kinds of substance. A year later, just before she wrote her annual report, she repeated the questionnaire survey and compared the results with her baseline assessment.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

Sometimes a needs assessment is conducted before a project starts. A needs assessment is different from a baseline assessment, because it is an assessment of the situation in order to decide what to do. A needs assessment identifies what the problem is, what resources already exist and where the gaps are. It identifies what needs might or should be met by a project. It should always take into consideration the results of the monitoring and evaluation of previous projects. It might be that some of the information you collect for your needs assessment could be used as your baseline, for example, how many young people of which age are abusing substances, but this is not necessarily the case.

From all of this, something very important follows. As far as possible, you need to start to evaluate your project, that is, through a baseline assessment, before you start the implementation of your activities, not after. Let's say you have decided what your project will do (your activities) and what its aim or purpose would be [your objective(s)]. Ideally, you will have decided this on the basis of a needs assessment. We certainly recommend that you do.* Then, before you begin implementation, you will need to collect the information that will become the baseline against which you will assess whether you have achieved what you wanted to achieve. Most probably you will find that you already have some of this information from the needs assessment, but that you need to collect some more to have a proper baseline. You begin implementation only after you have collected this information. We are aware that this might not always be possible and that, in fact, you might be reading these lines while in the middle of implementation and wondering "Does this mean I cannot evaluate my activities at all?" No, it does not mean this. We discuss some other possibilities in chapter 6, section D, Evaluation.

However, you should be aware of another important point. An evaluation including a baseline assessment will only tell you that there has been a change in the situation of your target group. To be able to say that this change has been due to your project, you will need to

*See United Nations, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *A Participatory Handbook for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes: a Guide for Development and Improvement* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XI.10) (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/pdf/ handbook.pdf); World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Workbook for Project Operators* (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/initiative_activities_workbook.pdf); and World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Facilitator Guide* (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/iniative_activities_facilitator_guide.pdf).

undertake more complex kinds of outcome evaluation, as we explain in the box below. Unless you are a trained researcher in social sciences, we do not recommend that you undertake such an evaluation on your own: you should enlist the assistance of an experienced evaluator. We will discuss this issue more in depth in the following chapter. We will also discuss how, even if you cannot undertake this kind of evaluation, you can still undertake a meaningful self-evaluation. For the moment, it is only important that you know that these possibilities exist.

Control groups and quasi-experimental and experimental designs

Even if you can compare the results of your post-implementation assessment with the results of your "pre-implementation assessment" (another name for a baseline assessment), you cannot state that the (hopefully) positive impact on your target group has been due to your project. This change might have been caused by something else that happened in the meantime. This "something else" is called an "intervening variable". If you want to show that change is due to your project, you need to work with two target groups that are as similar as possible to each other. One group takes part in your project and the other doesn't. This group that does not benefit from your project, but is similar to your target group, is called a "control group". You compare the results of pre- and post-evaluation assessments of your target group with those of pre- and post-evaluation assessments of the control group. The idea is that if the control group does not show any change and the target group does, you can confidently state that the change is due to your project. This way of doing an outcome evaluation with pre- and post-implementation assessments on both a target and a control group is called a "quasi-experimental design". It is quasi-experimental, because you cannot be certain that the groups are similar in all relevant characteristics. Therefore, you cannot be completely certain that there is not something in the way you chose the groups that has caused the impact, rather than your project. To avoid this possible bias, you would need an "experimental design" in which a representative sample is assigned at random to either the target or the control group.

Cost evaluation

Cost evaluation (sometimes called "cost-benefit analysis") attempts to identify the costs and benefits of a programme and compare it with the alternatives. It isn't enough for a programme to be cheap if it is ineffective; and it isn't enough for a programme to be effective if it is more expensive than a similarly effective alternative. Cost evaluation is not easy, because you need to have good information about the costs and the effects of your project and of other projects as well. These other projects should be similar enough in their objectives and targets to warrant a comparison. Moreover, it's difficult to measure all the costs and benefits of a programme—many of the costs may be hidden, many of the benefits may not be obvious, some benefits may be different from what you would expect. Finally, information on the costs and benefits of other programmes might not be that easy to obtain. However, for advocacy purposes, it might be useful, from time to time, to calculate how much your activities have cost and divide this by the number of people you have reached. This is not a "real" cost evaluation, but you might be able to show how "little" achieving your objectives cost and this might be useful for advocacy purposes.

Example of a cost evaluation

The Substance Abuse Prevention Group's youth club was quite cheap to run. It was staffed by volunteers and financed by street collections and fund-raising events. But was it good value for money? After all, there were other ways the group could have spent its money. The group decided to check this and asked a colleague to quantify the costs and benefits of the service. The colleague looked at the running costs of the club and compared them with relevant alternatives (an outreach project and a mentoring scheme). He reported that the costs of the youth club were comparatively low for the number of young people involved and that, in addition to direct support for these young people, it was a good way to recruit new volunteers. The club also had the support of the local community and had created a positive profile for the Substance Abuse Prevention Group. Whether the club was effective in its objectives was another matter; to discover this would take a more comprehensive investigation.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

4. What should be monitored and evaluated?

So far, we have looked at what we mean by monitoring and evaluation. Before we start to look into how to do monitoring and evaluation (who should be involved? and doing what?), we need to consider what should be monitored and evaluated. What is the information that we should collect? With regard to evaluation, what are the “things” in the situation of your target group that will tell you that you have had the effect you wanted to have? In other words, what are your “indicators” going to be?

Monitoring

Key ideas

- You will need to monitor implementation from three points of view: the use of your resources and the target and the quality of your activities.
- It is easier to monitor if you have a clear plan of activities to start with.
- Monitoring the quality of activities is sometimes not straightforward, but collecting feedback from the participants and staff is a good starting point.

In general you will need to monitor implementation from three points of view:

- Use of resources.
- Target of the activities.
- Quality of the activities.

With regard to the first two, you will find that it is easier to keep track of what your project is doing if you have a clear plan to start with. The plan should indicate which activities will be implemented and should include for each activity information about when it will be implemented, for how long, with what resources (human, financial and technical) and reaching how many people. It will then be easy for you to determine how to collect the following information during implementation:

- When was the activity implemented? For how long?
  Was there a significant deviation from your plan? If so, why?
- How much money and how many people did you use for this activity?
  Was there a significant deviation from your plan? If so, why?
- How many people did you reach through this activity?
  What was their age and gender?
  Was there a significant deviation from your plan?
  Did you fail to reach somebody you wanted to reach?
  Did anyone drop out? If so, why?

Monitoring the quality of activities is a bit more difficult (see two examples from the Philippines below). In the first example, Kahayag decided to use attendance as an indication of quality. However, another group, the Foundation for Adolescent Development, thought that participants might not like the activity and still attend. It is always very important to obtain feedback from the target group about the activity they participated in. No activity is going to be successful if the target group does not enjoy it or find it useful.

Attendance as an indication of quality

For us, the relatively consistent attendance of participants in an activity shows the level of interest of target beneficiaries, while good reactions and comments from the community and participants may mean that the activities implemented were accepted and agreeable. Children are the most honest and most transparent and do not fake their likes and wants. They will not go back to an activity if they experienced something bad and if they like it they will be most willing to participate again.

Kahayag, the Philippines

Usefulness of feedback

From time to time, the facilitator of substance abuse sessions conducted a one-on-one interview among the young participants. This usually happened after the session, when participants were having their snack. Based on the interviews, they really appreciated the use of the video in teaching about or discussing substance abuse. The showing of the video encouraged participants to share their thoughts and opinions on substance abuse. We collected feedback among them to know if the methodology used in conducting the sessions was effective among youth participants. It was good, because through their feedback we are now confident in continuing to use videos as a method of teaching.

Foundation for Adolescent Development, the Philippines

In this case, the Foundation for Adolescent Development in the Philippines chose a rather informal method of collecting information. Nevertheless, as we pointed out at the beginning, such subjective feedback, however useful, may not be enough and, especially in activities designed to provide information or skills to be used at a later stage, a more objective measure of how information or skills have been taken on board at the end of the activity would be very helpful. In fact, the Foundation for Adolescent Development itself decided to go a bit further, as can be seen below.

Usefulness of pre- and post-testing

The Foundation for Adolescent Development also developed a self-administered test for the youth and parent participants in substance abuse prevention and education. Youth and parents who attended the sessions completed the pre- and post-tests. These tests became more useful for us in terms of identifying the insights and learning gained by the participants. The results also told us what aspects needed improvement in conducting the session in the future.

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Finally, it is also very important to obtain feedback from the staff working on an activity on how they feel the activity went. A critical look at your activities, coupled with some specific information about who did and did not participate and why, and some feedback from those who did participate, can go a long way in telling you how well the project is progressing.

Evaluating whether you have achieved your goal of preventing substance abuse

Key ideas

- Most projects are too small (in terms of duration/intensity/coverage/number of risk and protective factors addressed) to be able to make a measurable difference in terms of substance abuse behaviour.
- Substance abuse behaviour does not change in the short term.
- Evaluating a project in terms of substance abuse behaviour to show significant results that can be attributed to the action of the project requires external expertise and is not cheap.
- Therefore, it is a choice recommended only to comprehensive programmes that have been working with good coverage and intensity for a substantial period of time.

We all work on substance abuse prevention. At least one of the aims of any given project, therefore, is to prevent substance abuse by young people. Evaluation needs to show that we have been able to do that. The problem is that this is really not easy.

Some projects are simply too small to make a difference in terms of substance abuse behaviour. They might have funding to tackle only one of the risk and protective factors that put communities and individuals at risk for substance abuse. Moreover, changes in the way people start and continue to abuse substances do not take place in the short term. Suppose you do some substance abuse prevention work with 10-year-olds. How would you know if it had been effective? You would need to look a long way into the future to see, for example, if fewer of the children, when they grew up, had substance abuse problems later on. The effect would be very hard to measure because of all the other things that might have happened to them in the meantime (as mentioned, researchers call these “intervening variables”).

Measuring change in behaviour is difficult

A year or two for a project like this is not enough to fully realize the goals. Although there were encouraging signs, we realized that trust-building alone, that is, between us and the youth, us and the adults/parents, us and the community as a whole, required the largest amount of time. It is also too short a time to determine the impact of the project, in particular on an issue as important as substance and drug abuse.

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Even if you could show that your group of 10-year-olds had turned out to be less likely to have substance abuse problems, these findings would come too late to help you in demonstrating that your substance abuse prevention work had been effective. Ten or so years later, the substance abuse problems might be very different; 10-year-old children would be different—and you would probably have moved to another job. A more measurable objective would have been better. Finally, many projects, for funding or other reasons, last for one, maybe two years. In either case, it would not be realistic to expect such projects to make a difference in terms of substance abuse behaviour, and it would be unfair to assess them by this factor alone.

Substance abuse behaviour is not something that people report on freely. There could be problems with the accuracy of people's reports concerning their own substance abuse and some methods are better than others at assessing substance abuse behaviour accurately. To be sure you are collecting information with a methodology that is appropriate, it would be worth seeking some help from people with **specific** training in this area. However, this would make for a more expensive type of evaluation.

We do not mean to say that it is impossible to measure the effect of your project in terms of substance abuse behaviour. However, for this kind of evaluation to be useful, certain conditions must be met. A project should have been or be comprehensive enough (addressing a range of relevant risk and protective factors), intensive enough, covering enough of a target group and running for long enough. Adequate funding for the evaluation should also be available in order to hire an experienced evaluator and to allow for an experimental or quasi-experimental design (what is the point of showing that your project has resulted in a change in substance abuse behaviour if the change cannot be attributed with certainty to the project?). In other words, it should be a very conscious choice, a sort of investment. However, we would not recommend this choice to many of our partners, who are probably able to work on one, maybe two risk factors, with not very high coverage or intensity, for a couple of years. A lot of evaluation effort would result in rather disappointing results.

The goal of preventing substance abuse and the indicators

If you decide that your project addresses enough risk and protective factors with enough intensity and covers enough people to show effects in terms of substance abuse behaviour, your next step is to decide what your indicators will be. Usually, for this kind of evaluation, you will have hired an outside expert and this is definitely something he or she should be helping you with. There are many different kinds of substance abuse behaviour and so there are many different things that you could measure. In part, what you measure will be determined by the substance abuse problem that you set out to tackle in the first place. Essentially, you will be looking at two main possibilities.

Age of the young people when they start using substances

The younger a person is when he or she starts to use substances, the greater the chance that he or she will develop problematic substance abuse later in life. An increase in the age at which young people start using substances is already a very good prevention result.

Number of young people who have ever used substances, and used substances in the last 30 days, and the rate of change

These are the two most widely used indicators of substance abuse. In some countries where binge drinking (drinking a large amount of alcohol on one occasion) is a problem, you might want to examine the lifetime and monthly occurrence of this particular kind of alcohol abuse.

Evaluating whether you have achieved your objectives of addressing risk and protective factors

Key ideas

- Your prevention activities will normally address a range of risk and protective factors. Changing the situation of your target group or community in terms of relevant risk and protective factors would therefore be the objective of your activities or project.
- Even if it is too difficult to demonstrate that your activities have changed substance abuse behaviour (your goal), you might be able to demonstrate that your activities have changed the situation in terms of risk and protective factors (your objective(s)).
- Beside recognizing important achievements, you could reasonably state that your activities have been able to contribute to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and substance abuse prevention.

Another way of approaching the evaluation of prevention is to "break prevention apart" and to consider the evaluation of the components of prevention rather than prevention as a whole.

What is prevention about? For us, it is about strengthening protective factors and weakening risk factors. You can read more about this in our handbook and training materials on planning.* For the moment, let's agree that in order to prevent substance abuse among young people in a community, you will normally undertake a needs assessment, which will identify the factors that put young people at risk of abusing substances and those which protect young people from this. On this basis, you will plan for a range of activities that address the relevant risk and protective factors. There are many activities that you could implement, addressing many risk and protective factors. However, you could broadly group your activities into nine categories according to which factor they address. You could have activities that:

*See United Nations, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *A Participatory Handbook for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes: a Guide for Development and Improvement* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XI.10) (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/pdf/ handbook.pdf); World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Workbook for Project Operators* (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/initiative_activities_workbook.pdf); and World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Facilitator Guide* (http://www.unodc.org/ youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/iniative_activities_facilitator_guide.pdf).

- Provide information about the health and social effects of substances (this could be done through teachers, peers, parents, youth workers, etc.).
- Strengthen personal and social skills (this could be done through teachers, peers, parents, youth workers, etc.).
- Strengthen positive personal attachments to parents, guardians and/or other adults.
- Provide shelter, education, vocational skills and job opportunities.
- Provide opportunities to spend free time in a way that is fun, constructive and challenging.
- Limit the availability of substances.
- Raise awareness of the problem of substance abuse in the community.
- Provide youth-friendly health and social services.
- Shape a community culture and youth subculture that encourage healthy lifestyles and discourage substance abuse.

As an example, imagine that you had identified one of the risk factors in your community was that, after school, students had too much unsupervised time, without much to do. Please note that in real life you would have identified more than one risk or protective factor. However, to keep the example simple, let's stick to this one. You had decided, therefore, that to prevent substance abuse you would plan activities, so that young people in your community would spend their free time in a way that was fun, challenging and constructive. You could say that to have young people in the community spend their free time in a way that was fun, challenging and constructive was the objective of your project.

As in all good projects, you plan the evaluation before starting implementation of your activities. You could try to assess whether young people in your community are no longer starting to use substances. As we have seen in the previous section, this is not easy for a number of reasons. What you could do instead is to assess how many young people spend their free time regularly and frequently in healthy activities. If you have achieved a significant increase, you could say that you are contributing to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and therefore to substance abuse prevention. You worked on the assumption that young people were starting and continuing to use substances because they had too much free time. Even if you cannot assess whether the substance abuse behaviour has changed, you can at least reasonably state that you have contributed to preventing substance abuse by changing the situation. It is not perfect, but it is an achievement and should be recognized.

Objectives and indicators

Once you have decided that you will assess whether your activities have achieved their objective(s) to change the situation in terms of risk or protective factor(s)—rather than their goal of preventing substance abuse—you will need to choose indicators for each of the objectives. That is, you will need to decide what information you will collect to show that the situation changed in the way you intended.

Sometimes people talk about “proxy indicators”. A proxy indicator “stands in for” the indicator that one really wants to examine but which is too difficult to measure. For example, say that it is too difficult to get information about the quantity of alcohol that young people drink each week, but that you know how much they spend on alcohol. You could use expenditure as a proxy indicator of their alcohol consumption. If the amount of money spent on alcohol increased (and the price remained the same), you could conclude that the level of alcohol consumption had also increased.

In the context of evaluation, because it is too difficult to estimate how many people are using substances, evaluators often measure how many people have a positive or negative attitude towards substance abuse. In other words, the number of people with a positive attitude towards using substances is often used as a proxy indicator for the number of people using substances. In that case, however, we would need to be very sure that there is a strong link between the two. We would need to be sure that people with a negative attitude towards substances either do not start, or stop, using substances. The most common proxy indicators are knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about substance abuse. The problem with using these as proxy indicators is that the link to substance abuse is not very strong. The link with knowledge is especially weak. The link to attitudes towards personal use is stronger, but it is not easy to measure.

You should be aware that what we are proposing cannot really be called “proxy indicators”, because we cannot say that any one of the risk or protective factors causes or prevents substance abuse on its own. However, as we mentioned before, achieving objectives in terms of weakening risk factors (or strengthening protective factors) is a step in the right direction, should be recognized, and can be said to contribute to the goal of preventing substance abuse.

The choice of which indicator to use will be determined, at least in part, by the amount of human, financial and technical resources that you have at your disposal to evaluate your project. For some indicators, it is easy to collect relevant information. For others, it is not. The table opposite lists some possibilities for each of the objectives mentioned above.

Monitoring and evaluating unintended effects

Key ideas

- You need to be open to information that points to results (both positive and negative) that the project did not intend to achieve.
- It is particularly important to follow up with people who have dropped out of your activities or whom you have not been able to reach. This could be key to understanding how to improve your activities.

Of course, a project may have effects that you had not expected or intended. Evaluators need to be open to the possibility that the work will result in positive or negative changes that might not have been part of the original objectives. This is also one of the reasons why it is

OBJECTIVE	POSSIBLE INDICATOR	POSSIBLE INDICATOR	POSSIBLE INDICATOR
To provide information about the health and social effects of substances	Number of youth who have accurate facts about substances, their short- or long-term effects and how much they are used	Number of youth who have negative attitudes towards substance abuse (but not substance abusers)	
To strengthen personal and social skills	Number of youth who are more able to solve problems constructively and cope with their emotions and stress	Number of youth who have more faith in their strengths and talents and use them constructively	Number of youth who feel they are making new friends
To strengthen positive personal attachments to parents, guardians and/or other adults	Fewer tensions and/or more dialogue in the families of the community	Less substance abuse in the families of the community	Number of youth who have positive attachment to adults who do not abuse substances (a teacher, a coach, etc.)
To provide shelter/education/ vocational skills/job opportunities	Number of youth whose basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) are met	Number of youth in school/vocational training/work	Number of youth who report good academic levels and positive attachment to the school environment
To provide opportunities to spend free time in a way that is fun, constructive and challenging	Number of youth who frequently and regularly spend their free time in fun, constructive and challenging activities	Number of youth who actively participate in organizing fun, constructive and challenging activities for other youth	
To limit the availability of substances	Number of youth who feel that they can get substances easily	Number of substance-free venues where young people can and do meet	
To raise awareness on the problem of substance abuse in the community	Number of people who have accurate information about substances and their effects	Number of people who remember the logos and messages of the awareness-raising activities	Number of people who request information about substances or assistance with a substance abuse problem
To provide youth-friendly health and social services	Number of youth who use health and social services	Number of youth who are satisfied with the health and social services	Quality of health and social services provided
To shape a community/youth culture that encourages healthy lifestyles and discourages substance abuse	Number of youth who identify themselves with role models promoting healthy lifestyles	Number of youth in the community who choose substance-free recreational activities and venues	Advertisement of legal substances is limited or banned

useful to mix quantitative and qualitative methodologies in the collection of information for evaluation purposes. Quantitative methodologies give you the percentages, the real numbers. However, it is in the free-flowing discussion of a well-conducted focus group or in a semi-structured interview that unexpected issues can arise. For example, a youth club might get a very positive response from local adults, who notice an improvement in the behaviour of the young people attending it in terms of criminal or semi-criminal behaviour. Obviously, since you had not intended the programme to achieve this, and you probably did not do a baseline assessment, it will be difficult to assess whether there has actually been a change. However, the available indicators may prove useful for future phases of the project or for advocacy.

Some outcomes may be less welcome. An evaluation may reveal that levels of substance abuse have dropped as a result of a prevention programme in the school. At the same time, it may also reveal that more students have been expelled from the school for reasons related to substance abuse after the prevention programme was instituted. While this is not a positive outcome, the fact that it was noted would offer an opportunity to review the programme to see that students are, as far as possible, being assisted in dealing with their substance abuse problems and not made to leave school, which is in itself a risk factor.

Finally, it is particularly important to try to find out about the people that you have not been able to reach. Suppose you had a prevention programme that started with 20 people, but at the end there were only 10 people left and they were all positive about the programme. Suppose you were able to interview the 10 who had left and found out that all 10 had suffered bad experiences with the programme. It would become more difficult to say whether the programme had been a failure (because it didn’t work for 10 people) or a success (because it worked for another 10). However, it would be very interesting to know the characteristics of the 10 people who had had bad experiences and ask them what had happened. This information would help you understand why the project had not worked for half of your target group and maybe give you some ideas on how to improve it.

5. Who should be involved in the monitoring and evaluation?

Key ideas

- Involving does not mean "collecting information from"; it means participating in taking decisions about and implementing the evaluation.

Another aspect of monitoring and evaluation is deciding who will be involved and how. By "involving", we do not mean "collecting information from", but participating in the decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of an activity (and you could monitor and evaluate your monitoring and evaluation, too). Therefore, what you need to think about is who will participate in taking decisions about and actually undertaking the monitoring and evaluation. Should the staff and young volunteers of your organization be involved? What about an external evaluator and other stakeholders in the community? This section will try to answer these questions.

Involving staff

Key ideas

- Involving staff in monitoring and evaluation is part of establishing a culture of participation, reflection and improvement in your organization.
- It is essential to support staff in their efforts to monitor and evaluate through training and supervision.

Monitoring and evaluation should not be remote from the everyday concerns of projects; in some form or another, they are part of our work. It helps to think of monitoring and evaluation as one end of a spectrum of activities. At one end of the spectrum, people simply follow orders, at the other end, they examine what they do and use their increasing understanding to develop their professional practice. To help staff to do this, organizations should establish what might be called a "culture of reflection".

Developing such a culture may not be easy. In many projects, there is a "culture of doing". This is admirable: people work hard to get things done. But sometimes "doing" can be a substitute for "reflection", "pausing for thought", "considering" and other activities that sometimes seem less important. And "doing" is not always the best use of one's time. For example:

- Maybe "wrong" or ineffective or counter-productive things are being done.
- Maybe the things being done were once the "right" things, but are now no longer appropriate.
- Maybe the things being done are fairly effective, but doing some different things would bring even better results.
- Maybe all the "doing" is preventing the young people from taking more responsibility and control for themselves.

Monitoring and evaluation are steps on the road to establishing a "culture of reflection" because they imply:

- Defining clear objectives and plans for the work.
- Being open to the work being assessed against those objectives and plans.
- Being prepared to alter what is done if evaluation shows that the objectives are not being met.

Such a culture of reflection cannot be imposed on staff: they must be involved in the process of creating it. Some workers may get upset if they are told that what they have been doing is not as good as they imagined it to be. For example, those who have been with the organization for a long time may feel uncomfortable about close scrutiny of their work. People who just want to "do good" may not welcome a more rigorous look at what they are achieving. These worries are legitimate and need to be addressed; establishing a culture of reflection needs to be approached sensitively. Here's an example.

Helping staff to reflect on what they do

Sonal had taken over the management of a substance abuse prevention team that included three workers, who had all been there for a long time, and a team of dedicated volunteers. There were the inevitable suspicions of what a new manager might do, which increased when Sonal explained that she wanted to review the team's activities and see whether they were getting results.

Sonal realized that she needed to gain the confidence and cooperation of the team and volunteers, so she arranged a special meeting where they were asked to think about the objectives of their work. After some initial resistance, they had an enjoyable brainstorming session and then prioritized their list of objectives. They discussed each of the main objectives and related them to the actual work they were doing or had planned.

Sonal then asked the group to discuss how they knew if what they were doing made a difference. This led to much discussion: some thought it was self-evident. One person said: "If we tell them about the dangers of substances, then they won't use them". Others questioned this glib view and the group's conclusion was that they really did not know how effective they were in communicating substance abuse prevention messages. Several of the group felt that what they were doing was well designed and conformed to the research evidence, but they admitted that they could not be sure it was making a difference. Some of them said that it was impossible to determine and that you just had to keep "hitting home the message". But once the doubts had been raised, others could see the problem, and the more open-minded participants were prepared to consider solutions. They went on to discuss what could be done to gather more information about the effects of their work.

Sonal felt that the meeting had been a useful start to the process of helping people recognize the need for monitoring and evaluation and to address the practical issues involved in getting those data. She was pleased that the discussions had allayed most people's fears about doing this.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

Involving young volunteers and participants

Key ideas

- Young people who participate in prevention programmes can also be involved in monitoring and evaluating the changes among their own peer or target group.
- When young people are involved, it is very important that they understand why they are involved and know what their roles are.

Young people who participate in prevention programmes should also be involved in monitoring and evaluating the changes among their group. This can become part of their personal review process. Here's what Sonal did next.

Involving young volunteers

A second key issue that Sonal wanted to address in her new managerial role was the lack of real youth participation in the work of the substance abuse prevention team. Although young people were involved as volunteers, they did not have any say in the policy of the organization and their knowledge was not used to plan programmes or to gain feedback.

Sonal made a good start by organizing a meeting of the young volunteers. She made it welcoming, with some food and drink, and they began with some "ice-breaker" activities. She had prepared for the meeting by planning it with a small group of young people. They then ran the meeting, chairing it and taking minutes. The volunteers very much welcomed this, feeling for the first time that they really mattered to the organization.

As the meeting progressed, interesting information emerged about local substance abuse issues that the team was not currently addressing and there were some good suggestions about how these might be tackled. Sonal explained that she wanted to ensure that what the substance abuse prevention team did was worthwhile, and this meant that it needed to be monitored and evaluated. The young people were eager to help with this and brainstormed about ways in which this might be done. They came up with some good suggestions, including arranging focus groups and puppet-assisted interviews with younger children to find out about their knowledge of and concerns about substances.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

As with everything regarding monitoring and evaluation, the involvement of young volunteers and participants does not happen of its own accord. It is not rocket science, but there are a few things that you need to keep in mind to ensure that young people are kept involved in a meaningful way:

- Make meetings easy for people who are not used to formal meetings by using appropriate techniques (some activities, not all talk).
- Value the contribution of volunteers and participants, that is, act on it and give feedback to them on what action was taken on the basis of their contribution and why.
- Have some of the young volunteers and participants run at least part of the monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Provide supervision and training to young volunteers and participants that you involve in monitoring and evaluation: no one is born an evaluator, and appropriate support will ensure that their efforts and input do not go to waste.

Training and supervision are important

Young people were involved in analysis of the data from the pre- and post-implementation tests. The problem was that the data were collected but not well presented, and some important information and details were not included in the report. Next time we will continue the idea of involving young people in the analysis of data, but prior to their involvement we will have an orientation session on how to do it. Close supervision by the project staff is also recommended in order to answer the questions of the young people during the data collection and analysis.

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Involving other stakeholders

Key ideas

- It is good practice to involve the main project stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation: their perspective and/or resources could help.
- You may not want to involve everyone at all stages, but representatives of key stakeholders could be involved in the decision-making process and the larger community might be informed of the progress at key stages.

"Good practice" in participatory project implementation and in substance abuse prevention promotes the involvement of a wide range of community stakeholders in the development and implementation of prevention projects. It should come as no surprise that it is recommended that they should also be involved at the monitoring and evaluation stages.

Firstly, each person will bring his or her own perspective and help to build a fuller picture of what is happening. Secondly, the fact that there has been an evaluation or the evaluation results, themselves, should not come as a surprise to stakeholders. Moreover, the fact that stakeholders at least know what kind of monitoring and evaluation is in place might contribute to reassuring them as to the value of the project and to increasing their commitment. Some of them (especially donors) may have needs that have to be taken into account. Moreover, some of them may be in a position to provide human or technical resources for your monitoring and evaluation activities or may be in a position to put you in contact with such resources.

It might not be practical (see our example below) or even advisable, to involve all stakeholders at all stages of monitoring and evaluation. If you do not have one for your project already, you may want to create a committee with representatives of key stakeholders who would be involved at key stages of the process. The larger community could be kept informed through a few meetings (for example, concerning the process, the baseline results and the final results).

Each group should have its space

To maximize time and money, different groups (including youth beneficiaries, youth organizers, support groups such as church groups, community leaders and so on) were gathered together in the same venue to evaluate the project. This resulted in a misguided flow of discussions, as different concerns were heard and were not addressed according to priority and importance in the project. The young beneficiaries were overwhelmed by the adult participants. Through the experience, it was realized that each group should have their own separate discussions so as to become more focused and effective in addressing different concerns.

Foundation for Drug Information Campaign, the Philippines

Involving an external evaluator

Key ideas

- An external evaluator lends objectivity to the findings of an evaluation and can look at a project with trained and independent eyes.
- However, an external evaluator can be costly and there still needs to be intensive follow-up to ensure that he or she has a good grasp of the situation and chooses data collection and reporting methods that meet the needs of the organization.
- An external evaluator can certainly contribute to but does not guarantee a successful evaluation.

Depending on the kind of evaluation and methods you intend to use, it might be a good idea to involve an external evaluator. An external evaluator has many advantages. The first is that he or she will have skills in conducting evaluations that you and your team may not have. The second is that, being external to the project, the evaluator will be able to look at the project with fresh eyes without being “influenced” by personal issues or by personal “investment” in parts of the project. Thirdly, as mentioned above, the results of an evaluation overseen by an external evaluator will be perceived as being more objective and will therefore have more authority when they are disseminated.

However, involving an external evaluator also has its disadvantages. Firstly, it can be very costly, especially for a small programme. Secondly, an evaluator will have his or her own point of view on what needs to be done, and this may not always coincide with the needs of the project. One way to lower the costs of involving an external evaluator is to involve a local university, giving it the opportunity to do field work. In that case, however, it will be more important than ever to maintain a close dialogue in order to harmonize the needs of the organization with the research needs of the university. Thirdly, it may be difficult for an external evaluator to get to know and thus understand the project and its people as well as someone who has worked with it.

Should you involve an external evaluator? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. You may feel that your programme has become big enough and established enough that it is time to make this investment. Alternatively, you may think that your resources are too scarce and that it would be enough for your programme itself to coordinate a smaller-scale evaluation with the staff and volunteers. Both would be very reasonable points of view, depending on the circumstances. Here are a few issues to keep in mind before you take your decision.

The fact that you cannot afford an external evaluator does not mean that you have to abandon the idea of doing an evaluation altogether. Systematic monitoring and self-evaluation can go a very long way in telling you how your programme is progressing and can suggest ways to improve. In fact, some might argue, it is the best way to go about it. Moreover, a systematic and well-presented self-evaluation can also be an effective fund-raising and advocacy tool, especially for a relatively small group, which few would expect to have the resources to undertake a larger-scale evaluation. You can do a lot without an evaluator.

Conversely, the fact that you have employed an external evaluator does not necessarily mean that impact can be attributed to your project with any degree of certainty. To obtain this, you would need a more complex kind of evaluation that would include, for example, an experimental or quasi-experimental design (see the box in chapter 3, section B, under Outcome evaluation). Admittedly, to undertake a study of this kind, you will most probably need to hire an external evaluator, unless you are an evaluator yourself. However, a pre- and post-implementation comparison undertaken by an external evaluator will look more authoritative, but will not necessarily be more informative, than pre- and post-implementation assessments undertaken by the project team.

If you decide to invest in an external evaluator, it is very important that the organization not "hand over" the evaluation entirely to him or her. Although the evaluator must remain independent and will need to follow principles of scientific rigour, the evaluation should first of all serve the purposes of the organization. You should be able to make sense of the work undertaken. You should be able to use the results of the evaluation, to learn from it and, if everything goes well, to present your work to the outside world in a clear and informative way. This means that the organization should always maintain a dialogue with the evaluator and insist that choices concerning indicators, data collection methods, samples, analysis and reports be discussed and decided upon jointly.

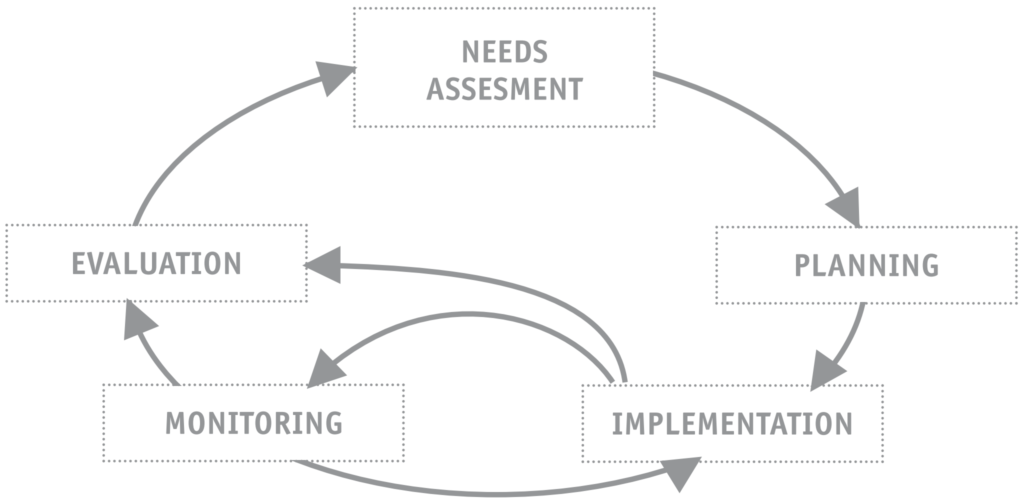
6. A framework to plan monitoring and evaluation

Key ideas

- Monitoring and evaluation should be an integral part of (and therefore affect) all stages of the project cycle.

As mentioned earlier, you need to plan your monitoring and evaluation. This section is about helping you to go about it. For the purposes of this handbook, we talk about monitoring and evaluation as if they were special kinds of activities within the project. However, monitoring and evaluation should really be an integral part of all phases of the project cycle. If you like, they should be mainstreamed into it. Here's a picture of how we see the project cycle. There exist as many descriptions of project cycles as there are organizations on Earth, each one slightly different from the other. Ours is just another approach. However, we think that the basic concepts are generally the same and that the model sketched out below will also be useful to organizations using a slightly different one.

The idea is to go through each step of the project cycle and to see how the fact that you are actually monitoring and evaluating your project will change it; in other words, how you will take monitoring and evaluation into consideration at all stages of the project cycle.



Monitoring, evaluation and project planning

Key ideas

- Monitoring and evaluating projects is much easier if you have clear and appropriate objectives and a clear plan of action.
- Preventing substance abuse would normally be your goal, while addressing different risk and protective factors would normally become your objectives.
- Your objectives should be **S.M.A.R.T.**, that is, **S**PECIFIC (clearly identify the target group and the desired change in the target group), **M**EASURABLE, **A**CHIEVABLE, **R**ELEVANT (address risk and protective factors pertaining to the particular target group) and **T**IME-BOUND.
- Your plan of action should include monitoring and evaluation as separate groups of activities.

Let's assume for the moment that your organization has already conducted a needs assessment: it has just collected and analysed information on the problem(s) of the community, the resources available and the lessons learned from previous projects of this kind and from this geographical area. In other words, your organization has at its disposal all the information to start its planning process, that is, to decide what should be done and to what end. Your planning process will be crucial for monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is about assessing whether your activities are going as intended. Therefore, if you have a clear plan of action, it will be much easier for you to monitor whether you are on the right track. Evaluating is about assessing whether you achieved what you wanted to achieve. Therefore, if you have set your objectives clearly and appropriately, it will be much easier to assess whether you have been more or less successful. We have found setting objectives one of the most difficult things to do in project management, so we will devote a bit more space to it.

Setting your objectives

It is not a good idea to set objectives that your project will not be able to achieve (because it is too small, too short, etc.). Your evaluation would show that you had not been able to achieve your objectives (which you probably knew beforehand) and you would probably not learn that much from the process (and be very disappointed).

What you might want to do is set a longer-term goal for your project. You know already that the project will not be able to achieve it, but you also know that your project will be a step in the right direction. In the case of a small organization doing substance abuse prevention, this will often mean stating that preventing substance abuse is your goal, not your objective. Your project is too small to prevent substance abuse on its own, but it is a step in that direction. This will leave you free to set objectives that are achievable during the life of the project. As we discussed before, you can think of substance abuse prevention as a group of activities addressing different risk and protective factors. Therefore, you could think of your objectives as changing the situation of your target group or community in terms of different risk and protective factors.

It would also be a good idea to set your objectives so that they are **S.M.A.R.T.**, that means, **S**PECIFIC, **M**EASURABLE, **A**CHIEVABLE, **R**ELEVANT and **T**IME-BOUND. If you have set your objectives according to the discussion above, you should already be in a good position. In fact, you would have chosen objectives that are **A**CHIEVABLE by the end of the project (that's the **T**IME BOUNDARY)!

If you are serious about setting objectives that are **A**CHIEVABLE and **T**IME-BOUND, this will also have a consequence. Depending on your budget and time frame, you might have very few objectives, maybe only one. Very often, in setting objectives, we succumb to the "I want to save the entire world" syndrome and set a long list of objectives that are more an expression of what we "would like to" achieve, than what we "will be able to" achieve. Although they might not look impressive, remember that, in the long run, by setting only objectives that will be within the reach of the project, your project and organization will gain in credibility, during both the planning and the evaluation stages.

An objective that is **R**ELEVANT contributes to the overall mission or goal of a team. In our case, as we are implementing substance abuse prevention projects, this means contributing to the goal of substance abuse prevention. As we said, prevention is about addressing the risk and protective factors of a target group or community. There is usually more than one risk and protective factor that needs to be addressed, and the risk and protective factors that are relevant for one target group or community are not necessarily relevant for another. Therefore, to repeat, for an objective to be **R**ELEVANT in our context, it should be an objective that contributes to substance abuse prevention. It might be a silly example, but although treating drug addicts is a laudable objective and is necessary, it is not a substance abuse prevention objective. The second criterion for **R**ELEVANCE, in our context, is that the activity should address the risk and protective factors that are relevant to the particular community or target group. If your target group is street children and they are sniffing glue because they are cold and hungry, and you have to choose one objective, providing them with information about the dangers of substances is not the most **R**ELEVANT one. Providing them with shelter and food would be a more **R**ELEVANT objective, because that is their primary risk factor. In reality, in each community or target group, the initiation of substance abuse is bound to be caused by more than one factor, and each objective in a prevention project should address one risk or protective factor.

We have the A (**A**CHIEVABLE), the T (**T**IME-BOUND) and the R (**R**ELEVANT) ... we are missing the S. Your objectives should be **SPECIFIC**, that is, they should define the target group in specific terms (for example, including the age of your target group members) and the change that you want to see in the life of the target group by the end of the project.

Finally, you will want to make your objectives **M**EASURABLE. If you have taken care that your objectives are **A**CHIEVABLE, **T**IME-BOUND and **S**PECIFIC, you will have done most of the work already. It might be difficult at this stage to express an objective in a way that is measurable right at the beginning. However, it is something you might want to come back to once you have thought through your activities, how you will monitor them, how you will evaluate them and therefore how you will assess whether you have achieved your objectives or not.

An example of setting objectives and making them S.M.A.R.T.

Juana and Maria undertook a needs assessment to identify the risk and protective factors that needed to be addressed and the resources they had at their disposal. They identified three risk factors: young people had too much idle time on their hands, they had too easy access to alcohol and parents did not have any idea how to talk to their children about substance abuse.

*Juana had good contacts with the parish and Maria was a teacher and very active in the parent-teacher association. They were both parents themselves, so they decided that, to start with, it would be good to do something about parents having information and the ability to talk with their children about substance abuse.They knew that it was **R**ELEVANT, because it was based on their needs assessment and addressed a recognized risk factor.*

*They needed to make it **S**PECIFIC. Who would be their target group? The parents of the community. Would this be **A**CHIEVABLE? Well, that would depend on how long they could work and with how much money. They had no funds, however, and though they could organize some activities themselves, they knew they needed to demonstrate that they were able to achieve something soon so they could raise additional funds. They decided to target parents of 12 to 14-year-olds in the parish they belonged to (the most critical age in their community) and to accomplish their objective within two years. That made the objective **A**CHIEVABLE, **S**PECIFIC and **T**IME-BOUND in one go.*

*Was it **M**EASURABLE? Well, if they managed to reach all the parents in that category, they could easily measure whether the parents they had reached had learned something about substance abuse. It would have been enough to do a short quiz before and after the* *seminars they intended to organize. How would they measure whether parents had improved their communication with their children about substance abuse? They felt that it would be difficult to measure this through a written questionnaire. However, they could get together with a few of the parents before and after the sessions to discuss the issue and see if they had made any progress and why. They concluded that this was indeed a **M**EASURABLE objective.*

So this became their objective: "The parents of 12 to 14-year-olds in our parish will have better knowledge about substance abuse and will be more able to talk about substance abuse with their children".

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

The plan of action

In setting your objectives, you will probably already have in mind what you want to do to achieve them, that is, you will already have an idea of what your activities will be. However, if you systematize your idea of what the activities will be into a proper plan of action, you will find it helpful on a number of counts. A plan of action normally lists activities in chronological order against the objective they will help achieve. Moreover, for each activity, the plan will indicate when it will happen and for how long, who will be in charge of the activity, who will be involved in its implementation and what they will do. There will be an indication of what will be needed to implement the activity, in terms of materials and/or funds. Finally, the plan will indicate how many people will be targeted, of which age and gender, and the relevant socio-economic characteristics.

A plan of action is useful in itself because it makes it easier to present the way the project intends to reach its objectives to stakeholders and prospective donors. Moreover, later on, while you are implementing your activities, it will be easier to monitor them, because you will have a clear picture against which to judge what is happening in the reality of your project. A good plan will go a long way towards making your monitoring smoother.

Some project formats require that you identify intermediate elements between your objectives (the change that you hope to see in your target group) and your activities (what you are going to do to make that change happen). These elements are sometimes called "outputs", "benchmarks" or "outcomes". Many organizations even call them "objectives", but in a more specific sense than the objectives we have discussed above. In general, they indicate something specific that the project must produce in order to achieve the objectives. For example, let's say your objective is to give the teachers of our school more accurate information about substance abuse. You would have two outputs, the training materials and the training workshops that you need in order to achieve this objective. To deliver those outputs, you would have a series of activities. For example, to deliver the output "training materials", you would have "draft training materials"; "send training materials to technical committee for review"; "finalize training materials"; and "edit, design and print training materials".

Whether your organization works with outputs, benchmarks and outcomes or not, it does not change the overall picture. These are the products of your activities. In our soup example in chapter 3, “What are monitoring and evaluation?”, cooking was the activity and checking while you were cooking was the monitoring. The product of the activity was the soup, which was also your output, and that makes people happy (or not), which would be the evaluation. Assessing whether outputs have been delivered or not is thus part of monitoring and process evaluation, and not of impact evaluation.

Planning your monitoring and evaluation

Key ideas

- To plan your monitoring, you will need to think “who”, “when” and “how” as regards *(a)* keeping track of the participants and the quality of each activity, and *(b)* analysing the results and feeding them back into the project.
- To plan your evaluation, it is essential to identify your evaluation needs and resources and to decide what kind of evaluation you want.
- Following this, it is necessary to identify what information you will collect in order to determine whether you have achieved your objectives (indicators) and how you will collect and analyse that data.
- An evaluation plan would include the information above, plus an indication of who would be collecting and analysing the data, how, when and with what resources.

What we have seen so far is that to make monitoring and evaluation easier, it helps to first have clear objectives and plans of action. Now that you have these, you can turn to the task of actually planning your monitoring and evaluation.

Planning your monitoring

With regard to monitoring, things will be relatively straightforward. For each activity or group of activities, you will need to think who, when and how in relation to:

- Keeping track of who participates in the activities (number, age, gender).
- Keeping track of the quality of activities, including feedback of participants.
- Analysing the information at regular intervals.
- Feeding the results of that analysis back into the project at regular intervals.

We suggest that you go systematically through all your activities. Most of this information is not difficult to collect. In fact, at the planning stage, it is difficult to resist the temptation to list too much information. It may sound obvious, but if you do not use it, information is useless. Remember that you will need to collect it, analyse it and feed it back into the project regularly. Stick to the information that you and your staff can realistically collect, and try to identify the easiest way to do so. Moreover, the information must be of such a nature that you can analyse it and feed it back to the project regularly. In our experience, the most difficult part is often to analyse it regularly and use it. We would also suggest that you plan, at some point in your project, to sit down and "evaluate your monitoring". That is, sit down and think about how your monitoring is going, whether the information is being collected, analysed and used at all and what could be done to improve the process.

Planning your evaluation

As you can imagine, planning the evaluation of your project will be rather more elaborate, but by now, we hope, not an insurmountable obstacle. You have your objectives, so you know what achievements you need to demonstrate. Once again, divide the planning of your evaluation into a sequence of smaller decisions. We know that reality will be different, and that your decision-making process will probably be all connected. However, we hope that it will help clarify ideas if we divide things up a little.

Decide who will be involved in the decision-making process

You will need to decide who will be involved in the decision-making process. A small working group of representatives of staff, young volunteers, young participants and other stakeholders might be a good idea in order to ensure that the views of everyone are taken into account.

Decide what kind of evaluation you will undertake

The kind of evaluation you want to undertake will depend mostly on what you need your evaluation for and the resources you have available. If you go back to chapter 3, "What are monitoring and evaluation?", you will have a more detailed description of the possibilities available to you. In the meantime, here are a few examples:

- Maybe the project is implementing a model that has been extensively evaluated before. A process evaluation showing that your project has been faithful to the model may be enough.
- Maybe you want your project to become a model for others. Or you would like to show with certainty that the effects on your target group have been due to your project and not to other factors. If so, you will need an outcome evaluation with an experimental or quasi-experimental design and, therefore, an external evaluator to assist you and perhaps an external data-collection team.
- If your evaluation needs are "only" to learn how your project is working and how to improve it, the best choice would be a process evaluation (what happened?),

together with a simple outcome evaluation (what was its effect?). In this context, you would need baseline (pre-implementation) and post-implementation assessments. We would caution against having only a post-implementation assessment. On the basis of a post-implementation assessment only, you cannot effectively show that there has been a change.

- Maybe your donor requests an evaluation following a specific format and methodology, in which case some of these decisions will be made for you. However, you may still want to think if there are other needs of the project that can be met (other than keeping your donor happy).

Whatever your needs are and whatever it is you would like to do to meet them, you will need to balance them with the resources available. Time and money are needed to conduct an evaluation. Simple evaluations might not cost very much or require expert knowledge (and we hope that this handbook will provide enough information to enable simple evaluations to be undertaken). For more sophisticated evaluations, however, expert help may be needed—for example, from a local university. It might be useful to talk to people in other projects who have carried out evaluations. Ensure that there are sufficient resources: a thorough evaluation is not cheap—around 5 per cent of a project's budget may be needed for evaluation. The *All Stars Talent Show Network* in the United States of America contracted an external evaluation costing US$60,000. This seems like a lot of money until you discover that this is a big programme: their annual running costs are US$400,000; that is the evaluation represented 5 per cent of the budget for three years and the work had been going on for 19 years before the external evaluation was undertaken.

Develop your evaluation methodology

Once you have an idea of the purpose, type and resources of your evaluation, you are in a good position to develop your methodology. This may sound scary, and if you have decided to involve an external evaluator, this is definitely a good time for him or her to start helping you. However, it really does not need to be: essentially you just need to decide what information you will collect, how and from and about whom.

This is the stage where you identify what your indicators will be, as discussed in chapter 4, "What should be monitored and evaluated?". Basically, you will have a list of information that you want to collect for each objective, at least before and after implementation, so that you have an idea of whether there has been some change. For each of these pieces of information, you will need to identify how you will collect the information (methods) and who you will collect the information from or about (samples). Very often, you will not be able to collect the information you need from every single person in your target group. You will need to choose a part of it, or a "sample". In the next chapter, we will summarize what kind of methods and samples are available to you. In the meantime, here are a few general points to help you choose the right ones.

Firstly, remember that not all information has to be collected anew: some information may already exist. Or maybe during your needs assessment you have already gathered information that can serve as a baseline.

It is advisable to collect a few different indicators through different methods and from different sources and samples for each objective. The reasons for this are:

- If information is confirmed in different ways from different sources, at the end you will be able to compare the information and thus confirm your results. This process is called "triangulation".
- There is always the possibility that one of the methods of collecting information will not work. It is better to be able to count on more than one.
- You may need different kinds of information to satisfy different needs, either yours or those of important stakeholders. For example, a local authority may be willing to lend you support only if you can show that the programme or activity has a positive effect in terms of his or her own mission. Given that you will use your evaluation results for advocacy or fund-raising, maybe you can already start to think about which type of information will be more impressive to your future audience.
- Finally, different methods will produce different kinds of information, which can in turn be used for different purposes. Methods that generate quantitative data, that is, numbers, are good for presenting your project to advantage. Numbers impress. Methods that generate qualitative data are very helpful in understanding what has happened and why and thus are useful in suggesting how the project can improve. Some kinds of qualitative data, for example personal histories, can also be a powerful advocacy tool.

At the same time, it is important not to choose too many questions. There are many things that it would be interesting to know, but which do you really need to know? Remember that, to know these things, you will need to collect information and analyse it. Do you have the time? Do you have the resources? Are you trying to cover too much ground? Is there a resource you have not thought of before that could help you cover that extra idea?

Develop your evaluation plan

You have thought about your indicators, your methods and your samples. You can now develop your evaluation plan, that is, identify who will do what, when and with which resources. Ideally, therefore, you will go through each of the indicators, methods and samples and identify:

- Who will coordinate and be responsible for the collection and analysis of the information?
- Who will actually collect the data? How? When? With which resources?
- Who will analyse the data? How? When? With which resources?
- How will the information be used? When? With which resources?

Monitoring, evaluation and project implementation

Key ideas

- Make every effort to use the information collected through the baseline assessment and through monitoring. Although it can be used later, it is really meant to help you with implementation.
- Every now and then, review how the monitoring and evaluation are going. Be flexible, but try not to compromise the comparability of information.

After all this planning it is time to actually do something! From now on, it will hopefully be your plan that will guide you. Normally, before implementation starts, you will need to do some data collection for the baseline assessment. Once implementation starts, monitoring should also start.

Make a point of analysing the monitoring data and reporting on them regularly. It is true that if you collect data and do not use them during implementation, they can always be used at a later stage, during a process evaluation, for example. However, the purpose of monitoring is above all to help you with implementation and it provides a good opportunity for corrective action. It is difficult to advise how often "regularly" means, but common sense will help. It should be as often as possible, but with enough time between monitoring for the new information to be meaningful. Also, reporting does not need to be a "grand" affair: a discussion point in a weekly or monthly meeting or a chat with your staff and volunteers may be enough.

Do not forget the results from your baseline assessment! It is true that by the time you get the results from it you will have started your activities, it would be a good idea to set aside some time to review them to see whether any plans should be changed accordingly (especially evaluation plans) or whether the information gained can be used for further advocacy or fund-raising purposes.

Even if you have planned, and re-planned, and thought, and re-thought, about how you will collect and analyse your information, something is bound to go wrong. This was one of the reasons why we suggested that you collect different kinds of information. This is also one of the reasons why it is a good idea to review the monitoring process at regular intervals and consider how to take corrective action. The issue is to find a balance between being flexible and being too flexible. If the data collection or the analysis is not working, there is no point sticking to the plan for the sake of sticking to it. However, particularly with regard to evaluation information, there must be a certain consistency or you will not be able to compare information or draw any conclusion on the impact of your activities.

Evaluation

Key ideas

- Evaluation should have started with the baseline assessment. However, even if you did not have the time or the opportunity to undertake that assessment, a process of reflection on the achievements of a project is always possible and useful, especially if you have good information from monitoring.

- The process of both monitoring and evaluating can basically be divided into three main steps: collecting the data, analysing them and reporting and using the information. Analysing collected data does not happen by itself and can actually be resource-intensive. Collecting and analysing data is useless if the information thus generated is not reported and used.

By now, it should be clear that evaluation does not really start only after implementation, but that you will have already collected information during the baseline assessment. What if you have not done that assessment or collected information during implementation? Perhaps you did not think about evaluation at the planning stage. Very often there are limited time and resources to undertake evaluation. There may not be much opportunity to collect data and an evaluation may have to use what is available. Thus an actual evaluation may be far from “ideal”. But most projects have a wealth of information readily available that can be used for evaluation. Maybe no one has thought to use it for evaluation purposes. This applies in particular to monitoring data.

For example, a manager may be keeping track of what is happening with a group of young people and may record this information: how many young people attend each session; how many boys and how many girls; what was on the programme each week; what the response was. The manager’s purpose in collecting such information may be to monitor the project and to ensure that it is doing what it is expected to do. However, together with some data collection at the end of the project about how the lives of these young people have changed, and maybe some extra effort to find those who dropped out of the project, this information could already provide a good understanding of whether the project is being effective and why.

This is not to say that a baseline assessment is not necessary after all. A baseline assessment is much more effective in helping you build a more rigorous and complete picture of what your project has done; indeed, some donors require that you undertake one. However, it is important to remember, especially if you have collected good monitoring information, that a process of reflection on the achievements of a project is always possible and useful, even if you did not undertake a baseline assessment.

In general terms, you can divide the process of both monitoring and evaluating into three main steps: collecting the data, analysing them and reporting and using the information. We have decided to separate the phase of collecting data from that of analysis in order to draw attention to the fact that analysis is a phase that actually requires considerable resources and does not come automatically once the data have been collected.

Finally, collecting and analysing all this information is of little purpose unless it is used. This means reporting to workers, volunteers and donors and may include the children and young people who benefit from the project. Results will need to be presented in different forms appropriate to each audience—while the donors may want a full account of everything that was discovered, the project workers and volunteers will want the report to focus on what they have done well and what could be done better. The children and young people involved will probably want a simpler description of the work. We present some suggestions regarding these three phases in the next three sections.

Monitoring, evaluation and a new project cycle

Key ideas

- Monitoring and evaluation should lead to change and should be taken into account in the planning stage of new activities.

Evaluations are not of much use unless they lead to change. Having identified the lessons, how can they be applied in practice in this project or in others? There will be lessons for the evaluators as well. Using what has been learned can improve what happens next, both in projects and in their evaluations. We will not actually go into this stage in much detail, because this would lead into a new planning stage. However, no discussion about monitoring and evaluation would be complete without stressing that it is important that the circle be closed, using the monitoring and evaluation results to improve our activities.

Example of an organization that made key decisions on the project on the basis of the monitoring and evaluation results

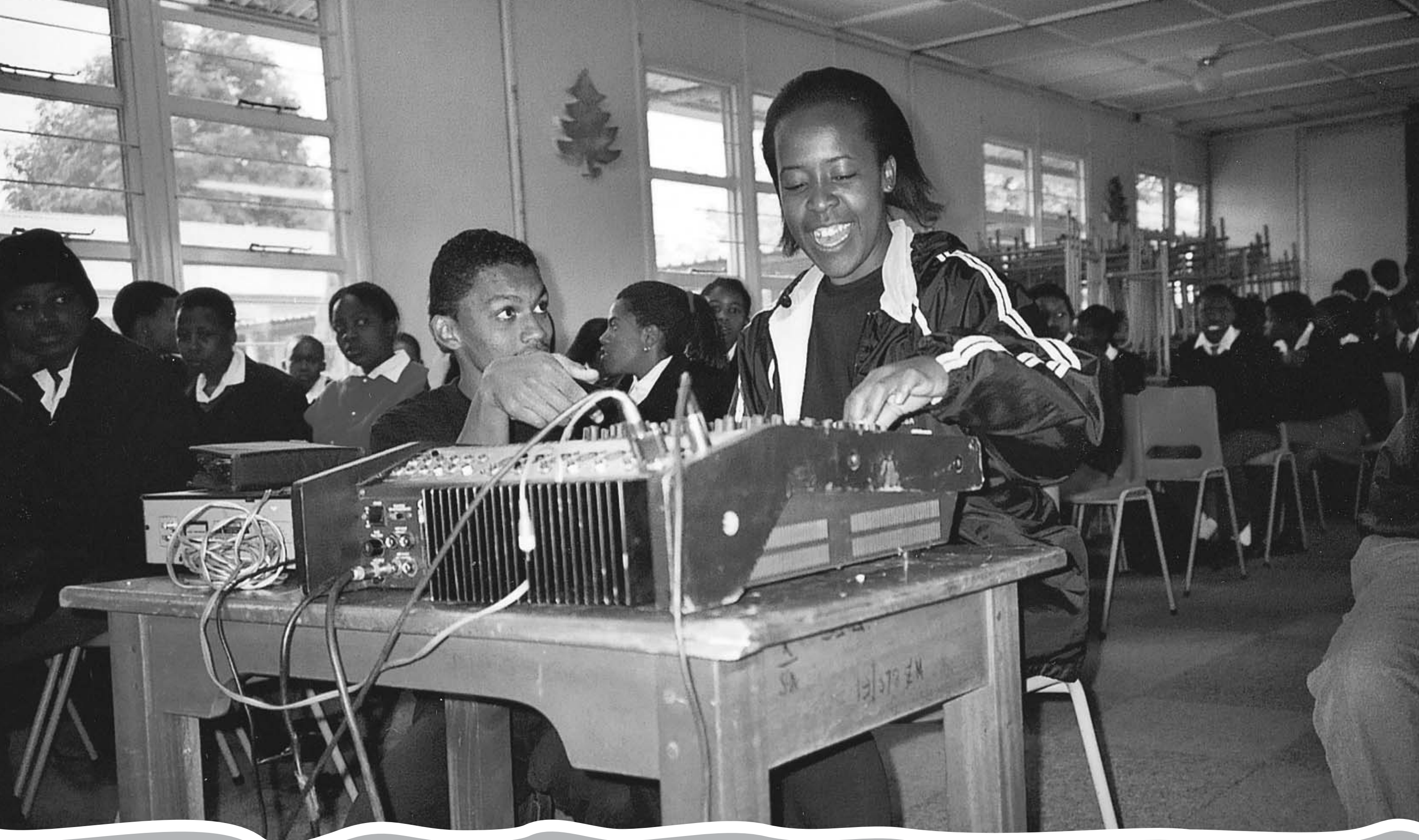
The drug abuse prevention project decided that it would produce some publicity material on drugs for schoolchildren. The objective was to increase children's awareness of drugs and to facilitate child-adult conversations about drug issues. The activities planned/interventions were a poster campaign in schools, a leaflet for teenagers and a leaflet for parents.

In monitoring this work, the project kept track of the schools to which they had sent the posters—one of the administrative volunteers called the schools and checked that they had received the posters and were going to display them. She made sure that the volunteers who were asked to distribute the leaflets actually did so and she kept a list of where they had gone. She also checked that the leaflet for parents was available in the targeted schools.

Once the campaign had finished, it was time to evaluate it. Members of the project talked to children and teachers in some of the targeted schools. They found that a large proportion of the children had seen the leaflet and claimed to have read it, although when asked about the content, most were rather vague. Teachers in the schools were enthusiastic about the campaign and said that it had helped them discuss drug issues more easily. Project staff interviewed a few parents, not enough to be a "representative sample", but sufficient to get an idea of the effect of the campaign. Parents liked the leaflet, but had not used it to initiate conversations with their children.

The project members concluded that something more than a leaflet was needed to get parents and children talking. The evaluation had identified that parents felt able to talk with their children about drugs when the issue came up in a television programme (such as a "soap opera"). The project members started to plan the next stage of their work by thinking how they could use such "drug events" on television to encourage parent-child communication.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.



7. Collecting the information

The purpose of this chapter is to show you the main things to keep in mind when collecting your information (safety, confidentiality and clarity) and the possible methods you can choose from when collecting information. Most methods can actually be used to collect information for both monitoring and evaluation purposes. However, there is a separate section with tips on how to keep records, which is the backbone of monitoring.

General points

Key ideas

- Ensure the personal safety of those collecting and giving information by anticipating and avoiding dangerous situations.
- Ensure that confidentiality is always respected, with the exception of what the law dictates and in cases where someone might suffer harm.
- Establish procedures to ensure the confidentiality of information and make sure that your staff understand their importance and follow them.
- Inform your respondents how the information they provide will be used and how their confidentiality will be respected. Respect the wishes of your respondents.
- Do not ask leading questions or questions that mix different subject matters, that are unnecessarily personal or invasive or that raise expectations.

Safety first

Most of you work with communities and people you know well. Therefore, you might not think in terms of ensuring the safety of those who collect or provide information. However, it is always important to ensure the personal safety of those collecting and giving information by anticipating and avoiding dangerous situations. The very nature of prevention work may mean operating in communities and neighbourhoods in which violence is a possibility. When you believe that the evaluation may place someone in a risky situation, such as a violent neighbourhood, or contact with potentially dangerous people, seek guidance from reliable persons in the community. Moreover, picking the right (safe) setting is an important way to build a sense of trust and safety. For example, conducting group sessions in a public setting may discourage open discussion because of the sensitivity of the issue.

You need a safe place to collect good information

Poor information was usually collected when outreach activities were conducted near drinking places, because drunken people would come and disrupt them, threatening to injure or destroy equipment, and this usually led to the abandonment of the activities.

Family Health Trust, Zambia

Confidentiality

Monitoring and evaluation require the collection of information, including information about individuals, their behaviour, their opinions, their thoughts and feelings. Some of this information is sensitive and respondents will want reassurance that their identities will not be revealed without their permission and that the information they have provided will remain confidential.

Meeting those expectations is essential to ensuring that they and others will cooperate with research and evaluation in the future. It is also the ethical approach. A further reason to respect confidentiality is that many States have laws about how confidential information is collected and stored and under what conditions it can and should be released. There are usually special regulations about obtaining and using information from or about young people and certainly about substance abuse. This handbook cannot give details of the situation in all countries in the world, but do make sure that you are aware of any relevant legislation in your country.

Besides laws, your organization should have rules about the way such information is stored and how it is used. Make sure that you follow these rules. Ensure that staff and volunteers recognize the importance of maintaining confidentiality, not just for bureaucratic considerations, but also out of respect for the individuals who have provided the information. In general you will need to develop procedures:

- To make records anonymous.
- To store data securely.
- To control who is allowed access to which data, including procedures to control access to sensitive material stored on computers (passwords, rules about copying data, etc.).

Making records anonymous

We made sure that the only people who knew respondents' names were the people who interviewed them. This information was not written on the interview sheet.

This example is invented, but is based on actual practice.

Explain to the people from whom you collect information that you will protect their confidentiality. In general, it is good practice to ask people to sign a consent form. In signing a consent form, your respondents tell you in writing that you can use the information they are going to give you for a certain purpose. Therefore, a consent form will explain the purpose of the evaluation, who is doing it and how the results will be used. The consent form can also indicate that respondents can opt out of answering questions they are uncomfortable with or can stop the interview or questioning. When you are collecting information from young children, you may need to obtain their parents' consent.

If you plan to use the information you collect in a form that will identify respondents as individuals (for example, by using their pictures or their stories) or if you are passing the information on to other organizations, ask respondents to sign a release form permitting you to use their photographic image or information about them in specified ways. This may be necessary in situations in which the sample is very small or if there is a good reason to identify someone—perhaps because they occupy a special position. Respect the wishes of the people from whom data are collected. Remember that the trust they have placed in your organization, once shaken, will be difficult to re-establish.

When writing reports that use data collected from individuals, be sure that no individual can be recognized from the descriptions you give. This may involve altering certain facts to disguise a person's identity. Be particularly careful when the sample size is small or when respondents come from a small area or are known to each other. On the other hand, if you do make changes to protect the identity of respondents, they should be limited to issues not directly connected with the conclusions that you are drawing, and it should be stated that changes have been made to the data.

Ensure that those analysing the data understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality and seek to do so. It may be useful to code answers with numbers and keep the names in a very secure place. Any data collected should be disposed of securely (by shredding, for example, as opposed to throwing into a bin) after they have been used for the intended purpose. If data are stored on a computer system, ensure that all traces are removed when files are deleted.

There may be extreme cases where confidentiality must be broken, for example, in situations where evidence of wrongdoing or criminal activities is uncovered through your work. In some countries there is a legal duty to report certain suspicions. Ensure that you comply with the laws of your country and the duties of your profession.

Clarity and respect

To maximize your chances of obtaining useful information, it is important to ask questions that are clear and respectful. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Do not ask leading questions. For example, asking “Do you agree that the youth team is doing a good job?” invites a “yes” answer and does not tell you much. Instead, ask questions neutrally, for example “How would you rate the work of the youth team, is it: very good, good, not sure, poor, very poor?”
- Ask about one thing at a time. For example, in asking “How do you feel about the project and the people running it?”, you might get an answer to one part of the question or the other, or an answer that mixes the two. Moreover, instead of asking “How do you feel about the project?” you might want to be a bit more **specific** and ask about a part of the project. For example, “How do you feel about this particular activity of the project?”
- Do not ask unnecessarily personal or invasive questions, for example “How many pregnancies have you had?” This is a very personal question and could cause distress, so ask such questions only when they are really necessary to the evaluation.
- Do not raise expectations that you cannot meet, for example asking “Would you like a new youth centre?”, when there is no prospect of getting one. Always make the actual situation clear, for example “We are thinking about expanding our activities. Of course, we do not know whether it will be possible, because we would need to raise the funds, but if you had to express a wish ...” or something like this.

Collecting monitoring information

Key ideas

- The backbone of monitoring is keeping a record of information when and as activities occur and asking participants for their feedback.
- If you are using a form, keep it simple, test it and find a way to encourage participants to actually use it.
- Sometimes you can devise ways for your young participants to create records by themselves or you can obtain information on staff feedback forms or minutes of meetings.

Working with young people has many different aspects. In just one session the roles undertaken by workers and volunteers may include group worker, teacher, confidant, counsellor and many more. To these roles we should add record-keeper.

Monitoring is about keeping track of how a project is being implemented, and the best way to keep track of something is to record what is happening as it is happening—in other words, to keep records of what is happening. Keeping records is the backbone of good monitoring. There are two types of record. Some records focus on individuals or groups of young people. These need to be kept confidential. Other records focus on the achievements of the project. They include reports of events and may contain photographs and video recordings as well as written records. Both types are useful in monitoring the work of the project and, later on, in evaluating it. In general, whenever possible, feedback should be requested from participants as to their thoughts and feelings about the activities they participated in.

To be useful in monitoring and evaluation, records need to be sufficiently detailed. For example, if an objective is to work with 10 at-risk youth and increase their self-esteem, then the records might indicate: how many young people you have worked with; something about the characteristics of those young people (including age, sex, whether they went to school or not and whether they lived with their family or not), how many times you have worked with them, for how long and doing what; and any changes that have been observed in their behaviour.

You could then compare these records with the objective, note your progress towards it and make any necessary changes to the work. In an evaluation, the evaluator may test the veracity of the record by talking with the young people involved and seeing if their account of the work tallies with the record.

At the same time you need to keep your records simple, covering only the information you really need. If a record takes too long to fill in, it will probably contain superfluous information. Recording needs to be made easy by using well-designed forms. It might be a good idea to design a form, test it for a while and then revise it. Even in the case of concise and well-designed record-keeping forms, workers and volunteers may need help and encouragement to keep records. Many workers with young people are less interested in writing than in doing the work. Time needs to be allocated for creating records and management needs to give encouragement to their staff to complete them. Records should be stored so that others with access rights to them can use them effectively.

Young participants can create their own records. A simple example is maintaining records of who attends a youth club. If young people sign themselves in, this automatically creates a record of attendance. All that needs to be done is to reach a total at the end of the session. Young people could record some additional data about themselves on the sign-in sheet (age and sex, for example). This would make this record even more useful for monitoring purposes. Encouraging young people to reflect on their experiences through writing, photography or some other medium can also create a record that can be used for monitoring purposes.

Records should be factually accurate and avoid reporting gossip or hearsay, although feelings and hunches may form part of some records. For example, perhaps you notice that a young person is depressed and withdrawn and you feel that he or she might have been the victim of some kind of abuse. In your role as a counsellor, it would be acceptable to record this feeling or hunch so that effective action could be taken if similar symptoms persisted. Confidential records must be securely stored, and everyone needs to understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

Other examples of monitoring include notes of meetings and staff feedback books. These can be rich sources of data for evaluation, recording key decisions and when they were made and sometimes identifying difficult issues that were the subject of discussion. Meeting notes will also record who was present and thus help identify the “key players” in a project. Some projects keep staff feedback books. For example, at the end of a youth work session, staff may write down some key points about how it went, ideas for future sessions and any concerns they may have about the work or even about individuals. Young people’s views may also be recorded, sometimes by the young people themselves.

Finally, you will need to keep accurate financial records. This is not as difficult as it sounds, but it is also an area in which you need the help of someone with experience, to be sure that you respond to your legal requirements and to the requirements of your donors. Financial records are particularly important if you intend to conduct a cost evaluation.

Collecting evaluation information

Data collection methods for monitoring and evaluation purposes do not differ significantly from the methods that you would use to undertake a needs assessment. The methods you can choose from, their pros and cons, and what needs to be done have been described many times in many other publications, including our handbook and training materials on planning.* The table opposite describes collection methods.

Sampling

If methods are about deciding how to collect the necessary information, sampling is about deciding who you will collect the necessary information from. In an ideal world, you would be able to collect information from or about your entire target group. However, in reality this is seldom possible. If you cannot obtain information from your entire target group, for example, because it is too large, you will need to obtain information from only a part of it. This is called a “sample”. The different kinds of samples used by researchers are discussed below.

*See United Nations, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *A Participatory Handbook for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes: a Guide for Development and Improvement* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XI.10) (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/pdf/ handbook.pdf); World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Workbook for Project Operators* (http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/initiative_activities_workbook.pdf); and World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Facilitator Guide* (http://www.unodc.org/ youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/iniative_activities_facilitator_guide.pdf).

Data collection methods

NAME	SHORT DESCRIPTION
(Self-administered) questionnaire	A questionnaire offers respondents a list of questions to answer in writing.
Interview	In an interview, someone asks questions of individuals and records their answers.
Snapshot survey	This is a series of interviews that collect relatively simple data over a short timescale.
Case study	Case studies involve collecting detailed information about a few individuals or situations by talking in depth with a few respondents and writing about their experiences.
Focus-group discussion	A focus-group discussion is a group interview. A group of respondents are asked about their experiences and opinions. Focus-group members may or may not know each other already.
Observed discussion group	A group is given a topic to discuss and the observer records relevant points. This method lies between the more structured focus-group discussion and the less structured listening survey.
Listening survey	The evaluator notes the content of unstructured and unsupervised conversations.
(Systematic) observation	We make observations all the time—doing so systematically can provide useful monitoring and evaluation information. Participant observation is where the observer takes part in the activities of the group he or she is studying.
Photo analysis	Photographs are used to assist in the assessment of the parts of the programme that are being evaluated.
Electronic data generation	Some data generated by interaction via computer systems can be used for evaluation purposes, such as the number of visits to a website.
Performance	Participants act out situations (for example, situations before and after the project) and the content is noted.
Maps	Participants draw a map to describe physical and social interaction patterns (for example, places that are important in their lives before and after the project).
Opinion poll	People are asked to vote on what they think about a topic. Opinion polls can be carried out via short questionnaires and/or interviews in person or over the web or mobile phones.

Representative sample

If you want to be able to use the information from the sample as a description of your larger target group, your sample should be "representative", that is, it should be as similar as possible in terms of certain characteristics to the larger target group. It will be difficult for you to make it completely representative. However, you should take care to create a representative sample as far as the important characteristics are concerned.

For example, let's suppose that you want to obtain a picture of what young people would want your non-governmental organizations to do in your neighbourhood. It may be very easy for you to ask a few of the students in the private school down the road. However, that would hardly be a sample that is representative of your neighbourhood, which also has two large state-funded schools, where youth come from very different socio-economic backgrounds and are bound to have different needs. A way to make the sample more representative would be to ask young people from all the schools and, if some schools are larger than others, ask more young people from those schools.

In many circumstances, it will not be essential to have a perfectly representative sample. In the case above, it might be enough to ask the young people who are present at the youth centre on an average afternoon; that is, there is nothing special happening either at the youth centre or outside, so that would be your "normal" number and kind of participants. Simply explaining how you attempted to make the sample representative of your target group lends more credibility to your results.

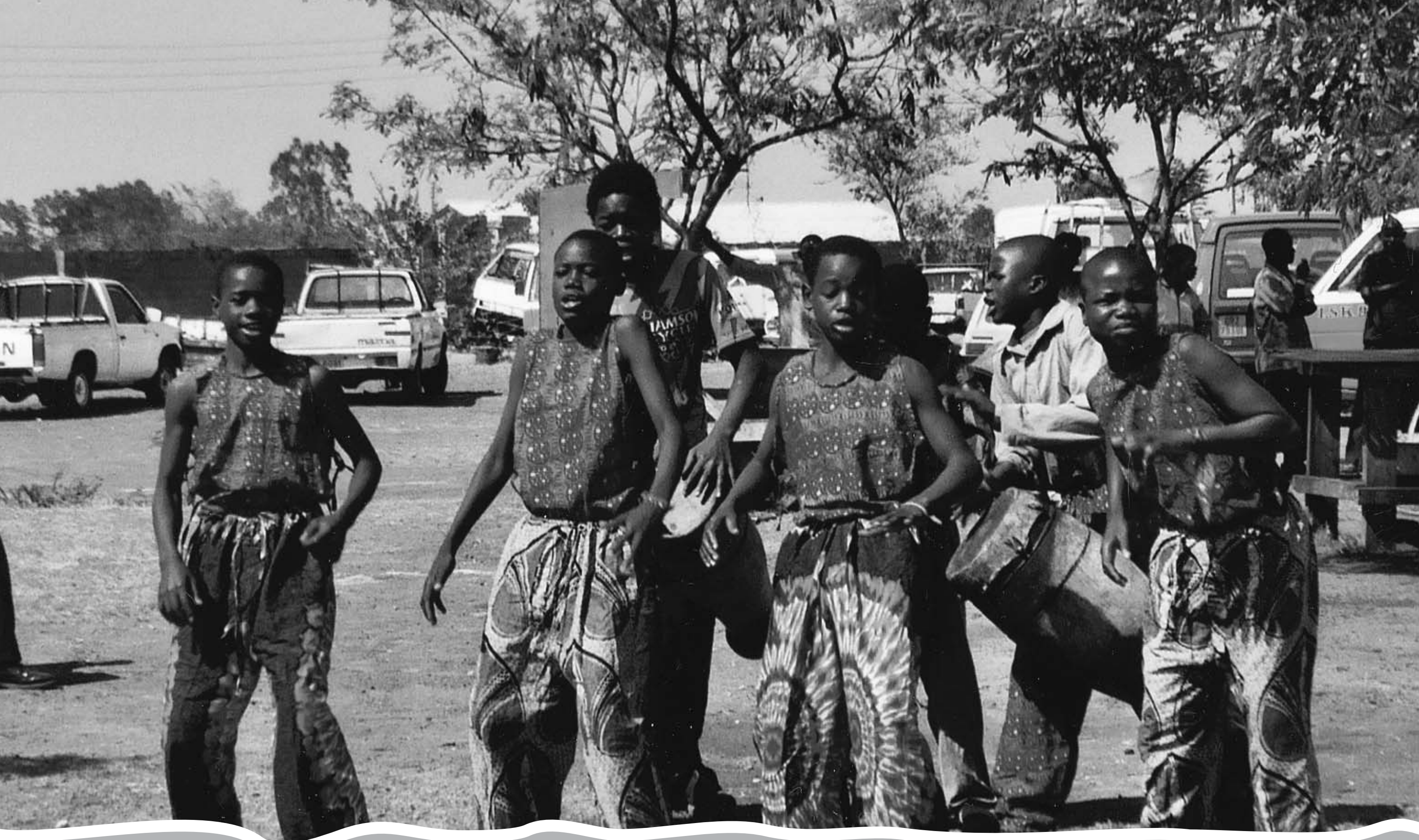
However, if you are conducting an evaluation with an experimental or quasi-experimental design, the representativeness of your sample becomes very important, in which case, you would probably have already enlisted the help of an expert evaluator.

Convenience sample

A convenience sample contains subjects who are easy to contact. For example, suppose you wanted to get a quick idea of what club members thought about a certain proposal. You could ask the first 10 people who came through the door that evening. The problem with a convenience sample is that it is not necessarily representative of the whole population.

Snowball sample

A snowball sample is one obtained by asking subjects to put you in touch with others. In this way, the sample gets bigger as you go on, like rolling a snowball. If you wanted to interview dependent drug users, but knew only two and you guessed that it would be difficult to contact others, then you could interview the two you knew and ask them to put you in touch with others whom they knew. This way, you could reach three more people and they might suggest others so that eventually you had a large enough sample. Snowball sampling is also not representative, but it is very useful when you are trying to get information about or from people who are hard to reach.



8. Analysing the data and using the information you have collected

What are you going to do with all these data that you have collected during monitoring and evaluation? Well, you will need to analyse them and use them somehow. Ideally, you will not have collected huge amounts of data through your monitoring and your analysis should be relatively straightforward. However, if your project (or the amount of data collected) is large, you should find the general points that we make below about analysing data and reporting information for evaluation equally useful for your monitoring needs. We have already discussed some general points about using your monitoring results in chapter VI in the section "Monitoring, evaluation and project implementation". In this chapter, you will find some general suggestions about using your evaluation results.

Analysis

Key ideas

- You can effectively summarize quantitative data through ranges and averages. There are different kinds of averages and you should be careful to choose the one that distorts reality the least.
- To analyse qualitative data, you must systematize your records and reflect on them. If you have large amounts of questionnaire or interview data, you will need to "code" the answers given to your questions in order to group similar ones.
- Triangulate, triangulate, triangulate!

It cannot be stated too often that analysing the data you have collected is not something that will happen by itself. Indeed, it is something that can require considerable resources. The purpose of this section is to give you an idea of how to analyse the data you have collected. Statistical analysis can be a very specialized field; however, not all statistical analysis needs to be daunting, and there are simple kinds of statistical analysis that anyone with a basic understanding of arithmetic can perform without specialized statistical training.

If you have carried out a survey using self-administered questionnaires or interviews, you will have series of data, normally of two kinds: quantitative (numbers of various kinds) and qualitative. In the first section we look at how to work with both kinds. The other qualitative techniques will not normally generate large series of data (i.e. a reply to one question by many people) that can be compiled and compared. However, those records will need to be systematized (see the second part of the section) before you move on to analysing the whole body of information together (which is discussed in the last part of the section).

Analysis should not be an afterthought!

For the planning stage, the one thing that we would do differently next time is to organize a means of analysing the data before we went ahead with the survey. If this part is left to the last minute, it can be a huge obstacle and it can actually render our efforts useless. We had questionnaires that were sitting in our offices and they could not be analysed owing to insufficient planning. Next time we would plan the whole evaluation process from designing the questionnaire to collecting the information to analysing the data.

Youth for Christ, Pretoria

Analysis of surveys

Let's suppose that you are the project manager of a youth centre and you have asked 53 members of the centre to fill in an anonymous questionnaire that asked respondents four questions: their sex; age; what they liked about the youth clubs and how many times they had smoked marijuana in the last month. (We are using a self-administered questionnaire as an example, but the same ideas could be applied if you had interviewed the respondents face-to-face.)

To analyse the data, the best approach is to use a spreadsheet, a kind of computer program that allows you to create tables and use them to make calculations. If you have few data, you can create a table and then do the calculations by hand. In this case you would create a table like this:

NUMBER	SEX	AGE	WHAT THEY LIKED ABOUT THE YOUTH CLUB	NUMBER OF TIMES HE OR SHE SMOKED MARIJUANA IN THE LAST MONTH
1	F	11	I meet my friends	0
2	M	13	Meeting people	1
3	M	14	The football tournament	0
4	Unknown	Unknown	The football tournament	0
Etc.				

Now you can start to play around with the data (yes, it can be fun!). A few values that you could calculate and use to summarize your data are described below.

Lowest/highest score

Let's look first at the age of the respondents and pretend that, going through all the records, you see that the lowest age says "11" and the highest "16". You could then say that the age of the respondents ranges from 11 to 16. If your group of respondents is a representative sample of the youth that come to your centre, you could state with reasonable confidence that "the age of the members of our youth club ranges from 11 to 16".

Mean (average)

Another easy way to analyse and summarize your information is to calculate the "mean" of the data. This is the most common kind of average, so much so that it is commonly referred to as "the 'average'". Your average (or better, your mean) would be found by adding all the ages and dividing the result by the number of people you have included in the calculation. In this particular instance, you have 51 people who actually replied to this question. You had 53 respondents, but 2 forgot or didn't want to give you their ages, so you really have only 51 replies. Therefore, your average would be equal to (11 + 13 + 14 + ...)/51.

You need to be a bit careful with averages, however. An average is a good summary of data when, as in this case, they do not differ too much from each other. If data differ a lot, the average will give you a distorted summary of reality. Of course, all summaries of information distort reality up to a point. The trick is to choose the one that best represents reality. Look, for example, at the case of how many times the members of your club smoked marijuana in the last month. Let's say only 47 people actually replied to this particular question, so the calculation of your average would be (0 + 1 + 0 + 0 + ...)/47 = ... Let's assume that your average would be 1.02, that is, that, on average, the members of your youth club smoked marijuana once in the last month.

But, hold on! You know your club members well and you know that most of them have never smoked marijuana or at least not since they have been attending your club. Maybe you are very,

very wrong ... or maybe the average is not the best way to summarize your data. Let's go back to the counting. You will find out that, of the 47 people who replied to this question:

- Thirty-five stated that they had never smoked in the last 30 days.
- Two stated that they had smoked once in the last 30 days.
- Two stated that they had smoked three times in the last 30 days.
- Four stated that they had smoked four times in the last 30 days.
- Four stated that they had smoked six times in the last 30 days.

Therefore, in reality, the majority of the young people in this group have not smoked marijuana. The reason why the average is more than once a month is because there are a few who have smoked quite a few times. These cases are called "extreme scores" or "outliers" and we say that the average is "sensitive" to extreme scores or outliers. In cases like this, you may want to use another kind of average.

Mode

You might want to calculate the "mode". The mode is the "most scored score", the most frequently reported number in a set of data. In the group above, that would be 0, as the majority of respondents reported that they had not smoked marijuana.

Median

A similar kind of measure is the "median". The median is the score below which half of the scores fall. The best way to visualize (and calculate) this is to write down all of the scores one below the other in ascending order and find the one that is in the middle of the row. If there are two, average them. In the example above, at least 50 per cent of respondents, that is, at least half of them, reported that they had not smoked in the previous month. Therefore the median is also 0.

Qualitative data and analysis

Before starting to process qualitative data, you need to prepare them a bit. Your question about what young people liked about the youth club was open-ended, that is, it did not require a yes/no answer and you did not provide a choice of possible answers, therefore each respondent was free to write whatever he or she wanted. To summarize the information, you will need to code it or create a "coding frame". How do you do this? You look at the answers and you group similar ones. For example, there were many people who said something like "meet new people", "chat with friends" or "meet people". You could say that they all liked to come to the centre because they like to meet friends/people.

Similarly, all of those who mentioned football and basketball could be said to come to the youth centre because they like the activities organized by the youth centre (which are, in fact, basketball and football). There will always be people who state things that are difficult to categorize: "I like the atmosphere", "Cakes are nice", and so you will have a category called

“Other”. You will not be able to actually understand some of the things written or some people will not fill the answers in, so you will have a category “Unknown”. Your table, at this point, will look like this:

NUMBER	SEX	AGE	WHAT THEY LIKED ABOUT THE YOUTH CLUB	CODE ABOUT LIKING	NUMBER OF TIMES HE OR SHE SMOKED MARIJUANA IN THE LAST MONTH
1	F	11	I meet my friends	Meeting people	0
2	M	13	Meeting people	Meeting people	1
3	M	14	The football tournament	Club activities	0
4	Unknown	Unknown	The football tournament	Club activities	0
Etc.					

Now, you can also count the answers to this question. You would get quite interesting results such as:

- Twenty-nine people said they liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Seventeen people said they liked the club activities.
- Five wrote things that could not be classified.
- Two did not answer this question or the answers were illegible.

So, if you didn’t know already (and if you did, this is a confirmation), you now know that the club is popular as a place to meet others and to a lesser, but important extent, to participate in its activities.

Cross-tabulation

Now you could examine the data in a slightly more sophisticated way by looking for any differences between boys and girls in their answers to the question about what they liked. In other words, you are looking at how one variable (sex) relates to another (likes); this is called a “cross-tabulation”. Say that with a total of 30 girls and 20 boys, you got the following results:

- Twenty-three girls liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Five boys liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Four girls liked the club activities.
- Thirteen boys liked the club activities.
- Two girls wrote things that could not be classified.
- Two boys wrote things that could not be classified.
- One girl did not answer this question or her answer was illegible.

Now, this is really interesting. If the group that answered the questionnaire is representative of the people who come to the youth centre, it is clear that: *(a)* this club is putting on activities that boys like a lot, but that girls do not; and *(b)* there are still more girls than boys coming to the youth centre, primarily to meet people and friends. Depending on your initial objective(s), this finding might suggest different sorts of future action.

Analysis of results from other qualitative data collection methods

Normally, as a project manager, you would not have done only a survey. You would have undertaken some in-depth interviews with some key informants, done some observations, had some focus group discussions or led group work on the basis of performance or visual representations. You will need to analyse the results of all of these.

Essentially, this will involve a process of systematizing the transcripts and notes and summarizing the main points. Apart from being as systematic as possible, the only important thing to keep in mind is to resist the temptation to extrapolate quantitative information from the results of these data collection methods. The sample of a focus group discussion or of a few in-depth interviews is simply not representative enough.

If you have used the same methods and questions with different respondents (for example, with boys and girls, or with one key informant each from different stakeholders), it may be a good idea to compare responses and think about what the differences (or lack of differences) might mean. In fact, if you have results from more than a handful of data collection activities, you could print them and cut them into pieces according to the main themes and patterns that emerge. Do not forget to always write on each piece where it comes from. Working on bunches of pieces that make points on the same issue or on similar ones is easiest.

Triangulation

The final part of the analysis is when you bring together all the information you have collected into a coherent whole. As already mentioned, it is strongly recommended that you collect information from different sources and/or using different methods. Remember that people do tend to provide the answers they think are appropriate or they think you want. It is therefore important to be able to compare results and thus validate them. For example, the results of your interviews might tell you that fewer street children are sniffing glue. However, the results of your observations tell you that as many street children are sniffing glue as before. How do you reconcile these two results? The conclusion you arrive at will always be based on a certain amount of subjective choice, but it should be based on additional information that either you already have or that you collect for the purpose. Always remember to triangulate with facts, not opinions. Do not use information that you cannot document.

Report it

Key ideas

- Decide for whom the report is being written. Different versions may be needed for different audiences. In all versions, use clear language and illustrations.
- Think carefully about the conclusions and recommendations and do not draw conclusions that are not justified by the data.
- Written reports have an important place, but consider using different methods of reporting, such as video and drama.

One of the most common ways to disseminate the results of an evaluation is to produce a written report. The first consideration is that a report should provide honest, reliable and considered information. Conclusions and recommendations will be expected. No evaluation, however thorough, can gain a complete picture of what has happened. There will always be loose ends and missing data, and knowledge of interventions will always be partial. The sample will very often not be representative. Be modest, therefore, when drawing conclusions from data. Do not "go beyond the data": common sense is useful here! For example, just because 100 per cent of the girls in a sample say they hate football does not necessarily justify the conclusion that all girls hate football—especially if you ask only very few of them!

The recommendations will need similar careful consideration. Base them on the findings. For example, if one conclusion is that not all objectives are being met because of staff shortages, then an obvious recommendation is to do something about staffing. The conclusion about whether the objectives are being met will need to be honest, saying that only some of the objectives are being met, but qualify this with the fact that this was due to staffing problems. What if an evaluation is very negative? It's easy for an evaluator to be critical, and more difficult to acknowledge achievements. Make sure that you include some positive comments in your conclusions. Even the worst project has some good points.

In general, it is best to avoid "academic" language—write clearly and directly. A short summary of the main points in the report is a useful document for people who want a quick overview. A summary written in simple language can be useful for people who have poor literacy skills. Make use of drawings, graphics and photographs. A report is not necessarily a book; it could be a video, CD-ROM or website, or even a performance or a piece of artwork. In fact, you will probably find that it is better to write different versions of the reports, suited to the needs of different people.

If you are going to present quantitative data, remember that there are different ways to present your data in a user-friendly way. Think about our example in the previous section. Our analysis had arrived at the following findings:

- Twenty-three girls liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Five boys liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Four girls liked the club activities.

- Thirteen boys liked the club activities.
- Two girls wrote things that could not be classified.
- Two boys wrote things that could not be classified.
- One girl didn't answer this question or her answer was illegible.

These findings are interesting. However, maybe there are more user-friendly ways to present them, that is, ways that make it easier to understand the main points arising from the finding. For example, to make this information clearer, these results could be written as percentages:

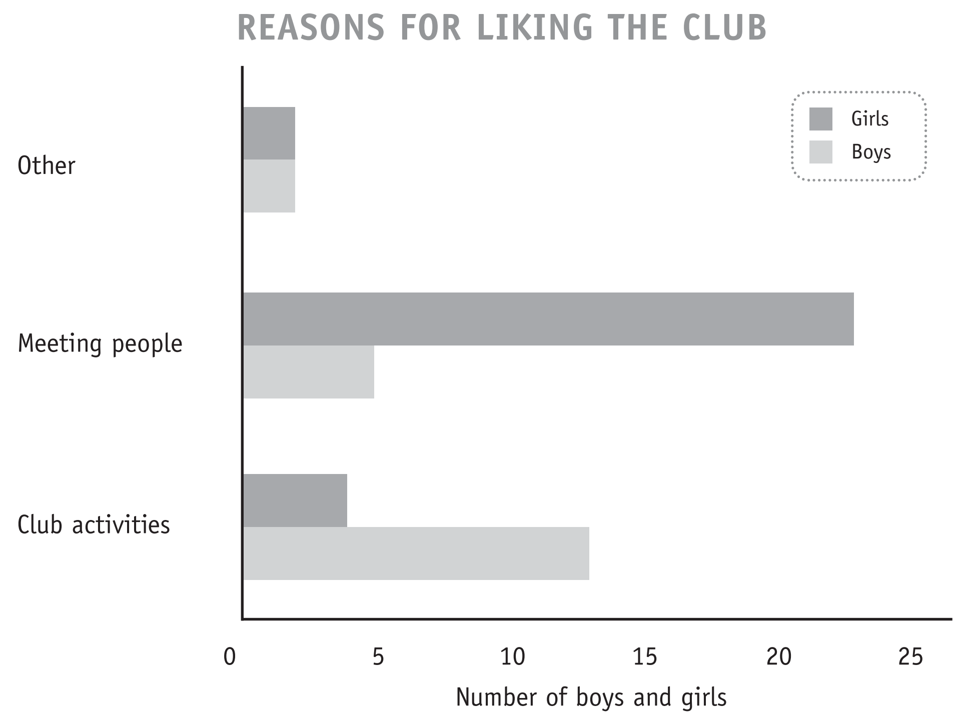
- More than three quarters of the girls, but only a quarter of the boys, liked the club because they could meet other people.
- Approximately two thirds of the boys, but only 14 per cent of the girls liked the club activities.

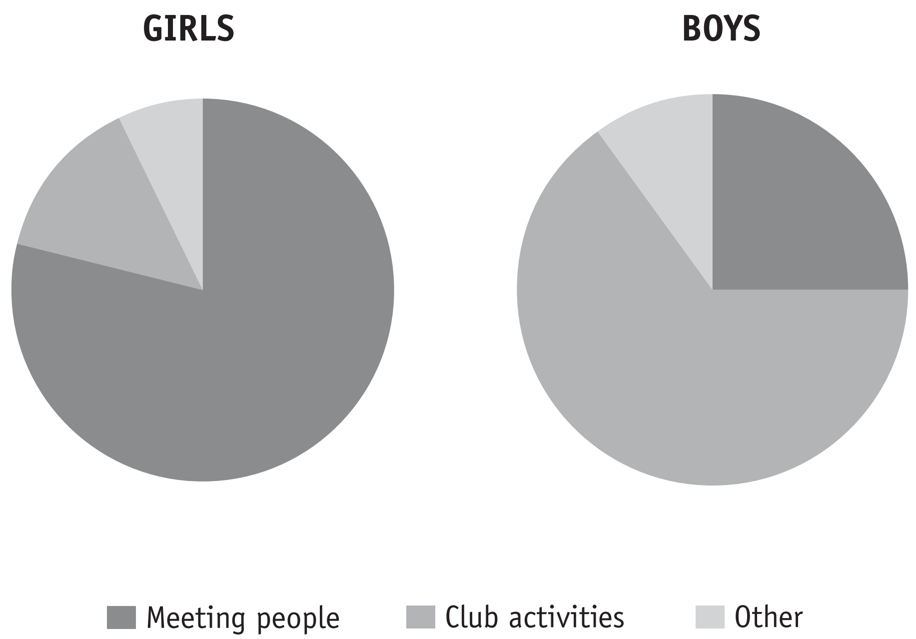
Some people find tables easier to read than figures in the text, so these results could be shown as a table, like this:

	GIRLS		**BOYS**	
Reasons for liking the club	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Meeting people	23	79	5	25
Club activities	4	14	13	65
Other	2	7	2	10

Many people will be happy with a visual representation that clearly shows the differences between boys and girls, even if less precisely than the figures. You could use a graph. A graph is the visual representation of data arranged along two axes. Specifically, you could use a "histogram", also known as a bar chart. A bar chart arranges the data in bars along an axis. From the example below it is still very clear that it is boys who overwhelmingly like club activities and that the vast majority of girls visit the club in order to meet people rather than for its activities.

Pie charts are another common way of representing data visually, but they tend to distort the representation of data. That is why, if you are preparing a report for a scientific journal, it would not be a good idea to use them. However, in presenting data to a community audience, they are also effective. This is the same data presented in a pie chart:


REASONS FOR LIKING THE CLUB
Girls
Boys
Other
Meeting people
Club activities
0
5
10
15
20
25
Number of boys and girls


GIRLS
BOYS
Meeting people
Club activities
Other

Use it!

Key ideas

Use the results of your evaluation:

- To acknowledge the work of your colleagues/staff/volunteers and the contribution of the many stakeholders in the community.
- As the starting point of a process of reflection on how to improve the work of the organization.
- To promote substance abuse prevention and the work of your organization with the community and the donors.
- In the context of planning your future activities.

As mentioned earlier, there is little point in collecting and analysing all this information if you do not use the results. We hope that you will have thought about what you need the results of the evaluation for while planning your evaluation. As we have seen, this would usually have helped you choose how you collected and analysed your data. However, here are some general points about using your evaluation results for your consideration and inspiration.

Other uses

The results of our monitoring and evaluation activities were used in activities other than the UNDCP/World Health Organization project. As an example, we used them in improving our strategies for and approaches to monitoring and evaluating our activities in a project on protecting children from child labour and drug abuse, an International Labour Organization programme.

Addictus, Manila

Improve the work of your organization. If the results of the evaluation are positive, you may want to take the opportunity to boost the morale and motivation of your staff and volunteers with a well-deserved meeting of celebration. This is also true of the many stakeholders who may have made even a small contribution, which should be acknowledged nonetheless. If you have good news, be generous with them, call a community meeting and find a way to thank and recognize the work and contribution of the many people you have involved. This can go a long way towards keeping them happy about the project, motivated and ... ready to help again.

In any case, and especially if the results of the evaluation were not so positive, you may want to consider using them as the starting point of a process of reflection on how to improve the work of the organization. Depending on the size of your organization, you may need to organize a general discussion to introduce and plan the process, then different discussions with different groups of staff/volunteers/participants and, finally, a general meeting to arrive at common understandings and decisions. Together with your colleagues/staff/volunteers/participants, you may also want to transform the results of the evaluation into documents that can be used by everyone in their day-to-day work, for example, a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” that could be used in staff training or as a checklist of good practice.

The results of the evaluation could also be used to raise awareness of the work of the organization and/or the problem of substance abuse prevention. In addition to holding community meetings, make copies of the results, or copies of the summary, widely available. If you are working in an area where different languages are spoken, consider producing the summary in those different languages. Make contact with journalists and promote your work among them; do the same with past and possible donors. Write a press release: even if the evaluation report is quite critical of the project, it can be used to demonstrate that lessons are being learned and changes made and it is also better if everybody hears your version of the situation first.

Finally, as suggested above, use the results of your evaluation when the time comes to plan new activities of the same kind or in the same area. Evaluations can be a very good source of information about a particular community, how to work with it or how to work on a certain issue. Whichever way you decide to go, do not forget to include a good monitoring and evaluation component in your next project as well.

Online sources

Prevention

United Nations, Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, *A Participatory Handbook for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes: a Guide for Development and Improvement* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XI.10) **(http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/pdf/handbook.pdf).**

World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Workbook for Project Operators* **(http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/initiative_activities_workbook.pdf).**

World Health Organization, *Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse: a Facilitator Guide* **(http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/global_initiative/pdf/initiative_activities_facilitator_guide.pdf).**

Online courses in evaluation

Evaluation courses of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention of the United States Department of Health and Human Services **(http://preventionpathways.samhsa.gov/eval/courses.htm).**

Guides on evaluation (not necessarily on substance abuse prevention)

W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (1998)* **(www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf).**

World Health Organization, *Working with Street Children: Monitoring and Evaluation of a Street Children Project* **(http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/924159036X.pdf).**

Maristela G. Monteiro, ed., *Young People and Substance Use: a Manual; Create, Use and Evaluate Educational Materials and Activities* (World Health Organization and Mentor Foundation) **(http://www.who.int/entity/substance_abuse/publications/epidemiology/en/).**

World Health Organization, United Nations International Drug Control Programme and European Monitoring Center on Drugs and Drug Addiction, *Evaluation of Psychoactive Substance Use Disorder Treatment,* Workbook Series (2000) **(http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/psychoactives/en/).**

Scotland's Effective Interventions Unit has produced a clearly written and accessible series of publications. They focus mostly on working with youth already using drugs, but the general concepts can be useful with regard to prevention as well. They are available for download as .pdf files, but unfortunately don't seem to be on one page. Search for them on **http://www.drugmisuse.isdscotland.org/publications/publications.aspx.**

Evaluation instruments

United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention **(http://preventionpathways.samhsa.gov/eval/tools.htm).**

Evaluation Instruments, Bank of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction **(http://eib.emcdda.eu.int/).**

Guides to statistics

R. Niles, Statistics **(http://www.robertniles.com/stats/):** a guide to statistics for journalists, as accessible as you can get.

D. M. Lane, *HyperStat Online Textbook* **(www.davidmlane.com/hyperstat/).**

The University of Berkeley's web-based course in introductory statistics, with test questions: technical, but comprehensive **(www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/SticiGui/Text/index.htm).**

About educari

The mission of the UK-based organization educari is to improve young people's experience of learning, with a particular focus on drug issues. You can find out more about what educari does by visiting the website **(www.educari.com)**.

Annex

Our partners around the world

GLOBAL MEETING
30 June-4 July 2003, Vienna

Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC), Sri Lanka (Duminda Edirisinghe, Shantha Kulathunge)

All Stars Talent Show Network, United States of America (Antoine Joyce, Pam Lewis)

Angaza Children Centre, Kenya (Raymond Kiruki, Faith Mbithe Mutua)

ASPAT/ACC, Senegal (Cheikh A. Bamba Diop, Gilbert Diatta)

Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs (Alexej Mayorau, Liudmila Blizniuk)

Butterflies, India (Ashfaque Ahmad, Tsering Yangchen)

CASA, Mexico (Jorge Burciaga Montoya, Ileana Espinoza)

IOGT-NTO, Sweden (Jenny Carlsson)

TeenNet Research Project, Canada (Mabel Soo, Sherry Biscope)

The Hub Youth Centre, New Zealand (Andre McLachlan, Kathleen Ahlers)

TYPS-TriCounty Addiction Services, Canada (Les Voakes, Steve Harrison)

Secretariat

Richard Ives (educari, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Gautam Babbar [Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)]

Giovanna Campello (Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit, UNODC)

SOUTHERN AFRICAN MEETING
10-12 November 2003, Bagamoyo, United Republic of Tanzania

South Africa

Alcohol and Drug Concerns (Solomon R. Rakale)

Elim Clinic (Khanyisile Twala)

South African Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) Nongoma (Siopho Mathe)

Sanpark Community Centre (Kelerogile Elizabeth Mosime)

University of Pretoria, Department of Psychology (Maretha Visser)

University of the North, Department of Social Work (Dorothy Winnie Malaka)

Youth for Christ South Africa (Doni Donald Maila)

United Republic of Tanzania

African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health Youth Centre Kinondoni (Michael Machaku)

Elimu ya Malezi ya Ujana (EMAU) (Stewart Chisongela)

Kimara Peer Educators and Health Promoters Trust (Pfiriael Kiwia)

Masgid Taqwa Youth Society (Ahmed Haji Saadat)

Youth Cultural and Information Centre (YCIC) (Kachepa Mango)

Zanzibar Association of Information against Drug Abuse and Alcohol (ZAIADA) (Ali Mohamed Abdalla)

Zambia

Chinika Substance Abuse Prevention Project (Lewis Benito Mwale)

Family Health Trust (Days Mhone)

Family Life Movement of Zambia (Margaret Phiri)

Kanyama Youth Training Centre (Levy Kafuli)

Mental Health Association of Zambia (Didduh Mubanga)

Programme Urban Self-help (PUSH) (Christopher Chilufya)

Youth Alive Zambia (YAZ) (Francis Mulenga Fube)

Zambian Red Cross Society (George Mubita)

Zambia Schools Anti-AIDS Club Patron Association (Andrew Ngwenya)

Observers

Arabang Maruping, Regional Advisor for Child and Adolescent Health, World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa

Republic of the Congo

Joseph Mbatia, Ministry of Health

United Republic of Tanzania

Zodwa Octavia Mvubelo, South African Alliance for the Prevention of Substance Abuse

Zambia

Ashbie Mweemba, Chainama College Hospital Board

Secretariat

Mohamed Amri, WHO, Dar es Salaam

Tecla Butau, Mental Health and Substance Abuse, WHO Regional Office for Africa, Zimbabwe

Giovanna Campello, Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit, UNODC

Theresia Ngahyoma, WHO Dar es Salaam

Mwansa Nkowane, Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence, WHO

MEETING IN THE PHILIPPINES
22-25 October 2003, Buyong, Mactan, Cebu

Addictus Philippines, Inc. (Fernando R. Rico)

Bidlisiw Foundation, Inc. (Julie V. Itaas)

Childhope (Cerila “Ella” B. Salibio)

Dangerous Drugs Board (Lilia V. Dulay)

Foundation for Adolescent Development, Inc. (Arceli “Czel” R. Obmerga)

Foundation for Drug Information Campaign (Rescaflor “Poi” De Asis)

Higala Association, Inc. (Ronnie “Cocoy” A. Eleptico)

Kahayag Foundation (Angela Rumilda T. Montojo)

Kapatiran Komunidad People’s Coalition, Inc. (Evelyn S. Galang)

Kaugmaon Foundation (Florie May Butiong-Tacang)

Kauswagan Community Social Centre (Job Sarmago)

METSA Foundation, Inc. (Fernando “Nanding” T. Santander)

Philippine National Red Cross (Sherwin “Dice” P. Daya)

MEETING IN THAILAND
29 September-1 October 2003, Bangkok

Buddha Kaset Chiang Mai Foundation (Srisom Malaitong)

Chaiprukmala Community (Tanom Butpradit)

Chorake Chop Community (Somwang Peungkuson)

Hug Muang Nan Foundation (Banjit Sairokam)

Indochina Intersection Development Institute (Chartrat Kruahong)

Institute of Juvenile Justice (Somchai Rattanaaree)

IOGTT (Chochat Ringrod)

Makam Pom (Duangkae Buaprakone)

Seka School (Prasitchai Hadda)

Takop Pa Group (Chaiwat Ngamjit)

TYAP (Sarinya Singtongwan)

Observers

Supika Klaiklueng, Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB)

Worachate Sajjaluksana, ONCB

Takahiro Terasaki, UNODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific

Secretariat

Pongsak Chanon, UNODC Consultant

Pornkasem Kantamara, UNODC Consultant, Thai Education Foundation

Suchart Tongsuk, UNODC Consultant

Katie Walker, UNODC Viet Nam Country Office

MEETING IN VIET NAM
7-9 September 2003, Ha Noi

An Hai, Hai Phong (Nguyen Van Thang)

An Lac, Ho Chi Minh City (Tran Hong Quan)

Dong Da, Ha Noi (Nguyen The Vinh)

Ha Noi Provincial Youth Union (Tran Thanh Huyen)

Hai Phong Provincial Youth Union (Tran Viet Phuong)

Ho Chi Minh City Provincial Youth Union (Nguyen Ngoc Rang)

Huong Vuong, Hai Phong (Vu Xuan Hieu)

Le Mao, Nghe An (Nguyen Hanh Phuc)

Nghe An Provincial Youth Union (Nguyen Trung Thanh)

Phong Lai, Son La (Tran Ngoc Dai)

Phu Nuan, Ho Chi Minh City (Vo Quang Thi)

Son La Provincial Youth Union (Nguyen Ngoc Toan)

Thai Hoa, Nghe An (Pham Hong Thai)

Thanh Xuan Trung, Ha Noi (Ha Bui Thu)

Van Ho, Son La (Hoang Van Toan)

Observers

Ngyuen Thi Minh Tan, Educational Centre for Population, Health and the Environment, Central Youth Union

Katie Walker, UNODC Viet Nam Country Office

Secretariat

Daragh Halpin, UNODC Consultant

Ha Thi Tuyet Nhung, UNODC Consultant

MEETING FOR BELARUS AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
17-21 September 2003, Anapa, Russian Federation

Belarus

Belarusian Association of Non-Governmental Television (BANT) (Valerij Anatolevic Bodnar)

Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs (Elena Sergeevna Smirnova)

Brest City Health Centre (Igor Yanovic Prezkailo)

Gomel Medical Institute (Marina Vladimirovna Prokopenkova)

Gomel Regional Health Centre (Tamara Michailovna Sharshakova)

Hope and Recovery, centre (Dinara Stanislavovna Kovrova)

Intelligence, centre of social assistance to creative youth (Marina Vladimirovna Pisarenko)

League of Youth Voluntary Service (Natalja Markovna Nemkevic)

Minsk City Health Centre (Andrey Valerevic Dudko)

POST, youth educational centre (Alla Dergay)

Probushdenje, republican organization (Lena Gennadevna Grigoreva)

Regional Narcological Dispensary (Ljudmila Vasilevna Shabalina)

Social Aid, international organization (Ivan Ivanovic Vodnev)

Uliana, civic women's union (Valentina Nikolaevna Savizskaja)

Russian Federation

AIDSInfoshare (Olga Viktorovna Morozova)

Angara, Baykal women's union (Olga Aleksandrovna Zaporoshez)

ANTIAIDS, non-governmental organization (Marina Viktorovna Mokienko)

Anti-crisis Centre For Youth (Yulia Yurevna Kripak)

Association of Humanitarian Initiatives (Ljudmila Nikolaevna Olefir)

Committee of Women for the Protection of Children from Drugs (Svetlana Borisovna Klimenko)

Compassion, charitable centre (Elisaveta Dzirikova)

Development, non-governmental organization (Irina Viktorovna Galjamova)

Drug Abuse Prevention Centre (Olga Dmitrievna Starizina)

Duchovnoje Zdorovje, regional organization (Grigory Potemkin)

Garmonja, charitable foundation (Ekaterina Evgenevna Rodkina)

Harmony, centre (Ershena Valerevna Goncikova)

Humanitarian Project, non-governmental organization (Tatjana Yurevna Golovanova)

Innovations, centre (Sergey Belogurov)

Light, support centre for children and youth (Irina Albertovna Kozic)

Look at the Future, regional non-governmental organization (Elena Vasilevna Cerskaja)

Medical Prevention Centre (Elena Ivanovna Kljavlina)

Optimalist Podmoskovja, Club UNESCO (Igor Nikolaevic Belaev)

POST, consulting point for teenagers (Yuri Sergeevic Chodakovskij)

Prospekt Mira, youth organization (Yuri Cernousov)

Republic Centre for Drug and Alcoholism Prevention (Soslan Hugaev)

Research Institute on Mental Health (Svetlana Nikolaevna Petrova)

Russian Women's Movement (Yulia Sergeevna Posevkina)

Siberia-AIDS-Stop, charitable foundation (Yulia Aleksandrovna Vtorushina)

Siberian Alternative, regional non-governmental organization (Vladimir Anatolevic Averin, Aleksey Aleksandrovic Starostenko)

Union of Women of the Republic of Altay (Tatjana Leonidovna Pachaeva)

Union of Women of Vladivostok (Natalja Nikolaevna Sherbakova)

Your Choice, non-governmental organization (Ruslana Ozerova)

Secretariat

Ljudmila Bliznjuk, Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs

Vladlena Vladimirovna Djackova, Centre of Social Technologies

Tatjana Bobrova, Centre of Social Technologies

Ivan Suchanov, Centre of Social Technologies

Ruslan Giamalov, POST, youth educational centre

Veniamin Veniaminovic Volnov, Siberian Initiative, non-governmental organization

Giovanna Campello, UNODC

Nadia Gasbarrini, UNODC Moscow

MONITORING and EVALUATING

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