

## [Principles: C4D RME Framework Summary](#)

### **The C4D Evaluation Framework**

The C4D Evaluation Framework was developed to reflect the needs and values of Communication for Development. The Framework is made up of seven interconnected principles. These principles guide our choices about R,M&E.

The C4D Evaluation Framework used in this Resource Hub is adapted from the framework published by Lennie and Tacchi (2013).

C4D Evaluation Framework diagram

Explore the links to each of the principles below to find:

- An overview of the principle
- Advice on applying the principle
- Commonly experienced challenges and strategies for overcoming
- Links to practical resources, toolkits and guides for applying the principle

### [C4D: Participatory](#)

#### **Inclusion; dialogue; partnership; human rights-based**

Participation is a central principle for C4D, and therefore should be incorporated in the R,M&E of C4D. Participatory R,M&E is undertaken in partnership with children and adolescents, community members and other stakeholders, using processes that are culturally and socially appropriate, creative, and based on mutual trust, openness and dialogue.

#### **Where do we start?**

The question that should guide participatory approaches is: ‘Who should be involved in the R,M&E, why and how?’ This question should be reflected on right from the conceptualisation and planning stages of a C4D intervention. It should then be raised again when approaching each of the R,M&E stages and tasks.

Participation in C4D R,M&E is not just about using interesting methods and involving people/institutions in data collection and analysis. A high level of participation is also about sharing decision making responsibilities about the R,M&E processes, the outcomes, and utilisation. To achieve a high level of participation that is potentially transformative and empowering start by thinking about which stakeholders should have a role in decision making about the R,M&E. the following tasks can be useful:

- [Understand and engage stakeholders](#)
- [Establish decision making processes](#)
- [Identify primary intended users](#)

Decisions about ways to engage stakeholders (i.e. in framing, data collection and analysis, reporting), and who should be engaged, can flow from there. For more on thinking through who might be involved, why, and how see [Participatory Approaches, Methodological Briefs from the UNICEF Office of Research](#).

## **Incorporating and implementing participatory approaches in practice**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

The [Understand and engage stakeholders](#) task is an important foundation for a participatory approach.

The [Establish decision making processes](#) task is an opportunity to formalise the involvement of stakeholders in decision making about the R,M&E. Participation in decision making about R,M&E is an important part of a participatory approach.

One important decision that needs to be made is [who will conduct the R,M&E](#). In a participatory approach an external consultant may be needed as a facilitator. Stakeholders may have roles in framing, commissioning, data collection and/or analysis.

Participatory approaches may cost more (at least initially) and may take longer. This needs to be considered as part of the task: [Determine and secure resources](#). It is important to balance the needs of a participatory approach with the need to remain *realistic*.

Using participatory processes to identify, adapt and [agree on ethical and quality standards for R,M&E](#) ensures that the standards guide appropriate practices in keeping with local standards and expectations.

Partners, community groups and others with roles in planning and implementing C4D should be involved in the task of [Developing Planning Documents \(Evaluation Plans and M&E Frameworks\)](#). This ensures that these documents respond to local needs, questions and contexts.

A participatory approach to the task of [Reviewing R,M&E \(meta evaluation\)](#) enables mutual learning and engagement among partners, relevant institutions and community groups.

[Developing R,M&E capacity](#) is an important task, since participatory approaches will often depend on capacity building of stakeholders. All learning events, structures and processes should be inclusive of community groups and other implementers and planners of C4D.

### **Define**

The [develop initial description](#) task is a relatively quick and simple way to engage stakeholders in the R,M&E. This can be done even if a full participatory approach is not being followed.

Community groups and other stakeholders can be engaged in the process of [developing a program theory/logic model](#). This ensures that program theories are generated in ways that respect and include local ways of knowing the world. Other sources, such as existing program documents, previous research on similar types of initiatives, and observations of existing initiatives, can be incorporated as well.

Involving different stakeholders in the task of [identifying potential unintended results](#) can draw on their unique knowledge and perspectives about an initiative, and reveal new information.

### **Frame**

In the task, [Identify primary intended users](#), it is useful to remember that in C4D users of R,M&E may include community members and leaders, who may take action as a result of findings.

When taking a participatory approach, the task of [Deciding on the purpose](#) of the R,M&E will usually mean thinking beyond donor/reporting uses.

In a participatory approach, engaged stakeholders (especially the primary intended users) should contribute to [specifying the key R,M&E questions](#). The R,M&E should respond to their questions.

The [Determine what 'success' looks like](#) task is about defining values and criteria. In a participatory approach these values and criteria should express what success means for and with the communities and other stakeholders.

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

[Use measures, indicators or metrics](#): Indicators should reflect local ways of looking at and measuring the world. Ideally, those funding, managing, planning, implementing, collecting, and using the data should be involved in the selection of indicators. In C4D this includes community groups and partners. Participatory numbers is an option for generating quantitative measures in a participatory way.

Some methods to [Collect and/or retrieve data](#) are more engaging, less extractive, and enable mutual learning to a greater extent, than others.

When taking a participatory approach, it is important to think about who owns the data, and therefore responsibility for [data management](#). There may be additional challenges when dealing with data that has been generated through more engaging methods.

A participatory approach to [analysing data](#) can reveal new findings and meanings, and support mutual learning.

[Visualising the data](#) can help make the data analysis process and findings more accessible for stakeholders.

## **Synthesise**

There are participatory ways to approach the task of [Synthesising Data from a Single Study/Evaluation](#) so that the perspectives of communities and other stakeholders can be included. See methods such as a consensus conference, and qualitative weight and sum options.

There are options for [Synthesising data across studies \(research, monitoring data, evaluations\)](#) that mean this task can be undertaken in a participatory way supporting mutual learning.

A participatory approach to the task of [Generalising Findings](#) means thinking about how the knowledge of partners, communities and other stakeholders' can inform questions about generalisability and how successful approaches can be adapted. Participatory options for this task include [Horizontal Evaluation](#) or the [Positive Deviance approach](#).

## **Report and support use**

Taking a participatory approach to the task of [Identifying Reporting Requirements](#) would mean actively engaging with key stakeholders in a reporting needs analysis, and/or the development of a communication plan.

When undertaking the task of [Developing Reporting Media](#), the media products can be co-created by some or all of the people and groups involved in the R,M&E. This is particularly useful as a strategy to ensure that results are communicated in appropriate and accessible ways.

A participatory approach to the task of [Developing recommendations](#) means meaningful engagement with partners, community groups and local institutions to ensure that the process supports community-driven development informed by local knowledge.

In a participatory approach, when undertaking the task of [Supporting use](#), in addition to use by development agencies, it is important to include processes to support use among community members and leaders, and other stakeholders.

## Challenges and strategies

### Legitimacy

Some may worry that participatory R,M&E will not have enough credibility or legitimacy. Some may criticise participatory approaches as lacking impartiality and independence, and believe that evaluations must be undertaken by an external consultant. It is important to address these concerns. The task [Define ethical and quality R,M&E standards](#) provides advice on this. There are ways to incorporate participatory approaches that fit with UNEG standards.

### Ethics

There can be additional ethical challenges associated with participatory approaches, especially in relation to sensitive topics such as HIV/AIDS, issues relating to children child marriage, violence against children). Not all stakeholders must be involved in all aspects of R,M&E where this is not appropriate. In these cases consider the appropriateness of involving marginalised groups in:

- Decision making about the R,M&E (see [Establish Decision making processes](#))
- [Reviewing R,M&E \(meta evaluation\)](#)
- [Specifying the key R,M&E questions](#)
- [Determining what 'success' looks like](#)
- [Analysing data](#)
- [Synthesise Data from a single Study/Evaluation](#)
- and/or [Developing recommendations](#)

The [Participation Matrix tool](#) can help to map the possible roles.

### Meaningful participation

Sometimes we end up with 'tokenistic' participation. This can happen where bureaucratic processes overtake engagement processes, or where some stakeholders are not able to participate openly because of fear or differences in power, or issues of language (jargon) etc. Ongoing [critical reflection](#) is the best defence against tokenistic participation.

### Time and resources

It is common to feel that we don't have enough time and resources for participatory R,M&E. The task [Determine and secure resources](#) contains useful advice on managing limited time and resources and suggestions for low-budget options. Including stakeholders in Decision making (see [Establish Decision](#)

[making processes](#)) is a useful first step, and from there stakeholders can decide which tasks require full participation.

## Working at scale

Meaningful participation with communities can be difficult when working at a large scale (e.g. in a context like India with 1.2 billion people). Focus on whose knowledge and participation matters. Consider [sampling methods](#) that might help to achieve representative or purposive groups for participation. [Methods to collect data](#) can be specifically chosen to deal with scale, such as participatory numbers or digital technologies (such as crowdsourcing).

## Resources

- [Facilitating workshops for the co-generation of knowledge: 21 tips](#)

A web resource that lists useful and practical tips on facilitating workshops. For understanding and engaging stakeholders, the tips include: 3) Use workshops to get to know key players face-to-face; 4) Co-convene; 7) Be prepared and optimally unprepared with the programme; 11) Identify key documents, encourage participants to study them in advance, and have them available; 12) Encourage multiple ownership and credit; 13) Set an informal atmosphere, and err on the side of informality; 14) Make good use of car and bus journeys!; 18) Use Participatory PowerPoint and 19) Think in advance about follow-up and seek agreement on actions.

- [A framework for monitoring and evaluating children's participation](#)

This resource by Save the Children is a 6-part guide that explores how to monitor and evaluate children's participation in programmes, communities, and in wider society, using participatory R,M&E approaches. Although it refers to 'participation' and not 'C4D', these two areas of work are highly complementary and often have significant overlaps. It includes indicators and tools with which to measure the work that is being undertaken, including:

- 25 indicators to help map how institutionalised children's participation is
- tools designed to help monitor and evaluate the scope, quality, and outcomes of children's participation
- a 10-step guide to help undertake a participatory monitoring and evaluation process

- [The IDEAS guide and facilitators' guide](#)

This is an entry-level guide to designing a learning-focused M&E Plan for small-scale C4D initiatives. The guide supports implementing teams to lead the design of the M&E plan.

This guide is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- Participatory: Each module in the resource outlines a group-based, often visual activity to explore options and make decisions in participatory ways in order to be accessible for people with little or no prior experience of M&E.
- Realistic: The resource was developed in the context of small-grants, so it is sensitive to the needs of small-scale initiatives. The language and processes are as simple as possible.
- Learning-based: The resource has a strong emphasis on using M&E during implementation to adjust the project direction as unfolds.
- Accountable: The resource includes a number of steps to map stakeholders and understand who has an interest in the findings of M&E about the project. This includes funders, and may include others such as governments, community leaders, participants and others.

## Examples

- [KAP action research study on violence against children](#)

A KAP action research project exploring issues of violence against children in Tanzania is an example of engaging with community researcher, children and other community groups for mutual-learning. Different groups were involved in different ways, including making decisions about what the research should focus on and how it should be done (framing), developing recommendations, including stakeholders as analysts of data, as data collectors, and as sources of information. Includes a matrix specifying the ways different groups were involved in different aspects of the research.

## C4D: Holistic

### **Context; systemic; boundaries; inter-connections**

Taking a holistic approach means considering the systems, structures and contexts within which people operate. This means seeking to understand the broader contexts and inter-connections between organisations, groups and individuals involved in a C4D initiative (directly or indirectly). This might include the different 'communicative ecologies' (or communication contexts) that people experience.

### **Where do we start**

The define and frame sets of tasks can be useful for thinking about a holistic approach. While it is important to define the scope of R, M&E, it is important not to focus too narrowly on the separate parts of an initiative, but instead to view the C4D and related initiatives within broader systems.

A key moment to ensure you are taking a holistic approach to R, M&E is when you [Specify the key questions](#)

## **Incorporating and implementing systems thinking in practice**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

[Define ethical and quality standards for R, M&E:](#)

Our expectations and perceptions of quality and ethics is culturally bound. In seeking agreement on quality and ethical standards it is important to understand these in the context of social, cultural, and organisational systems.

[Develop R, M&E capacity:](#)

It is important to take a whole of system approach to capacity development of C4D R, M&E. It can be useful to consider:

- What type of capacity development is needed, for whom, and at what level?

- How can capacity development be most effectively built into the activities of our organization and its R,M&E systems and processes?
- How will R,M&E capacity be sustained, especially if key staff leaves our organization?

## **Define**

### Identifying potential unintended results:

A holistic approach requires that we keep an eye on the wider context, which is important for identifying unintended results. Ethnographic and Ethnographic Action Research approaches can be useful for understanding why something has, or has not, happened through immersive and open-ended research that seeks to situate an event, activity, thing, or group within a broader relational context.

## **Frame**

### Specify the key questions:

C4D initiatives usually respond to problems strongly connected with different social, cultural, economic, political, geographic and structural contexts. This means that in C4D R, M&E it is important to ask questions about underlying causes and social, cultural economic, political, geographic and structural contexts - from the situation analysis right through to the monitoring and evaluation.

### Determine what 'success' looks like:

A holistic approach to this task encourages us to think about how the context influences the definition of success, values, aspirations and perspectives. It can be useful to seek ways to define holistic visions of success, beyond indicators and targets (i.e. in Results Frameworks) which often only show a single dimension of success.

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

### Use measures, indicators or metrics:

Indicators are concise, partial, aggregates of information. This is the opposite of holistic, in-depth information. Indicators can be used to 'indicate' areas that might need further, more in-depth, investigation (e.g., negative and positive outliers or lack of change where you expected to see change). Indicators should be used in combination with other more holistic methods to deeply understand situations.

### Collect and/or retrieve data:

If your key questions set out to explore contextual factors, the methods you chose to answer the questions need to be the type that helps you construct 'thick descriptions' (comprehensive, in-depth, contextual).

### Manage data:

Paying attention to a whole system can require multiple methods, and so you need an appropriate way to manage the R, M&E data. Thinking about and analysing the data together can help you to consider the focus of the R, M&E within the broader context.

### Combine qualitative and quantitative data:

Combining qualitative and quantitative data enables different paths into understanding the context. Combining data from different methods gives a more rounded, more holistic view of a context.

## Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)

When [Investigating Causal Contribution and Attribution](#):

- [Strategies based on creating a counterfactual](#) are often not suitable because they distort how the intervention might work in the 'real world' contexts.
- [Strategies to check that the results support causal attribution](#) are more sensitive to context and interconnections.
- [Strategies for investigating possible alternative explanations](#) are important for challenging and problematising assumptions as part of a holistic approach.

## Synthesise

When [generalising findings](#) it is important to identify what the key social, political, economic, cultural and other systemic factors were, in that specific place and time, that affected whether it worked. This will help to predict what factors will need to be considered in other contexts.

## Challenges and strategies

### Institutional barriers

There can be institutional and other barriers to holistic approaches to framing and implementing R,M&E. For example, large or joint programs sometimes get segmented and delegated to different partners, losing the holistic frame.

Use the [Understand and engage stakeholders](#) task as the basis for thinking about how to bring stakeholders together.

These management processes can be used in other tasks such as:

- [Determine what 'success' looks like](#),
- [Check the results support causal attribution\(strategy 2\)](#)
- [Generalise Findings](#)

in in order to bring cohesiveness and systems thinking to these tasks.

### Resourcing

There can be a tension between being holistic and being realistic. For example, methods that are strong in terms of their ability to gain rich contextual understandings, such as Ethnographic Action Research, pose real challenges for tasks like [Manage Data](#) and [Analyse data](#).

Use the [Determine and secure resources](#) (and revisit as necessary) task to develop a clear picture of financial resources, capacities and time. The pages on the [Manage Data](#) and [Analyse data](#) tasks include advice for making these processes as realistic as possible.

Other advice on shoestring methods are included as part of [C4D: realistic](#).

## Resources

- [Ethnographic Action Research Toolbox](#)

Ethnographic Action Research is an methodology that was developed to link action research with ethnographic approaches as a way to build in holistic research alongside implementation of C4D. The online EAR Training Handbook includes practical guidance and examples for using EAR methods such as communicative ecology mapping, semi-structured interviews, short questionnaire surveys, and participant observation. The 'Dealing with EAR Data' section includes guidance on analysing 'messy' data.

## C4D: Complexity

### **Emergent; unpredictable; contradictions; self-organisation**

The principle of complexity draws our attention to the multiple and changing 'interconnections' and 'inter-relationships' in C4D initiatives. It highlights complicated aspects: where there are multiple organisations working in similar ways, multiple components or parts of the initiative, or where we know that C4D interventions will work differently in different contexts. It also highlights complex aspects: where change is not predictable but comes about through 'adaptive' responses to changing circumstances.

### **Where do we start?**

Complexity can easily become overwhelming. It requires a different kind of mindset and can challenge our organisational systems. A good place to start is by thinking about how we need to adapt our management and organisational systems and processes to be more flexible, more attuned to different perspectives and changes. The [manage cluster of tasks](#) help us reflect on whether our organisational context supports or prevents R,M&E that enables us to be adaptive in our C4D work.

## **Applying the C4D Principles**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

[Understand and engage stakeholders](#): The stakeholders in complex social change processes may be a changing group of people. Their ideas, motivations, priorities, commitments and openness to adaptive C4D action may also change in response to the changes in the social system. Stakeholder mapping processes can help with engagement, especially where there are multiple stakeholders with different values and information needs.

[Establish decision making processes](#): Decision-making about how the evaluation will be done (including framing its purpose and questions, choosing an evaluation team, approving an evaluation plan and an evaluation report) may need to include different stakeholders. If the key stakeholders change, the decision making structures and processes might need to be flexible. Sometimes we may need to revisit decisions that have already been made.

[Develop planning documents \(Evaluation Plans and M&E Frameworks\)](#): C4D is generally integrated into a program. Because of this, M&E Frameworks for C4D should ideally be developed as part of the broader program's M&E Frameworks. Where there is a need for changing C4D action based on new insights, rapid, flexible cycles of evaluation will be most appropriate. Evaluation contracts will need to take this into account.

[Develop R,M&E capacity](#): Capacity building efforts need to support people and organisations to become more aware of how to work with the complexity of social change. This may mean capacity building in understanding and using complexity concepts and language, and exploring different ways of thinking about and responding to social change.

## **Define**

[Developing a program theory/logic model](#): A theory of change might have complicated aspects, involving multiple contributing actors, multiple goals, and different pathways linking activities to specified goals in different contexts. A theory of change might also have complex aspects able to incorporate emergent local solutions, participation by new stakeholders, introduction of new pathways and uncertain ultimate outcomes. A more detailed theory of change can be developed retrospectively using [Outcome Harvesting](#).

[Identifying potential unintended results](#): It is not possible to predict all the impacts that might emerge from an intervention with complex aspects. These impacts can be positive or negative, and once identified responses can be developed. Therefore R,M&E plans need to have some way of looking backwards to identify and document these (such as through open-ended questions in interviews).

## **Frame**

[Identify primary intended users](#): There may be different views about who to include, there may be multiple users. Primary intended users may have different information needs because of their different roles and priorities.

[Deciding on the purpose](#): The evaluation's purpose might need to change to support emerging findings and learning. How programs are implemented may change as a result. The primary intended users and their needs should be reviewed and revised to accommodate change.

[Specify the key R,M&E questions](#): It is likely that there will be differing views that need to be taken into account about what the key R,M&E questions should be. In addition, the boundaries may need adjusting as situations change, particularly with the emergence of new understandings, stakeholders and ideas.

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

[Sample](#): Samples should include multiple perspectives, to understand differences in experiences in different settings. Complex interventions might need sampling strategies that can be adapted to suit emerging issues and understandings, such as using 'purposeful' sampling (selecting based on what is useful or most interesting) to follow up emerging patterns and findings.

[Use measures, indicators or metrics](#): The selection and creation of outcome and impact indicators is a tricky area for C4D since emergent outcomes are hard to predict and are different in each context.

[Collect and/or retrieve data](#): Data methods should be chosen for how well they will show different perspectives and experiences, and increase understanding of how contextual factors influence outcomes. In complicated and complex interventions, quick methods (compared to slow methods like national surveys) will be more useful for informing adaptive implementation of C4D.

[Analyse data](#): Simple averages, frequency tables and graphs will not be enough to represent complicated and complex aspects of C4D interventions. At the very least, there should be disaggregation in tables and diagrams to show differential effects on different sub-groups. Time-lines can be important for showing non-linear change over time.

**Manage data:** Where there are multiple project partners, it is important to pay attention to data quality across organisations, data security when sharing data, and compatibility of IT systems. To support adaptive implementation of C4D it is useful to have data management systems that can quickly produce different types of reports in response to changing information needs.

## **Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)**

**Investigate Causal Attribution and Contribution:** To understand the causal contribution it is important to also understand the contributions of other programs and contextual factors. Strategies to investigate this must be in the evaluation design.

## **Synthesise**

**Generalising findings:** Although there may rarely be a one-size-fits-all set of recommendations for C4D, there may be some key principles or insights about the kinds of contextual factors that have most influence and can be generalised.

## **Report and support use**

**Identifying Reporting Requirements:** Different primary intended users may have different preferences for receiving reports. They may also have different interests and time scales for applying the findings. Thoughtful reporting strategies that suit the user's needs and timeframes can help facilitate an adaptive approach to C4D work.

## **Case example**

### **Retrospective Analysis study of Open Defecation in Nadia District, India**

The WASH team and the C4D team in UNICEF India was working with the government on two pilot approaches to ending open defecation when a separate district (Nadia district) started gaining attention as the first district in India to be declared Open Defecation Free. UNICEF India decided to undertake a study of how this had been achieved in order to see what could be learned or adapted for other parts of the country. This is consistent with the C4D Framework in the following ways:

- **Complexity:** Targeted investigations to understand successful cases and whether aspects can be replicated and adapted elsewhere is good practice in complex situations.
- **Holistic:** The quantitative data showed that the case was a success, and more open, holistic and qualitative methods were used to complement that knowledge to understand how and why it had worked in that case.
- **Critical:** While the quantitative data indicated that the case was 100% successful, the study also set out to understand how different groups had been affected, and the extent to which differences in caste, wealth, geographic location, gender and other factors influence the likelihood of sustaining those changes.

# Resources

- [Monitoring and evaluation of participatory theatre for change](#)

Includes guidance on theories of change, recognising that multiple theories of change combine to achieve change. Although it has been developed for participatory theatre, the 'Reach, Resonance and Response' framing could be adapted to a range of C4D initiatives.

This resource is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- Complex: The guide outlines six different, interconnected theories and assumptions as part of the overall Theory of Change. It is a good example of how multiple theories can be used.
- Realistic: 'Reach, Resonance and Response' framing provides a powerful yet manageable way to think through how different theories combine in an initiative. The guide outlines six core theories of change but encourages users to choose only those that relate to the initiative.
- Holistic: while the theories of change provided are general to participatory theatre, the guide suggests that only the relevant theories are selected and that theories are adapted and informed by context/conflict analysis.

- [Democracy, governance, and randomised media assistance](#)

This resource draws on findings from a research report BBC Media action on the use of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and other experimental and quasi-experimental designs with a counterfactual in the field of media and communication for development. This review is helpful for understanding what kinds of C4D initiatives are amenable to experimental designs, and which types tend to be too complicated and complex to allow for these strategies for causal analysis.

- Accountable: program teams are often asked to consider experimental designs, since this kind of evaluation can provide credible evidence about whether a program works. However, being accountable also means understanding when this approach is feasible and will deliver credible results.

- [Compare results to the counterfactual](#)

The C4D Evaluation Framework would suggest the need to reflect the following issues when considering using an experimental design:

- Complexity: as with all experimental and quasi-experimental designs, this creation of a counterfactual in the design of the research initiative required standardised implementation, and therefore did not allow the flexibility for adaptive and emergent approaches to C4D to be used.
- Participatory: experimental and quasi-experimental designs are generally not associated with participatory approaches, due to the need for standardisation and specific technical expertise.

## C4D: Critical

### **Power; difference; equity; multiple perspectives**

Including different perspectives highlights the critical importance of paying attention to power. Our approach to R,M&E needs to actively address issues of equity and diversity by paying attention to gender, caste, class, ethnicity, age, status, education and other relevant differences. Design and implementation of RM&E can

build upon the strengths and limitations of different evaluation approaches and methods; to find the right approaches for your evaluation questions and include all relevant voices and perspectives.

## **Where do we start?**

It is important to pay attention to issues of unequal power and maintain a critical-thinking mindset while undertaking all RM&E tasks. This is vital for a meaningful participatory R,M&E approach, and the best defense against tokenistic participation and bias in RM&E. A good place to start is by developing a plan for [Reviewing the RM&E \(meta evaluation\)](#) to embed critical reflection throughout the RM&E planning and implementation process.

## **Incorporating and implementing participatory approaches in practice**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

#### Understand and engage stakeholders:

Ensure an equity lens when thinking about stakeholders. Make sure you are not just working with the easy-to-reach groups. Think about differences in voice and power within each stakeholder groups. While the inclusion of representatives can be a good way to ensure integration of marginalised voices it can also be problematic. Are representatives truly representative or are there differences in power and class within the group they represent? Is there a risk of wealth-bias, literacy-bias, roadside-bias and other biases identified by Robert Chambers?

#### Establish decision making processes:

It is important to critically reflect on and remove any barriers to participation in decision making (e.g. geography of meeting locations, frequency of the meetings, logistics, language, etc.).

#### Decide who will conduct the R,M&E:

What are the assumptions about who should conduct the R,M&E? What alternatives are there, and how might they be more or less inclusive of diverse voices? What kinds of qualities are important for a facilitator/evaluator? How will might different facilitators influence power dynamics?

#### Define ethical and quality standards for R,M&E:

It is important to question existing sets of standards and their relevance in the local setting. We need to ask: whose interests and expectations are reflected in the quality and ethical standards? what are the assumptions embedded in the standards? what other perspectives are missing from those standards?

#### Develop Planning Documents (Evaluation Plans and MnE Frameworks):

It is important to reflect on power imbalances in the development of these strategic documents. Who has control over the creation and any adaptations to documents? How accessible are documents? Some types of strategic documents, such as Logical Frameworks, reflect Western styles of thinking and planning.

#### Review evaluation (meta evaluation):

Critical reflection throughout all aspects of the RM&E helps to maintain the quality of the RM&E and identify areas for improvement or extra attention. It is particularly important where participatory RM&E

approaches are used in order to maintain an eye to issues of power and voice. Developing meta evaluation processes helps to formalise the processes and procedures that will incorporate this in to an implementable plan for regular critical reflection.

#### Develop RM&E capacity:

Lack of local capacity can lead to exclusion of local voices and perspectives. Partnerships and capacity building within local community groups and institutions is important so that there is genuine inclusion and contribution of local voices and perspectives. Pay critical attention to power dynamics in capacity building partnerships.

### **Define**

#### Developing a program theory/logic model:

Program theories should consider how a program might work for different groups, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups. Theories and models should be developed with and alongside groups that experience marginalisation. This helps to develop a program theory/logic model that is sensitive to what might work (and what doesn't) for whom in what circumstances.

#### Identifying potential unintended results:

Unintended results may not affect everybody, and adverse outcomes for minority groups may not be obvious in the data. A critical approach to the identification of unintended results (with contributions from local groups) is important for understanding how C4D initiatives are affecting the least powerful.

### **Frame**

#### Identify primary intended users:

It is important to bring a critical lens to this process, and ensure that the primary intended users are not only those with formal, hierarchical power. The processes for engaging with primary intended users should address issues of power and control to ensure the needs and values of the less powerful are not excluded.

#### Specify the key R,M&E questions:

In C4D it is important that questions are framed in such a way that allows for multiple and diverse voices to contribute answers. This is important for descriptive questions, causal questions and evaluative questions.

#### Determine what 'success' looks like:

Whose criteria and standards are reflected are whose are excluded? What are the assumptions? Could the vision of success be enriched through the inclusion of different perspectives?

### **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

#### Sample:

Sampling should pay attention to equity dimensions, and ensure that the most vulnerable groups are represented, and that the data is able to be disaggregated. Additional effort might be needed to get adequate coverage of more remote, more disadvantaged groups due to known biases such as: roadside bias, seasonal bias, pro-literacy bias, etc.

#### Use measures, indicators or metrics:

Indicators should specify the required data disaggregations (often this needs to include age, sex, income, levels of vulnerability etc.). Local groups and institutions should be meaningfully involved in the process of developing and using indicators. This inclusion of local perspectives and attention to equity reduces the risk of indicators incentivising easier reach to populations to achieve targets.

#### Collect and/or retrieve data:

Consider weaknesses of methods in terms of equity, power and voice. Critically reflect on how certain methods may distort, exclude or silence particular perspectives.

#### Analysing data:

The data analysis process should involve looking for differences, exceptions, and a critical analysis of power. Participatory data analysis processes can help draw out these differences. In these cases it is important to reflect on who should be involved in analysis, how to ensure meaningful contribution.

#### Visualising the data:

From a communication of results perspective, data visualisation can help as many groups as possible to engage with data and findings and [make reports accessible](#).

### **Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)**

#### Investigate causal attribution and contribution:

It is important to pay attention to the different ways that C4D initiatives affect different groups.

[Counterfactual-based designs](#) (strategy 1) can show differences experienced by different groups through data disaggregations (looking at different variables). However, mechanisms to create a comparison groups (such as incentives) may disguise power differences.

Critical reflection on power dynamics and inclusion might therefore make strategy 2: [Check the results support causal attribution](#) and Strategy 3: [Investigate possible alternative explanations](#) better options.

### **Synthesise**

#### Synthesise data from a single study/evaluation:

Consider whose voices are included and excluded from the process of weighing up findings and making judgements.

#### Synthesise data across evaluations:

Ensure a critical and equity-focused approach by exploring what works for whom and in what circumstances.

#### Generalise Findings:

Consider who the initiative has worked for and where (who has it not worked for) and how this might translate to other contexts (places, people and groups). When using participatory approaches to generalising findings, consider whose perspectives are included and silenced in this process.

### **Report and support use**

#### Identify reporting requirements:

Critically reflect on the assumptions relating to reporting. It is important to ask: are there good reasons why reporting must take certain forms? are there ways in which certain reporting requirements exclude or favour certain groups? whose needs are being served by the reporting requirements?

### Ensure accessibility:

Because of the nature of C4D, there is likely to be a greater emphasis on communicating with diverse groups. How might differences in age, status, gender, geography, as well as disability, literacy, language, and education affect access, both physical access and access based on abilities?

### Developing recommendations:

There is a need to ensure that the recommendations includes a range of voices and perspectives, taking into account the power inequities between stakeholders.

## Challenges and strategies

### Who is excluded?

It can be difficult, especially when using participatory approaches, to know exactly what to do when certain people or groups are being excluded or silenced by more powerful groups. There is no easy answer to this, but recognising that power is present in participatory settings is a good first step. Solutions will vary from case to case, and creativity and group reflections will be important. For example, could you separate larger groups into smaller groups of similar people (e.g. groups of women, men, girls, community leaders, farmers etc.). A highly recommended resource to develop thinking about power and how it is present in your R,M&E practice is [a discussion about different dimensions and aspects of power on the Participatory Methods website by IDS](#).

## Resources

- [Power, on the Participatory Methods website](#)

An introductory page on different ways of analysing power, such as visible, hidden and invisible; power to, power with, power within; public, private, intimate; socialised and internalised. The Participatory Methods website also lists tools and resources to help analyse power, and work towards transformative change.

- [Facilitating workshops for the co-generation of knowledge: 21 tips](#)

This set of tips, written by Robert Chambers, are useful ideas for successful workshop facilitation towards learning, sharing and co-generating knowledge. Some of the tips offer practical ways to think ahead about how to manage power differences, for example, between government officials or VIPs, and other groups.

- [Doing qualitative field research on gender norms with adolescent girls and their families](#)

this resource includes practical advice, examples and tools to ensure gender sensitivity in evaluation and research with adolescent girls. The guide takes seriously the gender specific considerations that are required for ethical evaluation research and provides practical tools.

- [Participatory rural communication appraisal starting with the people](#)

This is a C4D resource developed in the context of C4D and rural development but applicable to other program focus areas. This is an excellent resource that provides guidance on how to work with community groups and institutions in participatory and learning-based ways to ensure that they are involved in deciding what kind of evidence and success they would like to generate from development interventions.

[The principles underpinning PRCA](#) incorporate power-sensitive approaches to participation, including recognising gender-dimensions, the need for a humble facilitator, and the ways in which the power of local communities may be undervalued and hidden.

The resource also deals directly with issues such as biases common to C4D R,M&E such as: roadside bias, visibility bias, wealth bias, pro-literacy bias and others. It includes [strategies for avoiding these biases](#), including how it is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework.

## **C4D: Accountable**

### **Transparent; rigour; multiple; quality**

Accountability means demonstrating results communities, partners, funders and policy makers. R,M&E that is rigorous, transparent and relevant will produce evidence for accountability. In C4D our primary responsibility is to be listening to, learning from and reporting to community groups and partners. Achieving accountability depends on having clear and shared expectations about what is to be evaluated, what the evaluation questions are, and how you will go about answering them. Understanding who you are accountable to also requires clarity.

### **Where do we start?**

[Deciding on the purpose](#), and more specifically how the primary intended users of the RM&E intend to use the findings and what their expectations are, and how this balances with [Learning-based](#) purposes. Being clear about the purpose helps to guide decisions about quality standards, rigour, and reporting.

## **Incorporating and implementing accountability approaches in practice**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

[Understand and engage stakeholders](#): As part of understanding and engaging stakeholders it can be useful think about accountability in a multi-dimensional sense, including accountability to donors (upward accountability and reporting), and accountability to colleagues, partners and collaborators and communities (horizontal accountability).

[Define ethical and quality evaluation standards](#): The quality and ethical standards for C4D R,M&E should reflect the expectations of all the people and groups we are accountable to (donors and managers, partners and community groups). Defining and following quality and ethical standards is important for maintaining accountability and integrity in RM&E. Ensuring ethical practices in RM&E is a responsibility of everyone involved in the R,M&E.

[Document management processes and agreements](#): Transparent and thorough record-keeping of management processes and agreements supports accountability to all stakeholders in RM&E processes.

## **Define**

[Identify potential unintended results](#): Unintended results can be both positive and negative. As part of being accountable it is important to minimise any harm from unintended results from C4D. We need to use tools to help us predict (as far as possible) unintended outcomes, together with monitoring processes to identify and respond to unpredictable and negative unintended impacts as quickly as possible.

## **Frame**

[Identify primary intended users](#): We often assume that the primary intended users of RM&E are the manager and donors. In C4D we think more broadly about who might use the RM&E. Key users in C4D usually include community groups, partners and others with roles in planning and implementation. The C4D and the R,M&E should be accountable to all of these groups.

[Deciding on the purpose](#): R,M&E can be useful for accountability purposes, because it can be used to report back to all people and groups connected to the C4D initiative (including donors, managers, partners, community groups, 'beneficiaries' and others).

[Determine what 'success' looks like](#): Working with community groups, partners and others to find agreement about what success might look like means that everybody knows and understands what values are used to make judgements about a program. In other words, the criteria and values to judge success are shared and transparent.

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

[Sample](#): Thoughtful and thorough sampling helps to make the R,M&E design more rigorous. In quantitative (numbers based) methods sampling the sample size and the sample selection are key to making credible claims about the findings. In qualitative (words, stories, visual) methods, sharing details about the sample and selection process increases credibility and trustworthiness.

[Use measures, indicators or metrics](#): We usually think about indicators as being useful for reporting and accountability to managers and donors. Indicators should also be used for providing partners, communication groups and others participating in the intervention with information about what was achieved/not achieved, and the importance of the indicators for their community. When using the data from indicators in this way, it is important to acknowledge that the information is simplified and partial, and that other types of information are usually needed to make informed decisions about the intervention.

[Combine qualitative and quantitative data](#): A key part of being accountable is rigour. Combining data from different data collection methods boosts the rigour by providing different perspectives and ways to understand a problem.

[Analyse data](#): Those involved in data analysis are in a powerful position of meaning making. It is important that the processes used to analyse data are rigorous, systematic and transparent.

[Manage Data](#): C4D emphasises good data management and ownership processes that are respectful, ethical, and responsible. It is important to agree to policies and processes that prevent or minimise harm (especially for vulnerable groups). These discussions should take place before, during and after the data collection.

## **Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)**

## Investigate Causal Attribution and Contribution

A central question in RM&E from an accountability perspective is 'what has been the impact (or contribution) of C4D to observed changes'. Answering this question rigorously requires selecting carefully from three causal analysis strategies:

- [Compare results to a counterfactual](#);
- [Check the results support causal attribution](#);
- [Investigate possible alternative explanations](#)).

## **Synthesise**

[Synthesise Data from a Single Study/Evaluation](#): By undertaking data synthesis processes we can make findings based on different sources of evidence and voices. This is useful tool for accountability to partners and community groups, and to donors and managers.

## **Report and support use**

[Identifying Reporting Requirements](#): Reports from R,M&E are usually focused on satisfying the needs of donor and managers. These are important users, but it is also important to think about the reporting needs of other groups we are accountable to. This includes partners, community groups, local institutions and other stakeholders.

[Developing recommendations](#): How can social accountability principles be used to ensure that recommendations from stakeholders are heard and meaningfully considered?

[Supporting use](#): To achieve social accountability it is critical that recommendations from different stakeholders are heard and meaningfully considered by decision makers. Committed and transparent processes to ensure that the findings (both positive and negative) from R,M&E are used is an important part of accountability.

## **Challenges and strategies**

### **Audience for reporting**

Systems like Results-Based Management tend to prioritise reporting to managers and donors, rather than accountability to partners and community groups. C4D can lead the charge in advocating for a multi-dimensional understanding of accountability, as set out in the SDGs

### **What does success look like?**

In Results-Based Management, accountability is usually judged based on how well the initiative followed planned processes. This is not as suitable in complex situations or where experimentation and adaptability are key.

The following tasks and approaches can be useful for thinking about alternatives:

- [Determine what 'success' looks like](#): this task is about being transparent about what 'success' means to different groups. Experimentation and learning could be part of what is valued.
- There are different ways to develop M&E Frameworks, including using Outcome Mapping, which sets out different ways of monitoring performance. Alternatives are discussed in [Develop Planning](#)

[Documents](#) (Evaluation Plans and MnE Frameworks).

## Fear of failure

Too much focus on ‘accountability’ for ‘results’ can make people fear failure. In C4D where outcomes are less controllable and predictable, teams might start limiting the objectives they set. This can also lead to less collaboration, where sections or organisations (in a joint project) only work on areas that they are accountable/responsible for. The Theory of Change is a useful way to create a holistic overview of how we think different parts of the project contribute to change (see [Develop program theory or logic model](#)). Concepts like the sphere of control, sphere of influence, and sphere of concern, borrowed from [Outcome Mapping](#), can be useful for identifying the degree to which teams should be expected to be accountable for changes.

## Methodological rigour

A common perception within some organisations is that high quality and credible evaluations require quantitative data

There are certainly ways to ensure rigour and quality in mixed-methods and qualitative designs. The following tasks can be useful:

- Use the [Questions-Led ME Framework](#) resource, which is based on the idea that methods should be chosen based on how well they will answer questions in the local context. These steps help ensure well-considered decisions.
- [Define ethical and quality evaluation standards](#): this task includes advice for identifying quality standards, and how to make sure these are followed.
- [Identify primary intended users](#) and [Decide purpose](#): these interlinked steps should clarify who will use the R,M&E and what they will use it for. If the users or the purposes requires being sensitive to what certain people believe is 'credible', that might in fact be a good reason to select particular

## Case Examples

- [Measuring Empowerment? Ask Them: Quantifying qualitative outcomes from people’s own analysis](#)

by Jupp, D. & Ali, S. I. (with contribution from C. Barahona).

This case offers an alternative model for creating indicators. Participatory processes were used to develop and measure progress against indicators of community empowerment. Accountability in this case is primarily maintained at the community level, but the data generated was repurposed for upward reporting requirements.

- [U-report](#)

U-Report is an SMS-based, user-centered social monitoring tool which supports social accountability. U-Report supports social accountability by providing a platform on which citizens can voice concerns and priorities and provide feedback to governments, development agencies and other decision makers.

## Resources

- [A toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation](#)

This 6-part toolkit provides guidance on how to monitor and evaluate children's participation in programmes, communities, and in wider society. It promotes participatory approaches to involve children in the monitoring and evaluation process.

## **C4D: Realistic**

### **Pragmatic; mixed-methods; grounded; flexible**

To be most effective, R,M&E approaches and methods need to be grounded in local realities. This requires openness, freedom, flexibility and realism in planning and implementing R,M&E and in the selection of approaches, methodologies and methods. This approach aims to increase the usefulness of evaluation results, which should focus on intended, unintended, expected, unexpected, negative and positive change. Long-term engagement with organizations and communities ensures effectiveness and sustainability, and a long-term perspective on both evaluation and social change.

### **Where do we start?**

In order to make decisions about what is feasible and practical, it is important to understand what resources are available and seek additional resources where required. A good place to start is the [Determine and secure resources](#) task.

## **Incorporating and implementing critical approaches in practice**

### **Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system**

#### **Determine and secure resources:**

Securing the resources needed, particularly funding, for R,M&E of C4D is a common challenge. This task is a foundational task for being realistic in the approach to R,M&E of C4D.

#### **Define ethical and quality standards for R,M&E:**

In C4D the ethical standards should cover sharing results and findings in accessible ways (especially with marginalised groups and those who were consulted in the data collection and report writing process) as an ethical responsibility. This also helps with promoting a [learning-based](#) culture and continuous learning.

#### **Document management processes and agreements:**

Pay attention to the description of the Scope of Work and make sure it matches the funding available. Experienced consultants can see (and will avoid) Terms of References that ask too much within too little time and without adequate resources. Use the [Determine and secure resources](#) task to make sure the resources available match the scope and consider cheaper options.

#### **Develop R,M&E capacity:**

Not all capacity building work should start from scratch. What existing systems and ‘communities of practice’ can be used to enhance capacities and strengthen networks? Prior to implementing capacity building ensure a capacity needs assessment (which could be rapid) has been undertaken.

## **Define**

### Develop an initial description:

This process can be useful for defining the boundaries (geographical and timeframe) of the initiative and R,M&E. It is important to be realistic about what kinds of outcomes or impacts can be expected within certain timeframes.

## **Frame**

### Specify the key R,M&E questions:

In C4D the questions should be written in a way that calls for need for various methods and tools that will capture people's voices.

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

### Collect and/or retrieve data:

Choices about methods must remain practical, pragmatic, and feasible, and fit with the available resources. This may involve compromise to remain realistic, however, in C4D ensuring that local needs, voices and experiences are given prominence should remain a priority.

### Combine qualitative and quantitative data:

As part of being realistic, the C4D Evaluation Framework advocates for the use of mixed-methods. This doesn't mean that every R,M&E activity must include both qualitative and quantitative data, however. For example, a qualitative study might be needed to fill gaps in quantitative data or indicators.

### Analysing data:

Additional resources may be required for analysing qualitative data (words-based data i.e. spoken or written, stories, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, videos etc.). In C4D, qualitative data is often critical to understanding contexts and changes. Qualitative data analysis (summarising and looking for patterns and themes) can be more time consuming compared to quantitative data, and requires different sets of skills.

## **Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)**

### Investigate Causal Attribution and Contribution:

Feasibility and availability of expertise might be factors when deciding on methods for investigating causes.

Experimental and quasi-experimental designs (strategy 1) don't necessarily take more time and resources, but they do depend on a number of practical factors including: upfront investment in planning and design; and the ability to plan the C4D intervention around the needs of the experiment.

Where these things are not possible, it might be more pragmatic to use:

- Strategy 2: [Check the results support causal attribution](#) and;
- Strategy 3: [Investigate possible alternative explanations](#).

## Synthesise

### [Synthesise data across evaluations](#):

Lower cost options, such as [rapid evidence assessment](#), are useful where there is a need to realistically balance the available resources and the need for quality data and rigour.

## Report and support use

### [Develop reporting media](#):

While there are many great options that may be ideal for communicating with different groups, it is also important to be realistic about how many different options are feasible. There may need to be trade-offs in relation how many different media are used, the quality of production and other factors.

## Challenges and strategies

In an ideal world there would be enough resources to do a perfect evaluation. In the real world, small budgets and a lack of time mean that compromises might be necessary. How do you decide where to compromise? And how to you maintain the integrity and usefulness?

It is important first to be clear about the resources that are available, and to think broadly about resources (including staff time, knowledge, existing sources of data etc.) and how to seek additional. Advice of this nature is outlined in [Determine and secure resources](#). Thinking about the match between the design and the available resources is often something we have to return to. It involves thinking creatively to make the best use of resources. Are there adaptations that can be made to make data collection methods more 'rapid' and small scale? See [Collect and/or retrieve data](#). Are there ways to value and synthesise tacit knowledge of stakeholders to achieve the goals? See [Synthesise data across evaluations](#).

Indicators for C4D poses challenges in terms of feasibility and practicality. Existing data sets usually don't cover C4D dimensions, however, commissioning data collection for indicators is often not feasible.

Remember that indicators are signs or signals of progress. Although it often takes the form of population or household data, perhaps there are other things that might be 'good enough' signals of progress? Or are there proxy indicators that could be used (with a clear understanding from collaborators about the limitations)? Read more on the [Use measures, indicators or metrics](#) page.

Data collection systems using technology can be a realistic solution. Although it requires some upfront investment, in the long term household surveys are much more feasible. See the [T-Watoto](#) case example.

## Case example

In Vietnam the assessment of the VAC Campaign had a relatively small budget of approximately \$10,000USD. The original plan for the assessment had to be scaled back to be feasible within the scope. However, with careful planning and strategic selection of samples (two field sites), methods and tools, and data sources, a useful report that met the needs of the key users was achieved.

## Barefoot M&E

The Barefoot Impact Evaluation methodology was developed in the context of a UNESCO/UNDP Media Project in Mozambique (see [the Communication Initiative website](#)) as a cost-effective, simple and practical R,M&E methodology to be designed and implemented by community radio, with little or not external support. It uses a range of local tools and solutions to build R,M&E plans around the opportunities that are available. It was designed to be just enough to 'check the pulse' of the radio, but not too burdensome. The techniques used have wide applicability, and could be adapted to suit a range of different C4D NGO and other contexts. Some of the realistic, barefoot techniques include:

- an internal self-assessment 'check-up' using a checklist
- 'hearing out' the community, where informal interviews with community members on their satisfaction are added onto routine contact with communities
- Registration of callers and letters to the station, with forms left by the phones so that demographic information of callers can be recorded
- feedback questions on the back of message slips (message slips are primarily to request announcements are made, but 30% of people also filled in the questionnaire on the back)
- interviews with people living in the staff members' neighbourhood, which enable some spread of the sample
- interviewing at public events
- some M&E is undertaken by a 'community mobilizer', who is a paid staff member at the station and is trained to undertake more in-depth focus group discussions and interviews.

This exemplar is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- [Realistic](#) The low-cost 'barefoot' approach focuses on make the most of limited resources. Although does not meet academic standards in terms of sampling and rigour, it is good enough for the context in which is it to be used.
- [Participatory](#) The approach is intended to be managed and implemented by community radio stations with a nominated community mobilizer.
- [Learning-based](#) The key users of the assessments are the community radio stations themselves. If they use it for learning and improving, the M&E is meeting the purpose.

## Resources

- [52 weeks of BetterEvaluation: Week 13: Evaluation on a shoestring](#)

Many organisations are having to find ways of doing more for less – including doing evaluation with fewer resources.

## C4D: Learning-based

### **Action-learning; adaptive; capacity development; critical reflection**

In a learning-based approach RM&E is integrated into the whole programme cycle and involves all staff and stakeholders. This principle draws on some of the core principles of action learning and participatory action

research (PAR), including iterative reflection on implementation for continual improvement. Involving a broad group of stakeholders in R,M&E requires attention to capacity development and learning processes and events.

## Where do we start?

It can be useful to begin by [Reviewing R,M&E \(meta evaluation\)](#) with a focus on previous efforts in order to understand: what worked well? what didn't work well? who was involved? how can the current initiative build on that?

To consider how learning fits into a new R,M&E initiative begin by [Deciding on the purpose](#), and more specifically how the primary intended users intended to use R,M&E can help to clarify the expectations in terms of learning from R,M&E, and how this balances with [accountability](#)-focused purposes.

[Develop R,M&E capacity](#), which should begin with an assessment of existing capacities, can also be a starting point for implementing the learning-based principle. It is especially useful to think about how capacity building processes can support [participatory](#) approaches to R,M&E.

## Incorporating and implementing learning-based approaches in practice

### Manage (and commission) an evaluation or evaluation system

#### [Understand and engage stakeholders:](#)

To effectively implement the C4D Evaluation Framework, a receptive organisational and community context and culture is required. Staff of organisations at all levels and relevant community members need to be willing to engage in constant reflection and learning from R,M&E in order to continually develop and improve organisational systems and C4D initiatives. This is dependent upon meaningful stakeholder engagement in the beginning and continuing throughout implementation.

#### [Establish decision making processes:](#)

Decision making processes and structures (such as an ongoing technical working group) should emphasise leadership and responsibilities for knowledge management, exchange and utilisation to ensure continuous learning, mutual understanding and creative ideas and thinking.

#### [Decide who will conduct the R,M&E:](#)

In contexts where it is difficult to find available, local evaluators with the skills and knowledge to be able to undertake C4D evaluation and studies, partnerships with capacity building components can be considered.

#### [Develop Planning Documents \(Evaluation Plans and MnE Frameworks\):](#)

Learning events, structures and processes (inclusive of all partners and community groups involved in implementation) should be built into M&E Frameworks and Evaluation/Research Plans. M&E Frameworks should be flexible enough to accommodate emergent issues. Some organisations are starting to refer to 'Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation Frameworks' to emphasise the importance of considering how frameworks can support learning in addition to producing information.

#### [Document management processes and agreements:](#)

Recruiting consultants with expertise in both C4D and the specific program area can be challenging. It is even more difficult when seeking local or regionally based consultants. Consider what kinds of expertise are required, what kinds are desirable, and what kinds are easily translatable from similar fields and approaches. Also consider whether capacity building and mentoring partnerships can be incorporated to fill gaps. See also [Decide who will conduct the research/evaluation](#) (or other study or monitoring).

#### [Reviewing R,M&E \(meta evaluation\):](#)

Including review or meta-evaluation processes in C4D R,M&E systems is a key part of being learning-based, using critical reflection processes, and it contributes to capacity development. The aim is to continually strengthen and improve R,M&E processes so that they better meet the needs of the people and organisations involved and help to create more sustainable, learning-oriented C4D organisations and initiatives.

#### [Develop R,M&E capacity:](#)

Including capacity development processes in C4D R,M&E systems is a key part of being [learning-based](#). This process should begin with a preliminary assessment of R,M&E capacities of local groups and institutions. What sort of ongoing training, support or mentoring might be needed? What sorts of local research training institutions are available? How can this best be delivered?

## **Define**

#### [Develop initial description:](#)

This process should be seen as open to revision as the R,M&E proceeds and new learnings emerge that have implications for the focus of the M&E.

#### [Developing a program theory/logic model:](#)

Program Theories and logic models can be used at various stages of the program cycle. In a learning-based approach, these would be developed over time as more knowledge becomes available:

- The design stage of the strategic planning process should include the development of a theory of change. For example, this might be one of the last tasks of a situation analysis.
  - This may be revisited mid-cycle, especially in more complex and unpredictable initiatives where it is more likely it is that you will need to revise and build on your theory of change as you learn more.
- In evaluation studies and final evaluations program theories should inform the design of evaluations. Revising (or, where none exist, creating) a program theory may be one of the first tasks of the evaluation.

## **Frame**

#### [Deciding on the purpose:](#)

The approach advocated by the C4D Evaluation Framework is to use R,M&E processes for adaptive and learning-based process, so that findings can be fed into ongoing C4D activities. This is because most C4D activities are complicated or complex (to understand the nature of your activity see [Complexity](#)).

## **Describe (to answer descriptive questions)**

#### [Use measures, indicators or metrics:](#)

Indicator selection should be focused on the type of 'summary' information that can tell us whether or not the intervention is 'on track' in terms of its implementation and anticipated results. Where the intervention content or implementation needs to be very adaptive and/or the results cannot be fully defined in advance (such as in complex situations), different indicators may need to be selected at different times during the intervention period. The indicators should help to answer the 'key learning questions' that are posed at various times.

#### Data management:

Related to the participatory approach, it is important to consider whether stakeholders may need capacity building support to be able to effectively manage data.

### **Understand causes (to answer questions about causes and contributions)**

#### Investigate Causal Attribution and Contribution:

The learning needs may determine which combination of strategies will be most useful. While [designs creating a counterfactual \(strategy 1\)](#) are best in situations where strong hypotheses (theories) are known and need to be tested and proven, they are not as well suited in more exploratory situations.

A combination of Strategy 2: [Check the results support causal attribution](#) and Strategy 3: [Investigate possible alternative explanations \(strategy 3\)](#) can be used where there is a need to learn about and better understandings of causes and changes.

### **Report and support use**

#### Supporting use:

This task contributes to a learning-based approach through taking seriously the tasks associated with supporting the use of findings in future programs and phases.

## **Challenges and strategies**

People often assume that 'learning' is just a given part of any R,M&E that has recommendations and lessons learned section of the report, and assume that no special attention or planning is required.

Being learning-based is both an approach, and a set of deliberate processes and strategies. It's an approach that requires more flexible, adaptive systems to allow for initiatives to grow and change as more understanding is developed. Deliberate processes and strategies, such as [Reviewing R,M&E \(meta evaluation\)](#), [Developing R,M&E capacity](#), and thorough processes to [Generalise findings](#), [Develop recommendations](#), and [support use](#) are key to a committed learning-based approach. Examples may include learning-committees, annual reviews etc.

People sometimes assume that being 'learning-based' demonstrates a lack of commitment to accountability.

The C4D Evaluation Framework would suggest that learning is a form of accountability. In most cases these two purposes can be balanced. See the [Decide purpose](#) task to work through the options.

How can we be adaptive and emergent in our approach using Results Frameworks?

It is quite hard to be adaptive and emergent when using Results Frameworks. Although they can be adjusted at certain times, they require heavy planning and are difficult to use for truly adaptive and emergent implementation. There are other options. See [Develop Planning Documents \(Evaluation Plans and M&E](#)

[Frameworks](#)) for details of options compatible with adaptive and emergent approaches.

## Case Studies

- [A study of the drivers of violence against children - Positive change in Tanzania and Zanzibar](#)

International collaboration for capacity building as part of the KAP study of VAC in Tanzania

In 2014 UNICEF Tanzania Country Office in collaboration with Government commissioned University of Huddersfield – the Centre for Applied Childhood Studies in partnership with Mzumbe University in Tanzania, to undertake a study entitled: The Drivers of Violence Against Children in Tanzania, a participatory action research exploring knowledge, attitudes and socio-cultural practices that contribute to violence against children in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar.

This is an example of a learning based approach in the following ways:

As part of the study a mentoring relationship between UK researchers and local university researchers was set up. This initiative brought together researchers from the UK (University of Huddersfield) and researchers from a local university (Mzumbe University in Tanzania) in a mentoring relationship. In addition, 10 researchers were recruited through Mzumbe University and trained to undertake community action research, and were deployed to research sites to recruit and train community researchers and child peer-researchers. The methods used in this initiative were not simply extractive (ascertaining people's views through qualitative research), but used participatory approaches to actively engage with stakeholders in iterative processes of learning. The 500 participants were supported to explore and critically reflect on the socio cultural factors that underpin violence against children, and through gaining a better understanding of the issues, explore possibilities for change. This example demonstrates the need to build the capacity in order to use participatory methods. The C4D Evaluation Framework would also highlight the following areas for consideration:

Realistic Those interested in replicating should be aware that the involvement of the UK researchers increased the budget, and this in turn impacted on the sustainability of the capacity after the initiative ended. The mentoring model could have been more sustainable and cost-effective if a regionally-based mentor institution was matched with a local institution.

- [Terms of reference for an action research approach to evaluation of She Can project - ActionAid](#)

This Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines the basis for the phased theory-based evaluation of the 'She Can' project.

## Resources

- [The IDEAS guide and facilitators' guide](#)

An entry-level guide for designing a learning-focused M&E Plan for C4D initiatives. The guide supports implementing teams to lead the design of the M&E plan.

This guide is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- Learning-based: The resource has a strong emphasis on using M&E during implementation to adjust the project direction as the project unfolds. It uses a metaphor of sailing to help users understand what a learning-based approach mean.

- Participatory: Each module in the resource outlines a group-based, often visual activity to explore options and make decisions in participatory ways in order to be accessible for people with little or no prior experience of M&E.
- Realistic: The resource was developed in the context of small-grants, so it is sensitive to the needs of small-scale initiatives. The language and processes are as simple as possible.
- Accountable: The resource includes a number of steps to map stakeholders and understand who has an interest in the findings of the M&E about the project. This includes funders, and may include others such as governments, community leaders, participants and others.
- [The community radio continuous improvement toolkit](#)

This toolkit is premised on a mix of self-assessment and peer-review towards co-learning and horizontal evaluation. In this case, it is fellow community radio station staff and volunteers who undertake the assessment. It was created in the context of community radios in India, but, with some adaptation of the questions, the processes and guidance could be applied to support peer-assessment between organisations doing a range of different types of C4D.

This resource is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- Learning-based: The peer-review methodology enables staff and volunteers and different community radio stations to learn from the experiences and innovations of other radio stations while undertaking the peer assessment. Often peer-reviewers come back to their own stations with new ideas to adapt. The purpose of the methodology is continual learning.
- Participatory: The peer-review process is participatory, with peer community radio station staff and volunteers engaging in critical and self-reflection meetings and workshops.
- Realistic: The process outlined is focused on working through and reflecting on a series of questions. Although it takes some time, it makes use of the knowledge and expertise of participants and is not overly burdensome.

It is important to consider the following:

- Accountable: Although the Indian Government has agreed to use this methodology in place of accountability- focused evaluation processes, the methodology is not about replicating external accountability R,M&E and is instead explicitly directed towards co-learning and continual improvement, towards building a community of practice. The methods of self-assessment and peer-review may not be considered rigorous enough in other circumstances where upward accountability and reporting are included as a purpose of R,M&E efforts.
- [Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal Manual](#)

This is a C4D resource developed in the context of C4D and rural development by FAO, with wide applicability to other program focus areas. This is an excellent resource that provides guidance on how to work with community groups and institutions in participatory and learning-based ways to ensure that they are involved in deciding what kind of evidence and success they would like to generate from development interventions.

- [Equal Access Community Researcher Manual for Publication](#)  
[PDF](#)  
[1.3 MB](#)

This manual is part of the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit developed with a C4D organisation (Equal Access). The Community Researcher Manual was developed for the community researchers working on a particular C4D project. It clearly explains the approach, the role of community researchers, the context and the tools to be used. It is consistent with the C4D Evaluation Framework in the following ways:

- **Learning-based** This is an example of a resource developed to build the capacity of community researchers
- **Participatory** Including community researchers and building their capacity to lead the research is a good example of how to build in participatory approaches.