

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.