Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

Queensland University of Technology

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Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit

Helping communication for development organisations to demonstrate impact, listen and learn, and improve their practices

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Toolkit contents

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This toolkit was developed as part of the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* (AC4SC) project which was conducted from 2007 - 2011. Significant outcomes and learnings from this action research project were drawn on to develop this toolkit. This project was a successful collaboration between Equal Access Nepal (EAN), Equal Access International (EAI), and two Australian universities: Queensland University of Technology and the University of Adelaide. The Chief Investigators for this project were Professor Jo Tacchi, Dr Andrew Skuse and Dr Michael Wilmore. Dr June Lennie was a Senior Research Associate with the project.

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Some of the materials in this toolkit are drawn from the *Ethnographic Action Research Training Handbook* (2007) written by Jo Tacchi and others (see http://ear.findingavoice.org/)

Acronyms

AC4SC	Assessing Communication for Social Change project
C4D	Communication for development
CFSC	Communication for Social Change
CLFS	Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions
CRs	Community researchers
DOC	Domains of change
EAN	Equal Access Nepal
EAR	Ethnographic Action Research
FDGs	Focus group discussions
MSC	Most Significant Change technique
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NN	Naya Nepal (New Nepal) radio program
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
QDA	Qualitative data analysis
SQS	Short questionnaire survey
SSMK	Saathi Sanga Manka Khura (Chatting with my best friend) radio program
TOC	Theory of change

Introduction and background to the Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit

What is this toolkit?

This toolkit provides a series of modules that you can use in your organisation to find out how well you are doing and what impacts your communication for development (C4D) programs are making. It is a key outcome of the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* (AC4SC) project which was undertaken in collaboration with Equal Access Nepal and Equal Access International. The toolkit is guided by principles of the Communication for Social Change approach to C4D (see box below) and the principles of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). It also based on recent ideas about effective evaluation and evaluation capacity development and our learnings from the AC4SC project.

Either the entire toolkit, or individual modules can be used. The toolkit takes a participatory approach to this task, and will encourage you to include as many people and stakeholders in your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) work as possible. It is largely qualitative, because through qualitative approaches you often learn something new and unexpected and gather rich insights into the subtle processes involved in social change. However, we encourage you to use a range of methods in your M&E work, including tools that will provide useful quantitative data.

Core principles of Communication for Social Change

- Meaningful involvement of people directly affected by an issue in all steps of the process (from dialogue to impact assessment).
- The belief that every voice should be listened to and heard.
- Participation in and local ownership of the communication process and the content of the communication.
- Local control of and access to communication is essential. A bottom up approach is favoured.
- Collective decision-making and collective action.
- Equity and respect for local cultures, cultural identify, beliefs and knowledge. The belief that what is happening in the community has an impact on the communication process and that effective communication must have an impact on communities as well as on individuals.
- Both private and public dialogue and negotiation is essential to communication and for lasting social change.

(adapted from Byrne et al., 2005, page 2)

M&E findings can challenge your ideas and assumptions about your audiences and the communities you are trying to reach, in very helpful ways. Your project is likely to fail if you don't understand your audiences and their issues. You may think that you know, perhaps from your own experience, or statistics, what your audiences think, and what they need … but when was the last time you checked?

This process involves taking risks, and challenging yourselves. Becoming an open, participatory, learning organisation presents a series of challenges - it may not be easy to give authority to, and deal appropriately with people who you consider to be less 'knowledgeable' on certain topics; it may challenge you to respect the ideas and views and experiences of others with different views from your own.

Equally it provides a series of opportunities – it allows you to be in close and meaningful collaboration with the people and groups who mean most to your work and organisation; it will help you to understand things from their points of view.

We think it's important to take **a long-term perspective that emphasises the benefits of participatory M&E, which are outweighed by the time and other resources required to effectively use PM&E**. These benefits include:

- Flexibility of the process
- Increased ownership of and engagement in the evaluation by program participants and other key stakeholders
- Better quality evaluation findings and outcomes
- Better use of evaluation results and recommendations
- Strengthened evaluation capacities
- Improved program impacts.

This toolkit is designed to help you navigate these challenges and make the most of these opportunities and benefits. It will ask you a series of questions, and in doing so, challenge you to think about what you are prepared to do in order to answer them.

Overview of the toolkit modules

This toolkit consists of six modules:

Module 1: Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process
Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators
Module 3: Research and PM&E methods
Module 4: Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions
Module 5: Doing qualitative data analysis
Module 6: Getting started and planning for PM&E and impact assessment

In addition, the toolkit contains a detailed Community Researcher manual and Most Significant Change technique manual and a list of useful resources, information and tools.

The following describes the main outcomes from using these six modules:

Module 1: Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process

This module aims to help you understand:

- how to analyse the stakeholder groups you want to engage in PM&E, their different roles, and how they will work together in the process
- how to map the communication flows and connections between stakeholders engaged in PM&E and identify and address communication barriers and issues
- how to identify who needs your PM&E outputs, what they need to know, and when they need to know it
- how to assess your communication and reporting capacities and needs
- the need to factor in sufficient time for PM&E processes into reporting cycles
- some possible strategies for preventing communication problems

Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators

This module aims to help you understand:

- the concept of indicators and what they can and cannot tell us
- how to set objectives and indicators
- why they are important
- how they can help you to assess the progress of your project
- the difference between SMART and SPICED indicators
- the importance of working closely with stakeholders to set indicators and define what change means to them

Module 3: Research and PM&E methods

This module aims to help you understand:

- how to collect rich qualitative data to understand your potential audiences and the impacts your programs have on them
- some key qualitative and short survey methods and when to use them
- what will make you a good facilitator, and how this is important in participatory approaches to M&E
- how to deepen and improve your data, and to probe important issues

Module 4: Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions

This module aims to help you understand:

- why radio programs targeted to C4D need Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions (CLFS) built into the organisation
- how CLFS can improve your radio programs
- the steps involved in undertaking CLFS
- how the process can be used with listeners in the community
- how the process can be used for pre and post tests of your radio programs
- how CLFS outcomes can be triangulated with other findings to get more rigorous results
- some of the challenges and limitations in using this method

Module 5: Doing qualitative data analysis

This module aims to help you understand:

- how good quality qualitative data analysis (QDA) can help you identify impacts of your programs to better meet your objectives and the needs of the community
- the steps involved in undertaking basic QDA, including repeated reading, analysis and interpretation
- the value of involving others in the QDA process
- the difference between description and interpretation
- the value of seeking feedback on your analysis and using triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of findings

Module 6: Getting started and planning for PM&E and impact assessment

This module aims to help you understand:

- The key steps to effectively developing a PM&E plan
- How to plan in terms of time, people and resources
- How to deal with power, gender, literacy and sensitive issues
- The ethical issues you need to consider when doing PM&E

Each of these modules includes several examples and other information provided by the M&E team at Equal Access Nepal. They are based on the tools that the M&E team and the community researchers used, the data they collected and analysed, and their actual experiences with and learnings from the AC4SC project. Some of the examples were modified to better illustrate various tools and processes.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed primarily for staff who are responsible for planning, conducting and championing M&E within your organisation. It is specifically designed to suit the needs of C4D practitioners.

A range of staff should be involved in PM&E processes - management, program managers and strategists, M&E staff, and content creators. Creating or maintaining good communication between staff groups is valuable for the process, and the process can in turn help to improve good communication in your organisation.

For a participatory evaluation process to be sustainable in the long term, strong support and involvement from those in leadership positions within your organisation, and program stakeholders is required, along with a willingness to be open and honest about things that are not working well and what we can learn from our evaluation activities. Good internal and external communications are necessary. We provide ideas on how to ensure you maintain good communications in **Module 1: Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process**.

Why use this toolkit?

Becoming a learning organisation

Monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the impact of your communication activities will tell you how well you are achieving your objectives. It can tell you if you need to rethink your objectives and ways of doing things. It will help you improve your programs, and find out if groups that you wish to work with are responding to your work. This toolkit will help you become a learning organisation. It will help you reflect on your own work, and listen to what people think of you and your programs. It provides a series of modules and tools designed to help you achieve this.

Do you want to become a learning organisation?
What do you think will improve if you do?

Improving practices and demonstrating impact

By becoming a reflective, learning organisation, your practices are likely to improve and become more effective. As this happens you will achieve greater social change and other impacts. If you actively listen to what those you are trying to reach think of your work, engage with them in a dialogue about how it has had an impact on their lives and communities, and what they would like you to do in the future, then you are not only able to demonstrate impact, but also adapt to ensure your work remains relevant, useful and appropriate. Communication for development is often focused on getting people to listen to our messages:

How often do you to listen to messages from your audiences?
How often do you ask them questions?

When should this toolkit be used?

Building evaluation practices and processes into the day-to-day work of your communications organisation is the best way to improve your work, and be in a position to demonstrate impact. The ideal scenario is an evaluation system that is ongoing and flexible. It is focussed on program improvement. It is part of the overall activity of an organisation, included in program and project planning and management cycles. It encourages regular monitoring and longer-term embedded research. A simplified diagram of the PM&E cycle is shown in the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual** in this toolkit.

While you may not be able to achieve this all at once, this toolkit is designed to help you gradually meet that ideal.

Alternatively, you can take up modules and individual tools as you are able to make use of them, depending on the purpose of the M&E work, time available, and other resources. The

more you learn through good PM&E practices, the more your organisation is likely to want to invest in further strengthening your PM&E capacity.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

The PM&E approach used in this toolkit actively engages all key stakeholders in all aspects of the process. It is based on fundamental values of trust, ownership, empowerment, inclusion, and openness to ongoing learning and improvement. It can allow local knowledge to be incorporated into our M&E processes, and helps to create a clearer picture of what is happening at the grassroots level.

PM&E should be seen as integral to the rest of your organisation's work, so that useful information can continuously and quickly be fed into your programs to improve them. Used effectively and appropriately, PM&E will strengthen the research and evaluation capacities of staff and stakeholders, and increase their sense of ownership and commitment to the process. In PM&E, the processes that people engage in together are seen as just as important as the recommendations and findings in PM&E reports or feedback meetings.

Essential ingredients needed to make PM&E work in your organisation

1. Receptive context – PM&E works best when your organisation is prepared to listen and learn.
2. The evaluation team's commitment to participation and faith in the inherent capacity of people to contribute meaningfully to the PM&E process.
3. Recognition that PM&E takes time and resources; it cannot be rushed.
4. People skills — particularly facilitation — are a key part of the participatory evaluator's toolkit. Willingness to share experiences, knowledge, insights, and perhaps most difficult, power.
5. Capacity development should be a PM&E objective. Capacity development enhances accountability and supports sustainability through community and leadership development, creating a core of participants who are committed to the program/initiative and knowledgeable about it.
6. The process should be structured in such a way that ensures participation of the different interest groups but must be easy to facilitate because local facilitators may be themselves inexperienced in participatory techniques.

(adapted from Parks et al., 2005, page 14)

Definitions of key terms

It is important to have a clear understanding of what we mean by the key terms used in this toolkit, since they are often used in different ways. The definitions provided here were developed in collaboration with EAN staff as part of the AC4SC project.

Monitoring:

A systematic and ongoing process of collecting, analysing and using information about the progress of programs and activities over time, and their strengths and limitations, to help guide and improve our programs and assess outputs and activities.

Evaluation:

Determining, through systematic, regular research, the value that primary stakeholders and others place on our programs and activities, and their outcomes, in order to improve their effectiveness and sustainability, better reach our objectives, and make good decisions about future programming.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation:

Developing a partnership between the primary stakeholders in a program to collaboratively design and systematically implement an M&E process, develop tools, set objectives and indicators, and share concerns, experiences and learnings.

Impact assessment:

Understanding and assessing the lasting social changes brought about in whole or in part by programs and activities, among the primary stakeholders in the mid to long-term.

Social change:

Specific and wide-ranging intended and unintended changes (in such things as community dialogue, knowledge, attitude and behaviour), identified by primary stakeholders and others, which are social in nature and directly or indirectly related to their involvement in programs. Social change refers to changes to a social system, not simply change at the individual level, even if that individual change is mirrored in a number of individuals.

Basic information about impact assessment and social change is provided in the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual** in this toolkit.

Differences between monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment

Evaluation

Evaluation involves undertaking regular, systematic research that enables mutual learning and understanding about the activities, opinions and experiences of audiences and others. It helps to assess the outcomes and impacts of programs. To do so, we first need a clear understanding of the objectives of programs. Our evaluation will then pay attention to such things as:

- The ways in which programs are thought about, researched, developed, planned and delivered; and
- How listeners receive, think about and respond to programs.

Evaluation answers a range of questions, based on questions such as: who wants to know what and why? It attempts to improve program effectiveness, quality and sustainability by learning from research findings in an ongoing way. For example, key evaluation questions could include:

- How well are programs and associated activities achieving their objectives?
- How can they be improved to better meet the diverse needs of community members and create positive social change?
- How well are programs responding to and incorporating audience feedback and input from stakeholders?

Monitoring

When we monitor programs the main focus is on program inputs, outputs, activities, performance and progress, rather than on how well objectives have been met. For example, monitoring could include the regular review of letters and other feedback from listeners to inform decisions about what issues to include in future programs. Monitoring of audience feedback can also determine whether program messages are understood and are having an impact on audiences.

Regular monitoring enables us to describe local community contexts and impacts, and to identify the strengths and limitations of our programs – the things that are working well or not working so well. Results of this feedback and analysis can then be fed directly into project management and planning processes so that changes to improve programs and activities can be made quickly. Monitoring is the key to good planning. If monitoring systems are working well, evaluation of programs is needed less often and is much easier to carry out.

Impact assessment

Impact assessment is a particular form of evaluation. It is not a separate activity but can be the focus of any monitoring or evaluation. Compared with M&E, impact assessment is less specific and also considers external, contextual factors that influence the impacts of our programs, such as changes in the use of various communication technologies.

In Equal Access, impact assessment is likely to concentrate on looking for significant changes in the lives of people and communities, and in community organisations and groups (such as listener clubs) in the mid to long-term. It is not about immediate and direct predicted outputs of our programs, but how social change is brought about in more long-term and/or in wider ranging ways. These impacts are not able to be defined in advance – they might be

predicted, but are as likely to be unexpected and unintended. They might be both positive and negative.

We need to be alert to and seek evidence of impact in terms of long-lasting changes at all times, through ongoing embedded PM&E. This enables us to document the stages and steps leading to change. We also need to be aware that other activities and processes might be partly responsible for the changes we identify. We can explore and try to describe the role we think our programs and activities have played in these changes.

A key question for impact assessments is:

In what ways do programs lead to social change beyond the short-term delivery and reception of the programs?

The answers might include impact in terms of changes in broadcasting content and styles, as well as improved knowledge and understanding among target key groups and resulting changes in social attitudes and behaviour around issues that your programs deal with, such as HIV prevention and peace and reconciliation.

Basic principles – participation and planning

Participation

Participation requires a deliberate effort to work closely with your primary stakeholders. It requires that you design, plan and implement the evaluation process together; develop tools, set indicators, and share concerns, experiences and learnings. Stakeholders might include your staff, audiences, local communities, NGOs, donors, and anyone else who is important to your work. Different stakeholders are likely to have different levels of involvement in this process.

Participation requires commitment to be open and available to listen and learn from others who often have different experiences, agendas, needs and knowledge. You will need to facilitate participation from stakeholders.

Are you committed to taking a participatory approach to your evaluation?
What would this mean for you?

Planning

It is important to carefully plan your M&E work. You will need to ask yourself why you are doing this work, what you want to find out, how you might best go about this, and how you will use your data. The toolkit modules must be used to suit your needs, related to your objectives. You will need to ask yourself a series of questions:

Why am I doing M&E work?
What information am I seeking?

What methods are best suited to each M&E activity?
Where will I carry out this M&E work?
What resources will I need?
How will I use the M&E results?

Module 6: Getting started and planning for PM&E and impact assessment will help you to answer these questions and develop an appropriate PM&E plan.

Basic processes - listening and learning

Listening

Often when you think about evaluating your C4D activities you will think about measuring the numbers of people who have listened to your programs, and you will try to work out what changes it has brought about for them. To really understand those changes, you need to turn the tables, and listen to your listeners, and to those who you would like to listen to you.

Listening is an act of recognition, it signals that you are interested in the views and experiences of others, and willing to consider and respect what they have to say. You will need to listen across difference – different contexts, different people and cultures - to create a rich and clear picture of what is happening at the grassroots level and how this might be affecting the outcomes and impacts of your programs. The toolkit will give you some guidance on how you might go about this.

Are you interested in listening to your listeners?

Learning

Listening to others is interesting and can be fun, but in terms of evaluation, it is pointless unless you learn from this experience. Use the knowledge you gain from listening, to systematically process it and feed learning back into your organisation and its practices. If you want people to listen to you and act on what you say, you must also listen and learn from them.

Are you willing to learn from your listeners and others who are involved in your programs?

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is designed to be easy to use. It often presents quite complex ideas in bite sized, simplified form. Because of this, we have attached a series of links, to give you the option, if you like, to follow up and learn more.

Essentially, you can pick up and use parts of the toolkit individually, or you can work your way through the whole. Ideally, and certainly if you want to develop a comprehensive

impact assessment process in your organisation, you would think of PM&E as an ongoing, embedded part of your activities, and work towards a fully fledged PM&E system for impact assessment. Using the exercises and steps in **Modules 1 and 6** will help you to develop an effective PM&E system.

You might use this toolkit as an individual, or use it in your organisation to facilitate a workshop. The more people in your organisation you can involve in the PM&E process, including planning and implementation, the better. These people can also be involved in the data analysis, and in the preparation and sharing of reports and other outputs created using the data you collect.

Where this toolkit came from

This toolkit emerged from the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* project. AC4SC is a four year research project which was jointly implemented by Equal Access Nepal, Equal Access International, and two universities in Australia: Queensland University of Technology and the University of Adelaide. Funding was provided by the Australian Research Council through their Linkage Project Scheme, and Equal Access Nepal.

The project aimed to develop an effective methodology for monitoring and evaluating communication for social change initiatives, and to develop more appropriate indicators of social change in collaboration with community members. It included setting up a network of community researchers in five different locations in rural and regional Nepal, strengthening the M&E systems of EAN and developing the skills, knowledge and experience of staff and community researchers in PM&E.

Feedback on the toolkit

We welcome your feedback on this toolkit – what works well, what doesn't work so well and how it could be improved. We are also very interested in learning more about how you have used this toolkit and how effective it was in helping your organisation to assess the impacts of your C4D programs, strengthen your M&E systems, and become a learning organisation. Please send your feedback to Jo Tacchi at jo.tacchi@rmit.edu.au

References for the toolkit

As well as our learnings from the activities of the AC4SC project, the development of this toolkit was informed by an ongoing series of literature reviews relating to the participatory evaluation of C4D programs and evaluation capacity development in the development context. The following lists some of the many resources and publications that were drawn on to develop the toolkit modules and the Equal Access Community Researcher manual. Some of them are cited in the modules.

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Module 1: Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- how to analyse the stakeholder groups you want to engage in PM&E, their different roles, and how they will work together in the process
- how to map the communication flows and connections between stakeholders engaged in PM&E and identify and address communication barriers and issues
- how to identify who needs your PM&E outputs, what they need to know, and when they need to know it
- how to assess your communication and reporting capacities and needs
- the need to factor in sufficient time for PM&E processes into reporting cycles
- some possible strategies for preventing communication problems

Introduction

Effective communication is important for all facets of an organisation's work, but is absolutely essential to the success of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). This is because PM&E results must feed back into your work processes as a whole to influence decision making. This process inevitably involves multiple stakeholders inside and outside the organisation. Effective PM&E also requires that an ongoing cycle of questioning and critical reflection takes place in relation to the data produced through PM&E work. Ensuring that this communication of learning happens successfully will be a crucial challenge for those involved in all PM&E work and particularly any that is conducted within the type of framework that was developed as part of the AC4SC project.

This module provides a guide to asking the right questions in the planning stage of implementing the AC4SC methodology. It includes a timeline to indicate the points in the project cycle when information should be collected and shared. A simplified organisational diagram helps to explain who should typically be involved in this process of communication. It emphasises that the PM&E process and reporting on what is learned must fit into the whole cycle of the organisation's work and the expectations of external stakeholders. These processes should aim to build on and improve existing communication, feedback and reporting processes within the organisation rather than to create additional work or to alter existing methods that are already working well. The aim is to improve communication and planning systems within the organisation as a whole, not just M&E systems.

Who is involved and how do they work together as part of the PM&E process?

Thinking about the M&E research you *already* conduct, who is involved? They could be people or groups that are directly involved in producing, analysing and reporting on the research or they could be the anticipated beneficiaries of the research who they report to. Your answer might include:

- Members of the M&E team (but take care to note if they have distinct roles or responsibilities within the team).
- Internal stakeholders in your organisation, such as program makers, project managers, and country directors.
- Community members, the people who form the program audience or other project beneficiaries.
- External stakeholders directly involved in projects or program making, for example people from partner-NGOs, expert program advisers, or community reporters.
- Donor organisations that support projects and programs financially.
- Other organisations that might be conducting work that's similar to your own (possibly rivals, but hopefully, collaborators!)

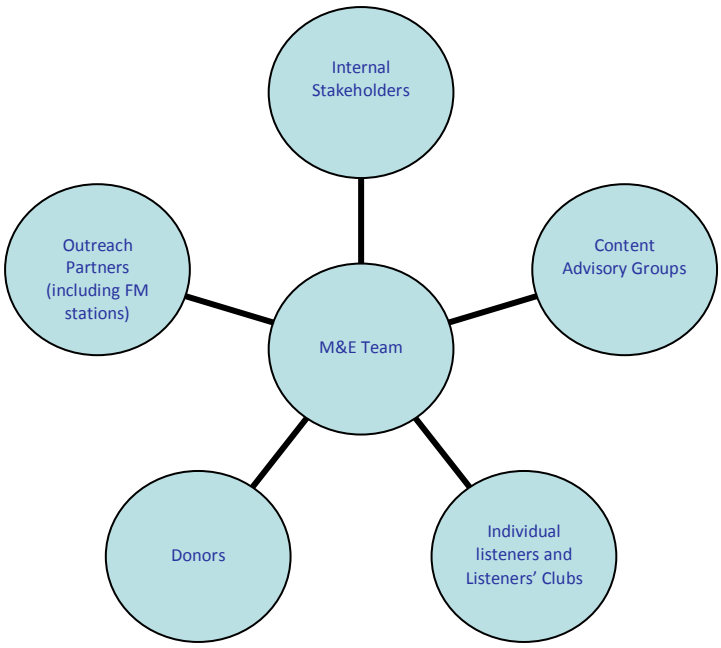
TIP: You can answer this question by producing a simple list using bullet points, as above. However, it might be more useful to create a mind map or 'spider diagram' with 'M&E team' in the centre, general description of stakeholders next (like those above), and then a set of second connections to these that contain the names of actual stakeholders. Visualising these connections may be helpful, even if you then convert your diagram into a list for easier inclusion in project documentation.

You can find a list of useful resources about stakeholder identification and analysis in the **Useful Resources** section of this toolkit.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

From the beginning, there have been different data sources and data collection methods which we have used under EAN's M&E framework. All of the people and groups involved in M&E research at EAN in the past are shown below:

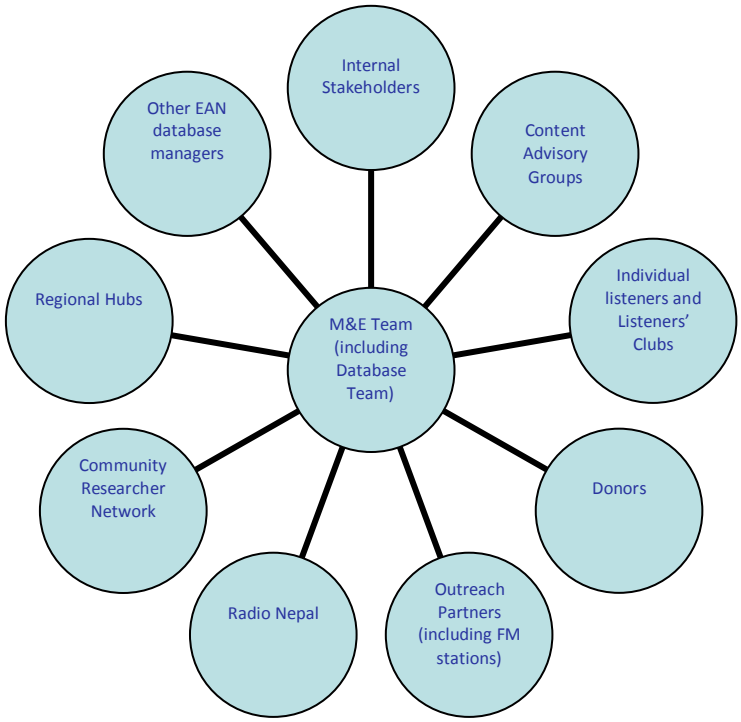
M&E working relationships BEFORE the AC4SC project was implemented



Internal stakeholders: They included makers of the radio programs, the data base team, community reporters (who also collect some feedback from listeners) management team members, and our accounts and finance section.
Outreach partners: There were some outreach partners assigned to look after outreach activities, such as mobilizing listeners groups and collecting feedback from the listeners. Their progress reports helped us develop evaluation reports.
Individual listeners: They provided feedback via letters.
Listeners' clubs: There are many listeners clubs around Nepal (some deliberately formed by us, but most voluntarily formed), who listen to the radio program regularly.
Donors: These are the organisations that provide the budget to operate our programs, which includes needs assessment, production, broadcasting, monitoring and evaluation)
M&E team: In the beginning there was a quite small team at EAN. There was only one person who was called an M&E coordinator and there were no other specified team members. Our letters database was managed separately and was only used for production of the SSMK radio program. Leadership of M&E was not very effective and wasn't even acknowledged by other program teams. The findings of our M&E activities were mostly quantitative, rather than qualitative.
Content Advisory Group (CAG): CAG meetings are for taking the advice from participants from different organisations for planning the content of the radio program. This is organised by content team members on the regular basis. Only content team members were involved in the activity and there was no involvement of M&E team in the process. It was more like a content team process only.

After the start of the AC4SC project, the level of engagement with communities by the M&E team has increased. They have been involved in research activities and in providing critical feedback for radio program development. Those research activities have produced research data which is analysed and triangulated with the other sources of data (such as listeners' letters) to enrich the network of embedded community researchers (CRs) who have been appointed to conduct some of our research activities. M&E research became better planned and more rigorous, and the team grew larger and had better leadership. It combined both quantitative and qualitative analysis of data to present enriched evidence of program development, program improvement and impact assessment. Now the new structure of M&E research at EAN looks like this:

M&E working relationships AFTER the AC4SC project was implemented



It is important to compare the list you make of those already involved in M&E work to those who might be involved in any new PM&E activities.

- If there are some anticipated differences, how will these new people be integrated into the process and what implications will this have?
- Are these entirely new types of stakeholder, or are they simply different people and groups that are similar to those you already work with in other ways?
- What level of involvement will each stakeholder group have in the PM&E process?

You need to ensure that you build in sufficient time for this step within your PM&E processes.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

We have definitely observed an increase in communication between content team members and the M&E team in the last three years. The value of M&E has been recognised by the content team members and they now see M&E as one of the major parts of the organisation. While writing funding proposals, an allocation of a separate budget for M&E became a necessary component. Content team member team now ask for more in-depth data to generalise feedback they receive about their different radio programs. The M&E team addresses this through analysis using many different forms of data from varied sources. There is frequent communication among M&E team members to address issues related to the monitoring and evaluation of different projects, to plan activities, reach agreement on indicators, and to develop the codebook and other tools we now use in our research. This has helped to internalise the responsibility related to different project's M&E works. We realised the value of dialogue between team members for better results.

Regular critical listening and feedback sessions have been introduced in EAN to provide feedback to the content team members. All of the program team members participate in these feedback sessions, which involve listening to the radio program that the M&E team randomly selected for the session. During these sessions the M&E team and other EAN staff provides critical feedback to content team members. This encouraged the content team members to review their work so as to create better radio programs in the future. On average, these sessions are being conducted bi-monthly for each radio program.

In addition, the Database Team are now fully integrated with the M&E Team and the Community Researcher Network is a major addition to the stakeholders involved in our working relationships.

It might be that the M&E team and its members are the difference! In other words, new types of M&E data may allow the team to contribute to aspects of other stakeholders work in new ways.

> *If that is the case, how will you work with these stakeholders to ensure that the M&E team's potential contribution is acknowledged and a working relationship established?*

What Equal Access Nepal say:

There were different levels of understanding among program makers about the work of M&E at EAN. Initially they didn't understand the importance of M&E. However, this is how M&E now is contributing to the work of EAN:

- More involvement in program development through Content Advisory Group (CAG) meetings, Program meetings, Partner meetings, and Donor meetings. Program team members value the involvement of M&E in such meetings because they take constructive feedback from M&E, and also involve the M&E team in all the processes at EAN. There is also now more interaction with content team members.
- Multitasking: At any time the M&E team is working on different projects. Sometimes one person is involved in different projects and sometimes different people work together in a project.
- The M&E team have developed a range of M&E tools, such as a Short Questionnaire Survey (SQS) framework, and regular Research Plans and they contributed to the development of data collection templates and a detailed Most Significant Change (MSC) technique manual.
- We have developed 'SMART Indicators' to assess the impact of the radio programs. The M&E team now engages program team members whilst developing program objectives and setting indicators to measure the impacts of the radio programs. This process is encouraging program team members to internalise the output of M&E team works throughout the life of a project.
- There is regular discussion of ways to improve the M&E system.
- We have observed an increase in the quality of our reports and our evaluation reports are regularly used in the development of funding proposals.
- The capacity of M&E staff has increased in terms of their ability to use different research tools, manage complex M&E processes, and communicate their findings to stakeholders.
- EAN management values the involvement of M&E team with other program team members during the field visits.

- The involvement of M&E team members in all aspects of EAN's work has increased and we are now able to provide information related with program development, program improvement and impact assessment of the radio programs to the content team members whenever they ask for this. Content team members feel that it is easy to ask for data or conduct research with the M&E team. The CR Network has helped a lot to gather such information.
- EAN now has a separate M&E room for team members to organise and conduct activities.

It is very important that 'internal stakeholders', i.e. members of your own organisation, understand how PM&E will contribute to achieving the shared goals of your organisation. They need to understand what you are hoping to achieve through PM&E research (its principal aims), how you hope to make a positive contribution to *their* work, and also what *they* can do to help you. Setting up the project through this kind of internal stakeholder engagement is very important in order to facilitate the introduction of new M&E processes, especially if this will involve new communication needs and changing work routines or relationships. This process also needs strong support from leaders in your organisation.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

As long as there was little communication between M&E and content team members, there was less chance of understanding the value of M&E by content team members. Content team members didn't didn't usually take M&E findings into account because they were self assured about knowing the value of program content. They thought M&E had nothing to do with content production or the development of the radio programs and they also thought that M&E was only for the donor's requirements. Lack of communication and coordination between the program and M&E team reduced the chances of working in a coordinated way with each other, rather than meeting for the project outputs in a combined way.

Sometimes the content team and the M&E team were so busy that this affected regular interaction and cooperation. It's not exactly that we were not communicating but how we were communicating. There were always complaints from both sides. Members of the content team were always complaining: 'The M&E team is not giving us exactly what we want', while the M&E team was always complaining, 'You don't tell us what you exactly want'.

For both the M&E team and the content team, coordination was a major issue. Sometimes the content team faced the problem that M&E information was not provided on a timely or regular basis. If they were broadcasting content about HIV, for example, the content team wanted feedback on this content to come within one or two weeks at least, rather than three or four weeks. They wanted the M&E team to analyse it, triangulate it and then be able to say, 'These are impacts of your program', or 'The listeners want to listen on this topic'. If the M&E team was able to provide such immediate feedback, the content team thought they could improve their next program to make it better meet the needs of listeners.

TIP: It is important to engage in a regular process of critical reflection on your work. Organise regular opportunities for everyone to meet to discuss their perceptions of what is and isn't working in the

M&E process, including communication. It is important to build a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of your programs, as well as an appreciation of the difficulties everyone faces in fulfilling their commitments to the this process. Tools like the Keystone **Theory of Change** (TOC) templates used in the AC4SC project may help to facilitate these discussions and provide a clear indication of the objectives you need to reach in this early, formative part of the PM&E process. **Module 6: Getting started and planning for PM&E and impact assessment** provides an example of the development of a TOC. The **Useful resources, information and tools** section provides a link to the Keystone TOC tool.

Mapping communication flows onto organisational arrangements and stakeholder connections

Developing a clear picture of who is, and who needs to be involved in your PM&E work and what their roles are is a first important stage in the communication process. Identifying exactly what is communicated and how this is done is the next challenge. Doing this requires you to develop a more realistic organisational chart or diagram in order to visualize these connections. This will help you to:

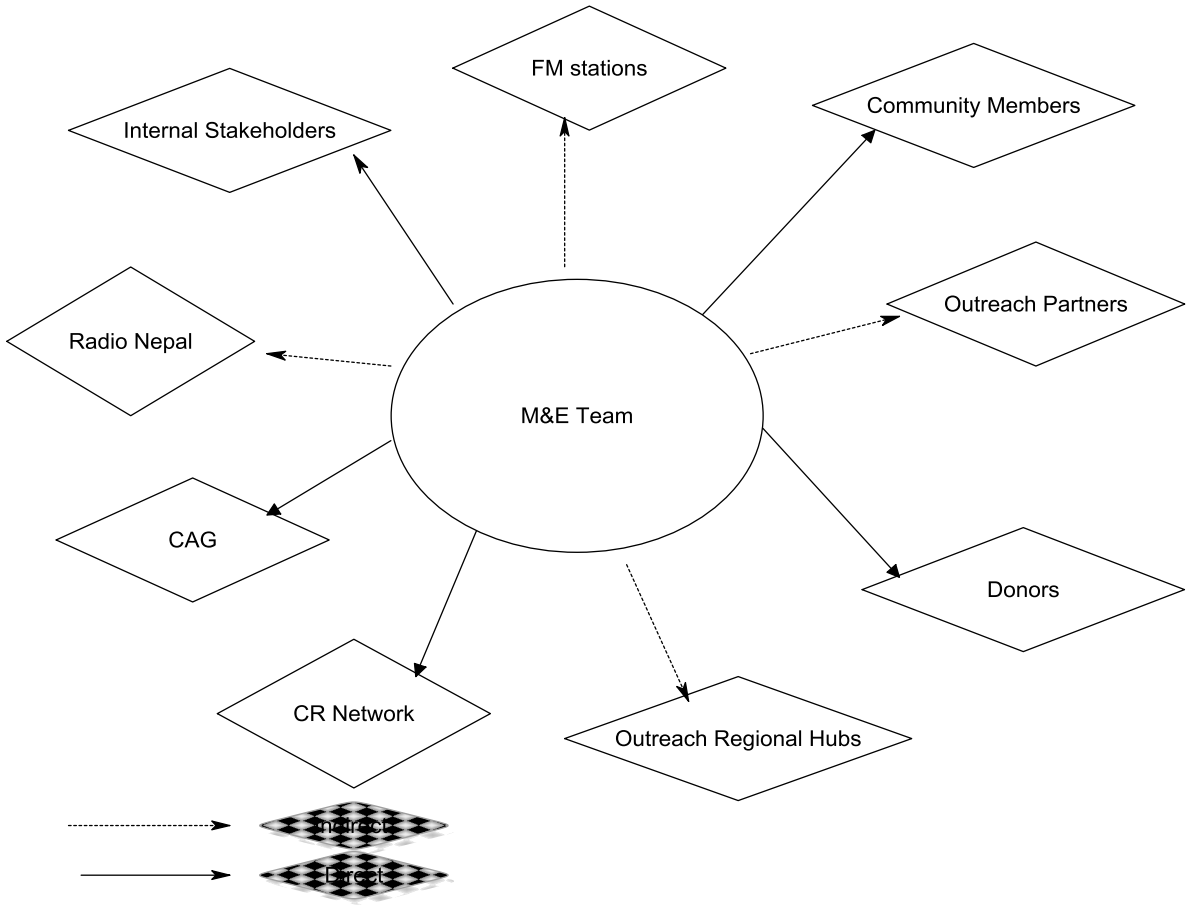
- Identify where there might be potential barriers to this flow of communication.
- Isolate relationships where there is no existing means of communication to cement the connection.
- Pinpoint types of communication tool or media that stakeholders may need further training to use effectively.

You may already have an organisational chart that you can amend to incorporate stakeholders who are specific to this M&E work. Otherwise, you can create this initially through trial and error to sketch the connections. These sketches can be perfected using a word processor or spreadsheet diagram, so they can be easily shared and revised as necessary. In order to work through this process you will need to organise a half-day workshop with key stakeholders. It may be useful for this process to be facilitated by an experienced external facilitator who understands the needs of your organisation.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

These are the stakeholders who directly or indirectly communicate and collaborate with EAN as a part of M&E process:

Simplified M&E communication process in EAN with M&E shown as central



Internal stakeholders: The M&E team has meaningful connections with internal stakeholders like the content team, outreach section, and management team members. Regular meetings with content team members is occurring to plan M&E work, develop different M&E tools to measure the impact of the radio programs, and to get feedback for program improvements. The M&E team works closely with the outreach section to monitor their activities.

FM stations: A majority of FM stations throughout Nepal are broadcasting EAN produced radio programs. Some FM stations broadcast EAN radio programs voluntarily, fulfilling the demand of listeners. They are not direct collaborators in M&E process. Recently M&E team encouraged program team to broadcast the Naya Nepal radio program though a FM station in Dang. Feedback or listeners and researcher showed that one big area of Dang, which also includes one of the research sites, was unable to listen to the Naya Nepal radio program.

Outreach partners: Some of the radio projects have partners to execute the outreach activities. EAN uses these outreach sites to study the impacts and feedback on the radio programs. For the AC4SC project, outreach partners are 'indirect' partners, but if we consider the whole M&E system they are 'direct' partners. The M&E team designs reporting templates, monitoring tools, etc., for outreach partners and they give feedback based on those.

Listeners clubs: There are lots of listeners clubs formed voluntarily, which have regular and irregular listeners who send their feedback to the program producers and take part in M&E research with the

CRs. In some places outreach partners facilitated the formation of listeners' clubs in some parts of Nepal.

Radio Nepal: Radio Nepal is the major collaborator with EAN for broadcasting its radio programs in Nepal.

Donors: Donors require EAN to provide regular progress reports and expect funding proposals to include log frames and indicators, etc.

CR Network: EAN is using a network of eight embedded community researchers around Nepal to conduct research mainly about two of its radio programs, Naya Nepal and SSMK. This network includes five different sites for research.

Content Advisory Groups (CAG): CAG meetings are for taking advice of the participating persons from different organisations to help plan the content for the radio program. These meetings are organised by content team members on a regular basis. Participants for the meetings will not be the same every time, but change over time depending on the program and different content topics under consideration. On a regular basis M&E team members are now invited by the content team members to participate in such meetings and give their input for better issues identification as stated in project documents. This is encouraging communication between content and M&E team members.

Community members: Involvement of community members with the works of EAN increased when the CR Network started working with the community members. More critical feedback about the radio program and more in-depth and richer data on the impacts of the programs on listeners is possible through the involvement of community members.

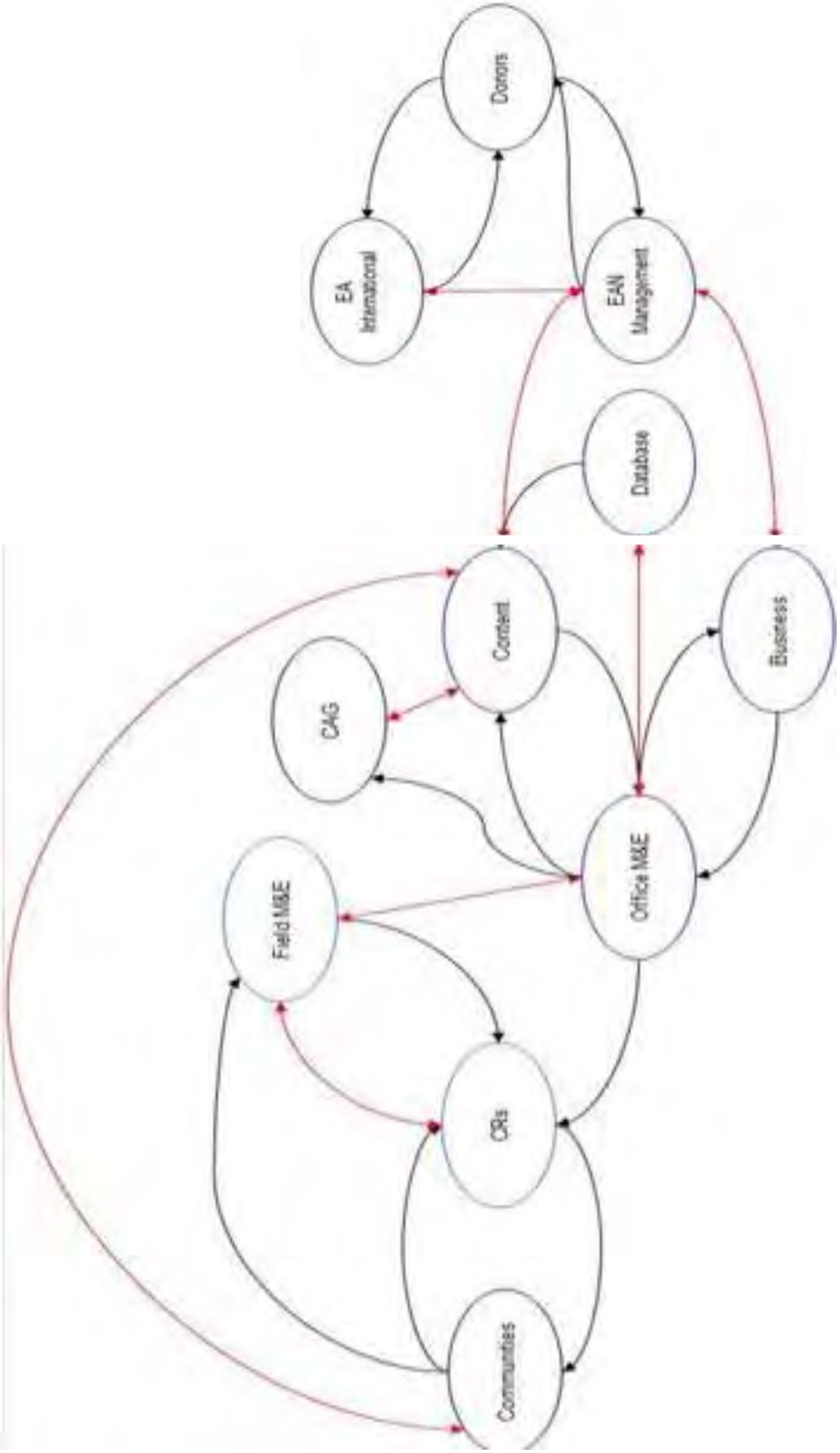
Outreach regional hubs: There are 5 regional hubs, one each in 5 development regions of Nepal. These regional hubs are responsible for managing outreach activities at field sites, for example conducting promotional activities for listeners clubs, broadcast monitoring, and conducting surveys and discussions.

M&E team: The M&E team has direct relations with most of the aforementioned stakeholders. Nowadays, program teams value M&E team's involvement in such activities related to different stakeholders.

The diagram at this stage shows a picture that is rather idealised and what the working relationships *should* be like in theory. How things work *in practice* very much depends on what is done to make these lines of connection a day-to-day reality for your organisation.

- Each line must involve some form of communication through which the relationship is formed and developed over time.
- In some cases these communications might already exist; if they do, indicate what they are on the diagram.
- If no communication exists at the present time or if it is only done in a fairly weak way, then the stakeholders involved will need to discuss what type of communication is needed and how it can be viably achieved to develop the relationship.
- If the stakeholders identify a need for some type of communication that they don't currently feel capable of using effectively, you will need to commit resources to training or other support to provide this link (see below).

Alternative diagram showing the flow of communication between stakeholders in the M&E process



What Equal Access Nepal say:

Frequent discussions with the content team members to develop M&E tools and analyse the findings of field visits and research has improved the relationship between internal stakeholders. The M&E team is able to meet the deadlines of different project's progress reports. During a stakeholders meeting in Kathmandu, participants questioned how we can generalise research finding which only covers a few areas of Nepal. In the same way, one of the content team members asked for more findings that cannot generalise things based on few findings. One cannot ignore similar kind of feedback for a long time. This means the research findings have feedback from same direction and asking similar questions, which compels the M&E team to address the issue. We have done this by introducing short questionnaire surveys (SQS) into our methodology, which allows us to ask controlled questions about these issues to a wider selection of community members. We can also feed questions generated by our qualitative research process into other large scale surveys.

Regular communication through mobile phones is one of the major activities conducted by M&E team members. There have been limited field visits and face-to-face meeting with the CRs. Therefore, team has been mentoring community researchers through mobile phone though this may be less effective. This is helping CRs to improve their research data. Sometimes research questions and SQS have been shared via email to community researchers, although it cannot be accessed by all community researchers. The M&E team has been analysing SMS polls, text messages, and letter responses, and triangulating these with the CRs research data to present more rigorous results to the program team members. Inconsistency in the number of responses and research data is one of the major problems which M&E team is facing to present results effectively.

Note that we can regard 'CRs' here as both community researchers and community reporters. The community reporters do a different job to the community researchers. However they have been part of our work for a long time and they fit into the flow of communication in a similar way.

It is important to be clear about exactly what communication is required to form a good working relationship between stakeholders involved in the PM&E process. Effective facilitation and meeting processes are also essential here. It is not sufficient that communication simply happens, but it must be the *right* type of communication to ensure that the PM&E work is conducted effectively. Your communications may often need to be:

- Documented
- Archived
- Searchable
- Sharable
- Accessible
- Delivered in a timely manner

Achieving these qualities in communication may depend on the development of new communication skills (e.g. database management, library archiving, report writing, etc.). Other important skills are facilitation and active listening. You may also need to take the particular circumstances of

stakeholders into account (e.g. any technology or infrastructure difficulties that they have to work under).

What Equal Access Nepal say:
The M&E team aims to present bi-monthly analysis reports regularly to content team members to get feedback from them on the data, although we have found that initially this was a hard thing to do. The M&E team is mentoring the CRs to work on the feedback (doing more probing research to find out missing information and get more in-depth data). The M&E team has been discussing the research questions and issues for research with the content team members and developing SQSs for our research. CRs are also encouraging listeners to write letters to content team members in respective research sites and are also promoting the radio programs, forming listeners groups, and encouraging dialogue at the community level. Here is a short description of this type of dialogue activity:

The value of community feedback forums: In January 2009 one of the M&E team and the local CRs held five community meetings in the Dadeldhura and Dang districts of Nepal to provide feedback on the research undertaken by the CRs and to discuss key findings from the research. These meetings had three main parts:

1. Asking the community what they knew about what the CRs are doing in the community.
2. Presentation of a report based on the data collected by the CRs.
3. Finding out what social change means to the community.

A key aim was to learn more about how much the CRs were able to involve community members in the research. The meetings were also seen as helping the CRs to be more accountable to the community in their research work. The meetings went well overall and had a number of useful and positive outcomes. At one meeting, the participants said they liked the change stories which the CR presented in his report because they helped them to learn about the change stories of other people. They asked him to present these stories to them regularly. Another meeting enabled parents and their children to meet together and discuss issues such as changes in discrimination between sons and daughters for the first time. However, it was difficult to get more parents to take part in the meetings. Various useful ideas about the process of social change in the community and the role of communication in social change were also identified in some meetings.

Communication and reporting capacities

We know already that communication skills are highly developed in your organisation – after all, communication is your work! But M&E, especially PM&E may involve new forms of communication with which you are less familiar.

The answers you've given above will already indicate many of the different types of communication – face-to-face, telecommunications and written – that you need to use as part of the M&E process. However, it would be a good idea to list them, clearly identify who will be tasked with producing each and summarize what the essential purpose of each may be.

In addition, it is a very good idea to identify the different audiences or recipients for these communications, because this will have a big influence on how communication is conducted. For example, you may have a lot of experience in writing M&E research reports for internal distribution and use by members of your own organisation; but can you also write reports and other publications (such as newsletters) that are accessible to community members or donor organisations? You could use a simple table in the following format to summarise this:

Type of communication	Who produces it	Intended audience	Purpose
E.g. Written report	E.G. M&E Manager	E.G. Donor	E.G. Annual progress report
Etc.			

Following on from this you should conduct an audit of the skills and resources available to the team. It is very likely that you already have most of what you need in place, but identifying possible needs well in advance is important. Discovering that you're missing something vital – for example knowledge of how to use some presentation software or even the software itself, may cause a big problem as a deadline looms. It's also important to remember that some communication needs might not immediately come to mind. For example, is a database used to archive your M&E data a form of communication? It certainly is! So you must ensure that everyone involved in using these types of complex communication tools either knows how to access and use them or knows whose job it is to provide this access.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

Our review of our current communication and reporting capacities looks like this:

Type of communication	Frequency	Who produces it	Intended audience	Purpose
Letters	Regularly	Listeners	Content team	Feedback and stories
SMS poll and text message	As planned in the project activities	Listeners	Content team	Feedback
Research data	Monthly	CRs	M&E team	Analysis report
Analysis report (research data)	Bi-monthly	M&E team	Program teams and donors	Feedback for program improvement and development and assess the impact of the radio program
Community feedback	Bi-monthly	CRs and M&E team	Community	Feedback and dialogue
Quarterly report	Every 3 months	M&E and program team	Donors	Progress update
Analysis report (letters, emails, SMS poll, text message)	Every 3 months	M&E team	Program team	Feedback for program improvement

				and development and assess the impact of the radio program
Evaluation reports	End of the project	M&E team	Donors	Overall progress and outcomes of the projects
Training needs assessment	Before the training	M&E team	Program team	Needs assessment
Training report and evaluation	As training takes place	M&E and program team	Program team	Assess needs and effectiveness of the training

Setting up the database for qualitative research data was a big challenge and triangulating it with the letter database was a problem. There were already set codes for the letter database and qualitative research data demanded of codes. Both of these coding processes have different methods that we found difficult to reconcile. After a long discussion on the database and coding system for research data, a separate database was created for CR data. Triangulation of this research data with the letter database is now in process and to date seven data analysis reports have been published as part of the AC4SC project.

Likewise managing the consistency in the number of and quality of research data which is sent by the CRs was a big challenge. Some researchers are managing this well, whilst others still lack in some areas. Appointing the first group of CRs was difficult, as we weren't sure what to mention in the selection criteria. As a consequence, some don't have enough qualifications to conduct qualitative research, although they received enough training and mentoring to enhance their capacity. Others lack some of the attitudes and values to do effective participatory research, so we should have considered this more carefully.

As part of a training workshop in April 2009, all of the CRs came to EAN's office in Kathmandu. During the workshop, the M&E team managed an interaction meeting with content team members, which the content team were also interested in. The meeting was fruitful because the CRs asked for content plans from both the SSMK and Naya Nepal teams which helped them to plan their research accordingly and be prepared before discussions with listeners in the community on the issues that the programs broadcast. They also asked about the irregular broadcast of radio programs in different areas and how to help people listen to the programs easily (some FMs stopped broadcasting and Radio Nepal has poor reach in some areas). Later this was addressed by the program team. Content team members provided them with a few research questions which they were very interested in. This interaction meeting helped both the content teams and CRs to understand each other's needs and values.

Another challenge was to give regular feedback to the community on the outcomes and process of research. To help community ownership in the process, regular bi-monthly feedback sessions were planned, but their conduct was irregular in some cases because of less effort by the CRs, who, to be

fair, probably didn't understand the concept of community feedback. We need to develop this part of the process more in order to ensure that there is more consistency in the cycle of communication among all researchers. This was planned to provide for community dialogue on the issues raised in the data collected by the CRs. This process would help each community to understand more about the issues covered in our programs, what their own solutions were to these, how a radio program can be responsible for social change, and how a radio program can help address their issues. This is a part of communication with the group of people that our programs are targeting, a process in which all levels of community people should be participating.

One particularly important element of communication involves training and workshop presentation and facilitation skills. Introducing new M&E processes may require extensive training, workshops and patient one-on-one explanations to provide the skills needed to other stakeholders. This training may, of course, be about communication itself! It is important to identify these training needs following your skills audit and identify who can provide this, either from within your organisation or as an external provider. You must identify training needs that occur regularly and what can be done as a special training event (albeit possibly with some follow-up work to reinforce learning after the main training session).

What Equal Access Nepal say:

The training needs of the M&E team were:

- Research planning
- Generating evaluation reports
- Analysis and triangulation of different information into an evaluation report
- Setting indicators
- Use of participatory tools and methods for qualitative data gathering and analysis.

We conducted the following trainings and workshops:

- Training for CRs to use different research tools and techniques to generate qualitative research data.
- Stakeholders' workshop to share knowledge.
- Training for M&E staff and content team members on the use of participatory research tools and techniques, facilitation, setting SMART indicators, coding and analysis.

Participation by the M&E team in these various trainings and workshops enabled them to write better evaluation reports, develop program objectives and SMART indicators and manage different data sources. Development of our first bi-annual research plan, research manuals for CRs, a review of M&E tools, techniques and activities were the outcomes of such trainings and workshops. The community researchers are more focused on research now and their research data is improving gradually. While conducting training for CRs, we received their comments, for example that they thought they needed more time for the training we provided. We understood that the CRs need more support while they use different tools and techniques. Ongoing mentoring and review visits are helping them to overcome such problems.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) Manual and the Community Researchers Manual that were developed have been guiding them a lot. A rigorous review of MSC stories has been completed to increase the quality of stories and demonstrate the value of MSC stories to EAN.

Time and M&E work routines

We have already explained that you must understand *who* needs your M&E outputs and identify exactly what they need to know. It is equally important that you identify *when* they need to know this. We have already said that communication (especially the outcomes of your PM&E work) must be delivered in a timely manner to be effective. This means that you must also consider the different timelines for the different communications used in PM&E and ensure that these fit into the other work schedules of your organisation. For example, it might be that the M&E team can only produce reports on their research findings on a monthly basis, but others in the organisation work to a much shorter schedule, perhaps needing to produce work outputs on a weekly basis. It will be impossible to devise a single schedule or work pattern that meets everyone's needs. But what you can do is to document these timelines, identify points where there might be potential problems, and then devise a schedule for M&E work that provides the best possible solution to these conflicting communication needs.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

After the M&E team started sharing data analysis reports with the program teams, they also started sharing their feedback for more probing on the issues raised by the research participants. For example, one piece of feedback related to why they think of SSMK as urban centric. Later research results showed that the use of English language and lack of local issues were of concern to listeners. Program team members wanted to know about how listeners want to listen to the radio program: individually or in groups, what medium listeners prefer - radio or TV, and what are the criticisms of listeners related to the radio program which were later explained by the research findings. Triangulation of research findings helped us to better understand the feedback for program improvement and development. Nowadays, program staff hold more discussions with M&E team members for all of the M&E activities planned in the program framework. Program team members think that these discussions are helping them to understand program intervention methods, build interpersonal relationships, improve the quality of the programs, and assess the impact of the radio programs. These discussions are also helping to assess the state of the projects and identify actions needed to complete the activities successfully.

One way to 'map out' these timelines visually is through a GANTT chart (see http://www.rff.com/) but it might be that simply using wall calendars or other shared diaries will be sufficient. The tools you use will vary depending on your evaluation of the complexities and challenges you face.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

This is how M&E fits into the program work of EAN:

Identification of issues: Content advisory group (CAG) meetings are regularly organised by EAN to decide the issues for radio programs. EAN invites some organisations which have similar kinds of

experience. These meetings help to decide issues to be raised in the radio program for the next two to three months. Our letters database and the community research data also helps to identify the issues. On a regular basis M&E team members are asked to participate these meeting, in which they provide their ideas related to the issues.

Broadcasting the program: After finalisation of the radio program, it goes on air through Radio Nepal and other FM station collaborators. The M&E team encourages the content team by providing feedback on regular broadcast monitoring.

Outreach activities: Outreach activities are conducted by regional outreach hubs and other NGO partners. The M&E team develops different tools for them to manage monitoring and evaluation work related to outreach activities. This is done in coordination with the program team members, and includes considering what needs to be assessed, what tools to develop, and how to use such tools.

Critical listening and feedback session (CLFS): For the past year, the M&E team have been conducting bi-monthly critical listening and feedback sessions at EAN. These sessions were developed by the M&E team. The idea of each session is to randomly choose any one episode of a broadcasted radio program and ask all the staff at EAN to listen critically and participate in the feedback session. This has encouraged program team members to see their radio programs critically and to improve accordingly. Content team members also share challenges and limitations while producing particular radio programs selected for the session.

Monitoring visits: The M&E team have been going on regular visits to monitor the program activities at a community level. They are also visiting research sites to monitor research activities and to mentor the CRs. They have been sharing these findings in program meetings to update their colleagues on the progress of different projects works.

Evaluation works and reports: Different sources of information like the letters database, research data, field visit reports based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews are triangulated by the M&E team in order to produce evaluation reports. These evaluation reports are also shared with program team members to discuss these findings. After getting some feedback from the program team members, detailed preliminary versions of evaluation reports are sent to the donors. Some key findings that are required for the donor's reports are also extracted from AC4SC data reports.

Feedback for the final report: Donors send their feedback on the final report. These findings are helpful to develop new funding proposals.

Let's imagine a project for one year with only nine months of radio program production. This is how the M&E team plans the project's activities in a Gantt chart at EAN.

S/N	Activities	Months											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1.	Identification of issues												
2.	Broadcasting the program												
3.	Outreach activities												
4.	CLFS												
5.	Monitoring visits												
6.	Evaluation research												
7.	Preparation of final reports												
8.	Feedback and completion of final report												

It is important to make a clear distinction between:

- Communication events that occur on a regular basis,
- Things that need to be done routinely by the M&E team, but only done when the need arises, and
- Special events that need to fit into the wider pattern of the M&E work.

At this point you should look again at your previous map of communication activities and relationships in order to try to identify what time characteristics they have. For example:

- The M&E team might regularly produce a monthly report on recent research findings for circulation and discussion amongst everyone in the organisation.
- Field staff might email or telephone CRs or reporters to pass on new research questions or ideas for improving data collection shortly after receiving fieldwork reports.
- A special training session might require materials on M&E work.

Some things might combine the above characteristics. For example:

- A report to a donor organisation might be done on a regular annual basis, but this cycle is sufficiently long to make preparation of such a report a special task for the M&E team.

Sharing information about different stakeholders' work schedules and timelines presents a communication and coordination challenge in its own right. This information needs to be discussed, shared, and, if necessary, revised by everyone who has a stake in the outcomes of the PM&E process. This is important because failure to appreciate the different time pressures that people work under and how the failure to provide timely communication about key PM&E findings may be a significant cause of tension within the organisation as a whole.

What Equal Access Nepal say:

There was a question about whether community reporters will also work as researchers or whether new CRs will be hired when we expand the network to add eight new CRs. Our recent review of the AC4SC project indicated that there were some resource advantages in favour of the first solution. But we decided that we would hire new CRs and later the M&E process can also use them for other

projects. Nowadays, program staff visiting field sites get regular assistance from the CRs. They are working as EAN's 'identity' in the communities and encouraging people to discuss different issues raised by our programs.

Although it took quite a lot of time to develop our first bi-annual (six monthly) research plan, continuous involvement of program team members to develop the plan helped them to understand the process and why we are actually doing this research on our radio programs. Besides research data findings, the M&E team has been able to conduct short questionnaire surveys and present the analysis of these surveys to program teams to help them understand to what extent their radio programs are successful in achieving project objectives.

Data analysis and reporting cycles

The previous section looked at timely M&E communication in terms of different stakeholder and organisation needs. In this section we look at another factor that has a big impact on communication timing, which is the process of participatory and qualitative research itself.

Survey techniques used in most quantitative M&E research tend to be used at clear points in time. A survey or questionnaire is devised, administered and then the results are analysed prior to reporting. Even if multiple surveys are used, this tends to be done in order to achieve comparable data from different points in time, such as is the case with a classic baseline to endline survey strategy. There is usually no expectation that the survey questions would change and this may in fact be counterproductive if the research requires production of statistically valid data.

Qualitative research on the other hand often requires what is called an *iterative* research strategy or a process of constant comparison. What this means is that data is analysed as it is collected or at least shortly after collection, and what is learned from this analysis feeds back into an ongoing process of formulating further research questions. The process is exploratory and inductive in character (i.e. it involves drawing general conclusions from the evidence gathered).

This process of qualitative data collection and analysis is discussed in more detail in **Module 5**. In this module we only want to emphasize that participatory and qualitative research has this iterative characteristic, which means that conducting such research presents particular communication challenges for the M&E team. Unlike the communications described above, these mainly involve communication within the M&E team itself. Even if only one person is tasked with conducting qualitative M&E research, they must still need to be aware of the significant time commitment that producing iterative analysis will impose upon them.

The key point to remember here is that this is an ongoing commitment and such participatory, qualitative M&E work cannot simply be done at isolated points in time. This needs to be realistically reflected in whatever weekly or daily schedule is devised by the M&E team for their work. It is hard to catch up on a backlog of data collation and analysis if this becomes a problem.

It would be useful at this point to consider the following questions:

- Has routine time for discussion about and analysis of qualitative data such as MSC stories and notes from FGDs been built into the work schedules of the M&E team members and other key members of the organisation?
- Is there a clear understanding amongst the various members of the organisation of the need for these analytical discussions about interpretation of data?
- Does everyone have a clear understanding of how and why qualitative data is used within the M&E processes of the organisation and how it can be triangulated with other types of data to make your findings stronger and more trustworthy? (see **Module 5** for more information about this)
- What happens if there is any confusion or conflict around the timing of different activities and is there a clear mechanism for either reorganizing activities or assigning precedence to activities?

What Equal Access Nepal say:

Regular communication about the findings with the program team members is essential to encourage members of an organisation to value the whole M&E process. One component cannot go alone for long. Like other elements of our work, M&E is one of the key components in an organisation which bridges communication gaps within and between our programs. It also bridges the gaps between the organisation and the community and other stakeholders, and between the organisation and donors. M&E work always involves asking for evidence which needs systematic management and rigorous analysis of data sources. Our program team gave lots of feedback on research data analysis reports and other ongoing M&E reports for other projects. The M&E team tried their best to address them with evidence, which is one of the reasons we now have better coordination between the program and M&E teams. One of the most challenging things is to present the findings and feedback in a way that is interesting and engaging for the program team members to read. We have been developing our capacity to present what our various audiences want. A lot of discussion is going on among M&E team members on this issue.

One of our major challenges is the lack of any culture of sharing between organisations that are working in the field of communication for development in Nepal. There was no such evidence of EAN's M&E team's participation in sharing meetings on M&E activities with other communication for development related organisations. EAN has organised such meetings with its stakeholders and to some extent this problem has been minimised by the M&E team participating in CAG meetings and sharing information there. One of the good outputs of the involvement of M&E in the CAGs is the recognition of M&E's input for content development and sharing the other outputs with the participants as well. This has helped to increase the status of the M&E team at EAN.

Another challenge is when community members ask you what they get from taking part in the research. The CRs are facing this problem. While conducting bi-monthly feedback sessions with the community, people say that development is about providing some material to the people like building, roads, classrooms, and cattle. We try our best to convince them that the issues they are facing will be reflected in the radio programs. In some research sites, group listening and discussion is regularly being held by community people, especially young people. They are also providing regular feedback to program members through letters and participating in research activities.

A further major challenge is sustaining the communication system at EAN. Turnover of staff members in key positions and limited funding to run projects for years are the major two reasons which hinders effective communication. Therefore, to overcome this problem, good communication, feedback and capacity development systems need to be established in the organisation which need to be understood and followed by new team members in the organisation.

Frequently encountered problems in communication and possible prevention strategies

It is important to remember that communication is a thoroughly human process, so problems inevitably occur! Therefore, an essential part of the communication process is on-going self-evaluation to identify if problems are occurring, to identify at what point in the communication process this is happening, and to initiate problem solving strategies if needed.

You may need to reassess your answers to the above questions periodically as part of this problem solving strategy, especially if new projects have started or personnel have changed. In addition:

- Does everyone understand their responsibilities within the M&E process (i.e. what they need to do to support 'clients/stakeholders' within the organisation, as well as how this helps you to communicate effectively with communities and donors?
- What happens if a communication output isn't delivered or some other part of the communication process breaks down (i.e. is there any contingency in place to make up for a temporary or permanent loss of information, especially if this is required for a vital purpose)?
- Can people find the information they need in a timely fashion given their communication needs (for example, to contribute to a donor report by the given deadline or to contribute to a content advice meeting)?
- Are all outputs regularly evaluated for quality and what criteria are used to make this assessment given the different communication forms and content involved? Whose responsibility is it to do this?
- Is there a system of training or mentoring in place to help people effectively fulfil their various roles within the communication process?
- Is there a way to evaluate or measure the impacts of the M&E process— especially any contributions made by qualitative research, in order to make improvements if the benefits to the organisation (for example, improvements in program content, community impact, or donor support) do not appear to be appropriate to the cost of supporting the research?

Finally, here are some words of encouragement and tips from the people at EAN!

Effective communication is essential to the success of participatory M&E in an organisation. Effective communication between M&E team members and program team members increases the impact of program development on addressing people's needs. At EAN, PM&E involves the M&E team, program teams, community people and other stakeholders. Better communication and coordination is needed between them for successful and sustainable project outcomes. It needs the participation of all stakeholders in all aspects of program development, like needs assessment, program

implementation and impact assessment. Our M&E team has developed a culture of regular discussion among team members to provide feedback to our internal clients (program team members) and external clients (community, stakeholders and donors). Regular critical reviews of how well our M&E systems and the CR Network are working are needed to work effectively. EAN is now including an M&E component and cost in each funding proposal and strong M&E is one of the big assets of EAN at the moment.

Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- the concept of indicators and what they can and cannot tell us
- how to set objectives and indicators
- why they are important
- how they can help you to assess the progress of your project
- the difference between SMART and SPICED indicators
- the importance of working closely with stakeholders to set indicators and define what change means to them

Introduction: The importance of participatory indicators

This module introduces the concept of indicators and highlights the steps that you need to go through to set project objectives and identify the indicators you can use to see if you programs or projects are meeting their aims and having an impact. It is important to set objectives and assessment indicators that are realistic as too often these steps are taken without consulting with the people who are the so-called 'targets' or 'primary stakeholders' of the project.

Working with primary stakeholders enables projects to be established in which the objectives are driven by local realities. Working with communities to understand what they feel is a successful outcome and what social change means to them is challenging and requires patience, time and resources. Ideally, a wide group of stakeholders and community members would be involved, facilitated by inclusive processes and dialogue, and an empowering research approach. It is important that we do not impose our visions of what change means on to the people we work with, so the initial steps of understanding what changes are sought and how we will measure them are critically important.

While it may be tempting to forego the use of participatory approaches to setting indicators due to lack of time and other resources, it is important to take a **long-term perspective that considers the benefits of participatory M&E**. These benefits include: flexibility of the process, increased ownership of the M&E process by community members and other stakeholders, better quality evaluation outcomes, strengthened evaluation capacities, and improved program impacts.

In summary, setting indicators with your key stakeholders and communities is important for the following reasons:

- The process results in more realistic, meaningful and achievable indicators than those set by top-down methods.

- The process can often highlight the different information needs and ideas of change of different stakeholders and community groups (including women and men).
- The focus is not just on *what* is measured but on *how* it is measured and *who* has decided which indicators are important.
- Information about *why* and *how* change has happened and how important that change is to those affected is more likely to emerge.
- The process helps to increase community ownership of and involvement in projects, awareness, mutual learning and empowerment – this can increase the potential that your program has positive impacts of various kinds.

Overview of the concept of indicators

Indicators are ways of measuring (indicating) that progress on your programs or projects is being achieved, with 'progress' being determined by the aims and objectives of an initiative. Indicators are used to measure the impact of interventions and to monitor the performance of programs or projects in relation to pre-determined targets. Some evaluators consider indicator setting to be the most difficult step in designing an evaluation or impact assessment. In the attempting to provide indications of change in complex contexts

What indicators can and cannot tell us

Indicators can tell us things such as:

- To what extent our program objectives have been met
- What progress our project or program has made
- The extent to which our targets have been met
- That a change we are interested in is happening

However, indicators only provide an *indication* that something has happened – *they are not proof* and they cannot tell us:

- Why our program or project has made a difference
- Why and how change occurs
- How our communication activities should be undertaken

Types of indicators

Indicators need to measure physical and visible (measurable) outcomes, but also changes in attitudes and behaviour, which is often less tangible and not always easy to count. While quantitative indicators are emphasised in mainstream M&E approaches, for communication for development, and especially Communication for Social Change, they often need to be qualitative to be most effective and appropriate. Qualitative indicators can help us to assess the impacts of our projects and the extent to which change has occurred. They are generally more descriptive. Quantitative indicators can help to assess if our projects are on track. Indicators can take different formats such as pictures or stories of social change. This is particularly important to consider when we are working with people who have low levels of education or literacy.

The most important indicators are often not quantifiable. For example, the number of people participating in a social network is relatively unimportant compared to the *quality of relationships and dialogue* within that network.

There are many different types of indicators, for example, '**process indicators**' (the number of people trained) '**output indicators**' (increased dialogue within a community) and '**outcome or impact indicators** (for example, the proportion of youth who know about safe sexual practices).

Examples of types of indicators for monitoring and evaluating CFSC initiatives

Input indictor:

- Funds covering the planned communication activities
- Qualified staff

Process indicator:

- Number of participatory radio programmes aired
- Number of people reached through popular theatre activities

Output indicator:

- Percentage of participants by men and women
- Exposure to needed information/messages
- Expanded public and private dialogue

Outcome/impact indicator:

- ICT increasingly used for dialogue and debate
- Percentage of men and women who know about voting procedures

(from DANIDA, 2005)

Gender-sensitive indicators

CFSC initiatives are extremely gender-sensitive and women and men in developing countries usually have unequal access to information, freedom of expression and communication technologies such as radio. Indicators for your programs therefore need to provide data that is divided by gender and other relevant characteristics such as age, caste or ethnic group.

Objectives and indicators

Most projects begin with a design process during which the objectives and indicators are set. Often, donors state objectives in broad terms, i.e. % reduction in HIV or increase in gender empowerment, and they expect their project partners to identify clear links between their activities and the achievement of these development objectives, using standardised tools such as the logframe. Broad objectives relating to things such as human rights or gender empowerment often mean very different things at the local level. Gender empowerment, for example, might be understood at the local level as a series of small and ongoing changes that gradually lead to changes in the overall status of women.

What makes a good indicator

There are many different ways of assessing how useful our indicators are. Some guidelines include:

- They are relevant and accurate enough for those concerned to interpret the information – they do not need to be perfect.
- Relevance of information is essential to identifying appropriate indicators.
- The need to be achievable and realistic.
- They should enable you to assess change over a period of time.

Since social change can often take a long time, progress toward long-term social change can at times be an acceptable measure of effectiveness.

How Equal Access Nepal assessed change results before the AC4SC project

In the initial stages at EAN, we gathered lots of qualitative data through letters, feedback forms, group discussions and interviews but we had no mechanism to mange and analyse them. Indicators were not set to show impact results. Case studies, quotes and photos were considered as change results of the radio programs. Although lots of qualitative data were received, the information provided to donors was more quantitative, such as the number of letters received. This happened because there was more involvement of donors in our activities throughout each project. Impacts were more visible to donors because they visited the field a lot and met the beneficiaries frequently. Because of our donors' direct involvement in project activities, no questions were asked about M&E activities like setting objectives and indicators. That is why we had no mechanism to set objectives and indicators and did not think about the need for this.

Later on, training in Ethnographic Action Research was provided to program managers and M&E field staff in EAN to maintain field data as field notes, code them and then present impact results in the form of photo essays and features. However, there was no direct involvement of stakeholders in this analysis and reporting process.

During an initial AC4SC planning meeting, the following comment was made: 'EAN wants to be able to identify indicators of social change but donors are uninterested in indicators that don't fit their framework. That is why current indicators don't assess social change'. This helps to explain why indicators that were previously set were often quantitative, not focussed on social change impacts and set without the input from beneficiaries. Instead, they were often based on things like the number of trainings conducted, numbers of persons trained, and number of listeners clubs formed.

SPICED and SMART indicators

While there are no set rules to selecting indicators, one popular guideline has been to use the acronym 'SMART': indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable and action-oriented, Relevant, and Time-bound. This guideline tends to suit quantitative indicators in particular. Another acronym recently suggested is 'SPICED': Subjective, Participatory, Interpreted, Communicable, Empowering and Disaggregated. SMART describes the properties of the indicators themselves, while SPICED relates more to how indicators should be used, as the following table illustrates:

SMART indicators	SPICED indicators
Specific (to the change being measured)	Subjective
Measurable (and unambiguous)	Participatory
Attainable (and sensitive)	Interpreted (and communicable)
Relevant (and easy to collect)	Cross-checked
Time bound (with term dates for measurement)	Empowering
	Diverse and disaggregated

You don't always have to use SMART or SPICED indicators, but you can use them as a way of evaluating what you are doing with your indicators. They give you clear criteria to evaluate the quality of your indicators.

Essentially, your choice of indicator depends on what stakeholders want to measure or the type of changes they want to better understand and assess. The SPICED approach puts more emphasis on developing indicators that stakeholders can define and use for their own purposes of interpreting and learning about change, rather than simply measuring or attempting to demonstrate impact to meet donor requirements. This approach is more appropriate for the participatory monitoring and evaluation of CFSC programs, which is likely to draw heavily on qualitative and descriptive measures. However, SMART indicators and quantitative approaches also have a role, depending on the indicators and their purposes as designed through participatory processes. We also recognise that SMART indicators may better meet donor requirements, as the comments below indicate.

Some challenges in using SMART and SPICED indicators: a view from EAN

The major challenge in developing SMART indicators is coming into agreement with certain stakeholders (such as radio program team members) and giving briefings about indicators to beneficiaries at the community level. It took a long time to reach agreement on all of the SMART indicators we developed for our first six month research plan. Then, at the last moment, the M&E team was asked to remove indicators for certain themes by the SSMK team.

In terms of donor requirements, it is easier to set SMART indicators than SPICED indicators. From this point of view, SMART indicators are more practical than SPICED indicators. The SPICED approach is good as it uses a bottom-up participatory approach, but it requires more involvement of community members to define indicators of social change impact and they take a longer time to set. This means that more resources are needed than for the SMART approach.

Some resources about indicators and the SMART and SPICED approach to assessing indicators can be found in the **Useful resources, information and tools** section.

The SPICED approach

The **SPICED** approach is a useful tool for thinking about how project objectives and indicators can be set in a participatory and inclusive way with local communities. The approach is summarised below:

SPICED: Subjective - Participatory - Interpreted and communicable - Cross-checked and compared - Empowering - Diverse and disaggregated

Subjective: Informants have a special position or experience that gives them unique insights which may yield a very high return on the investigators time. In this sense, what others see as 'anecdotal' becomes critical data because of the source's value.

Participatory: Objectives and indicators should be developed together with those best placed to assess them. This means involving a project's ultimate beneficiaries, but it can also mean involving local staff and other stakeholders.

Interpreted and communicable: Locally defined objectives/indicators may not mean much to other stakeholders, so they often need to be explained.

Cross-checked and compared: The validity of assessment needs to be cross-checked, by comparing different objectives/indicators and progress, and by using different informants, methods, and researchers.

Empowering: The process of setting and assessing objectives/indicators should be empowering in itself and allow groups and individuals to reflect critically on their changing situation.

Diverse and disaggregated: There should be a deliberate effort to seek out different objectives/indicators from a range of groups, especially men and women. This information needs to be recorded in such a way that these differences can be assessed over time.

The **SPICED** approach is a very useful tool for thinking about how to set participatory objectives and indicators. It is qualitative; it appreciates local understandings of change and is a good tool for thinking about why it is important to work with communities. It identifies that different people have different ideas about what change means. Developing indicators that help us understand what change means at the community level is challenging, but several steps can be taken that make the process simpler to understand and implement. Key steps relevant to EAN include:

Step 1: Identify and engage stakeholder groups and community researchers

An important first step is to first identify the key stakeholder groups who should be involved in the process of setting objectives and indicators. Using different participatory processes to engage different groups is also important. You will need to consider which methods would work best with different groups in order to ensure that everyone's voices and views are heard. Using these processes as part of regular meetings or community-based activities can be one way to reduce the amount of time and effort that may be needed to organise special research-related meetings or workshops. Methods that could be used to identify and engage stakeholders include:

- Interviews with key informants who then suggest others.
- Holding a workshop with staff to identify key stakeholders

- Stakeholder analysis based on analysis of social networks (see **Useful resources** section).
- Conducting a survey to identify stakeholder groups and their type and level of stake then making contact with the main leader of each group.

The most appropriate community members and groups to involve in the process of identifying indicators also need to be identified. This step would include engaging listener club members and others in the community and who would take part in research related to identifying what social change means to the community. It is helpful to invite both program participants and non-participants to take part in the process of setting indicators. This enables the perspectives of different people affected by your project or programs to be taken into account and fosters greater ownership of the project among local people. A smaller number of stakeholder groups can be prioritised for the indicator development process.

Example of the successful engagement of internal stakeholders in setting radio program objectives

After the AC4SC project started, there were different meetings with the SSMK and NN content teams and management team members. EAN regularly involved content team members in setting objectives and indicators for the SSMK and NN radio programs. This process helped us to develop our first six month research plan which includes objectives, indicators and research questions. It also helped to develop better dialogue and cooperation between the M&E and content team members and raised the value of M&E work within EAN.

As an initial step in the design of the impact assessment of the SSMK and NN programs, the content and M&E teams met in a workshop and came up with different objectives related to the NN and SSMK programs. The aim was to identify the indicators that would be the focus of the initial impact assessment/PM&E process. This involved the following steps:

- A pre-workshop was held with fourteen EAN staff including senior management, program and production staff and M&E staff.
- Program objectives were listed and combined with similar objectives that were identified during previous workshops. This resulted in a list of twelve objectives for SSMK and ten for NN.
- Each workshop participant was given five red dots which they placed against the objectives they considered most important.
- Participants discussed the votes given to various objectives for the programs.
- The wording of some objectives was changed and agreement reached on which were more important than others.
- Further work on the objectives and more discussions were held at subsequent workshops involving a smaller number of EA staff.
- EAN staff eventually decided on the two objectives for each program that would be the focus of the initial work on the impact assessment, to be conducted as part of the initial capacity development workshops and fieldwork.

Example of the process of identifying key stakeholders

Once the SSMK and NN program objectives were identified, workshop participants were asked to list various groups of stakeholders who could participate in setting indicators of social change related to the programs. Initially, the SSMK and NN teams each prepared lists of all of their stakeholders. They then collaborated to list the stakeholders who could be involved in setting indicators of social change and the ways in which they could be involved in this process. The final list of stakeholders and the ways that we thought they could participate was:

- Listeners (letters, emails, phone calls, feedback, face to face interaction)
- Listener clubs (letters, emails, phone calls, feedback, face to face interaction)
- Reporters (audio clips, reports, photographs, success stories, feedbacks, meetings - both formal and informal)
- Outreach partners and organisations (periodic reports, meetings)
- Content Advisory Group (CAG meetings)
- Project staff (reports, field audio, monitoring, visits, outreach staff activities)
- Donors (reports and feedback)

Step 2: Understanding the local context, issues and barriers to change

This step assumes that you have already identified the communities in which you will conduct your impact assessment research work. It includes:

- Undertaking scoping research in the communities and preparing reports on this research.
- The community researchers using participatory tools to identify barriers to social change and develop and plan strategies to address those barriers.
- Evaluating the various methods used in this research.
- Understanding the communication context in the selected communities, including what access different groups have to various communication technologies and other sources of information and what forms of communication they engage in.

Example of scoping research to understand local contexts, issues and barriers

One of the first steps in the AC4SC project was to conduct scoping studies in the Palpa, Dang, Dadeldhura and Dhankuta districts of Nepal which had been selected as the initial four research sites. The main aims of these scoping studies were to:

- Identify and engage key stakeholders in the community who could provide relevant information about the community and assist in identifying other stakeholders and potential community researchers. We thought that later on they could participate in setting indicators and engage in the impact assessment process.
- Explain the AC4SC project to key stakeholders in the community and the benefits of the project to the community.
- Identify and interview potential community researchers.
- Collect demographic data on each community.
- Collect relevant contextual information about the area, including the recent history of the area, and key community sectors and organisations.
- Undertake communicative ecology research and mapping.
- Conduct research to obtain relevant information related to SSMK and NN such as who listens to the programs and how and what the community's level of knowledge is about some of the core themes in the programs.

We used different participatory tools such as diamond, communicative ecology, spider diagram, community mapping, gender chart, interviews and focus group discussions to better understand the community in these four districts. In addition, we gathered government statistics and other data about the such things as: population numbers, age distribution, gender, ethnicity/caste, religion, educational/literacy levels, economic activity and migration to and from the area. We also gathered information about annual events such as religious and cultural festivals.

We found that lack of education, gender and caste discrimination, poverty and superstitious beliefs were the major barriers to social change. Communicative ecology mapping was used to understand the media preferences of individual community members and the community as a whole. People were using personal face to face contact, the telephone and mobile phones more as communicating tools. Some people knew what the internet was but lacked access to it. Regular research work conducted in these districts identified changes in people's interest toward media preferences. More people were found to be interested in watching TV than listening to the radio and more people were interested in listening to local FM stations with local radio programs than national broadcast services such as Radio Nepal.

Step 3: Identifying information needs and interests

This step includes:

- Using various methods to identify the needs and interests of diverse community groups related to social change information and other associated activities.
- Aligning objectives and media content to best meet those needs - the appropriate content for locally produced programs and nationally broadcast programs would need to be considered here. Local radio stations and advisory groups would also be involved.

Example of identifying the information needs of the community

Through our use of various PM&E methods, our research participants provided a range of feedback about ways that the SSMK and NN radio programs could be improved. This included the feedback that they wanted the programs to cover what they felt were issues in the local area such as the trafficking of girls, HIV and AIDS, impunity, and accountable government services. The following shows some of the issues that short questionnaire survey (SQS) respondents wanted to see included in the programs. They indicate that listeners are still interested to know more about many of the issues that these programs have been covering for a long time.

Issues for NN

- Improvement in the political process
- Impact of unstable political situation on youth
- Media and its security
- Update on the Constituent Assembly
- Role of youth during the transitional period
- Awareness of youth on criminal activities
- Role of youth on public justice and security
- Good governance

Issues for SSMK

- Girl trafficking
- Love and sex
- Development of youth
- Role and responsibilities of youth towards their nation
- Employability
- Vocational training
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Quality education

As well as this, Content Advisory Group meetings were held regularly at EAN to get feedback from different stakeholders to develop program issues for the content development of the radio programs. Feedback on radio programs through Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions was also used to triangulate with other data about the information needs of program audiences.

Step 4: Identifying social change impacts and indicators

This step includes:

- Using various participatory methods to identify different forms of social change impacts of the programs.
- Staff and others using this data to identify potential indicators of social change; i.e. what communities feel are achievable outcomes in the short, medium and long term.
- Identifying the things that need to occur to achieve change, i.e. what actions need to occur?
- Evaluating the methods used to identify impacts and indicators.

Participatory research techniques such as Most Significant Change and Roadblocks and Barriers (to name but a few) can help you to understand what 'success' or 'change' means at the local level.

Examples of identifying social change impacts and indicators

EAN used various methods to identify different types of social and behavioural change impacts of the SSMK and NN programs. Some of this data helped us to set indicators which were included in our first six month research plan.

Identifying what social change means to the community

During a community meeting held as part of a field visit to Dang and Dadeldhura in January 2009, community members were asked what social change means to them. Participants thought that raised level of awareness; decrease in caste and gender discrimination and no negative thoughts are social change. They suggested that many different things help to bring about social change such as education, awareness, discussion, youth activities, and people who motivate for change. They also thought that radio programs, wall paintings, posters and pamphlets, newspapers, and television programs can help to achieve social change. However, they have to regularly address an issue to help change happen. One method alone cannot make change happen. They all have to work together to create social change.

Identifying domains of change

After undertaking a review of 20 MSC stories, AC4SC project participants were able to identify a number of domains of change (DoCs) related to the NN and SSMK radio programs. This process included the following steps:

1. Reviewing the broad visions and objectives for the SSMK and NN programs
2. Sorting the MSC stories
   - Eliminate stories lacking in detail or that do not focus on change associated with SSMK or NN.
   - Categorise the remaining stories and data into piles of similar broad types of impact or change (for example, change in awareness related to education or health, or change in participation or personal relationships)
   - Note down the broad types of impact identified for each program
3. Developing draft DoCs: List up to eight possible DoCs for each program based on the broad objectives and the impact themes identified
4. Consulting the SSMK and NN program teams
   - Ask the teams to comment on the list of DoCs and suggest revisions and additions
   - Seek agreement on the list of draft DoCs and the wording of any revisions
5. Consulting the Community Researchers. In order to know how they interpreted the DOCs, each of the CRs were asked:
   - What changes does the Naya Nepal program help bring to its listeners and community?
   - What changes does the SSMK program help bring to its listeners and community?
6. Based on all of these inputs and ideas, decide on the final DoCs: Meeting participants further prioritised the DoCs and decided on the specific DoCs that will be used in future MSC story collection.

Example of indicators based on domains of change

These are some of the SMART impact indicators linked to the broad/ongoing objectives of the SSMK and Naya Nepal programs and the domains of change that were included in the draft six month research plan developed by EAN. They were later revised or refined.

SSMK indicators:

- At least 50% of the SSMK target group researched are sharing knowledge obtained from SSMK with family and/or peers.
- At least 50% of the SSMK target group researched give examples of how they have developed skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about one or more SSMK issues.
- At least 15% of the SSMK target group researched can give examples of how they or others in their family or community have changed their attitudes towards superstitions and social ills after listening to SSMK programs on these topics.

Naya Nepal indicators:

- At least 40% of NN listeners researched are aware of their duties and responsibilities as a citizen related to the promotion of democratic, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable systems of governance.
- At least 60% of NN listeners researched will have increased their awareness about reforms to the Justice and Security System.
- At least 10% of NN listeners researched can give examples of how they or others in their family or community have encouraged others to take part in socio-political activities and discussions during the previous 12 months.

Step 5: Identifying indicator categories and verifying indicators

This step involves:

- Identifying the most relevant, effective and appropriate indicators of social change for the key stakeholder groups (M&E staff, donors etc).
- Reaching agreement on definitions for each key indicator.
- Developing categories of indicators and impacts.
- Going back to community members and groups to check the extent to which the indicators developed adequately captured their realities and perspectives.
- Seeking agreement on the wording of the indicators.
- Assessing the various methods used to develop the indicators.

Example of reaching agreement on indicator and impact categories

The indicators developed for the six month research plan as part of the AC4SC project were based on continuous dialogue between the M&E and content team members and input from the AC4SC research team. Before setting these indicators, this dialogue and cooperation was helpful to develop objectives of the radio programs first, based on which the indicators were set. As well as this, the development of the domains of change (DOCs) has helped us to assess various types of changes in program listeners. As for example, a DOC related to the NN radio program is 'changes in the attitude of citizens towards politics' which was been defined after we analysed MSC stories collected from listeners which mentioned that after they started listening to the NN program, they started think that politics is not a dirty game rather they should take an interest in it. This has also been verified by analysis of short questionnaire survey results. The impacts that were identified through this ongoing process of analysis and discussion are:

SSMK:
Can talk freely about sex
Dialogue among peers on HIV and reproductive health
Aware on HIV and AIDS and reproductive health
Able to make decisions
Able to convince parents that they should study and reject early marriage
Developed critical thinking

Naya Nepal:
Started taking interest in political matters
Able to understand Constituent Assembly and its process
Discussion and dialogue about political matters at the community level

Example of translating generic objectives/indicators to more local indicators

One of the broad objectives of the Naya Nepal radio program is 'to encourage discussion and dialogue about political matters at the community level'. These activities have been identified through the research conducted by community researchers and the M&E team at EAN. Analysis of MSC stories and the outcomes of group discussions and interviews show that listeners are taking more interest in political matters and having discussions about different political issues after listening to the NN program.

Some local examples of indicators of discussion and dialogue about political matters at the community level that were identified though community-based research are:

- Community members directly asking questions about local problems to local Constituent Assembly (CA) members
- Changes in women's participation in and interest in political matters and their increased self confidence in speaking about these issues
- Encouraging and motivating family members and neighbours to vote during the election.

The importance of being able to speak directly to CA members was verified by the results of an SQS which showed that the NN program segment 'Question to CA members' was ranked as the second most liked segment by a quarter of the survey respondents.

Some final words

The process of setting objectives and defining indicators is concerned with better understanding the people that you work with. Development is a partnership and understanding what change means at the community level, what change communities strive to realise and how CFSC programs and projects can help them achieve it places a very special emphasis on the kind of M&E process and methods that can be used. Increasingly, participatory approaches are helping to close the gap between project implementers and stakeholders and increase dialogue. Working with communities in a participatory and equal way from the outset and then throughout a project is essential to understanding what change is sought and what change has occurred.

Some useful tips and ideas for setting indicators

- ***Set appropriate indicators and methods***: Develop the types of indicators that are appropriate to your programs or projects, through processes that are appropriate – link them very strongly to your program objectives. Use methods that are appropriate for the type of indicator (tangible/intangible; process/outcome).
- ***Get good input from many stakeholders***: Indicators should be developed with input from a wide range of relevant stakeholders, using participatory processes that encourage discussion and enable people to identify indicators of social or behaviour change that are meaningful to them.
- ***Keep indicators manageable*** and keep them to a ***reasonable number*** – it's more useful to use a small number of meaningful and useful indicators which can be looked at regularly and carefully than a long and complicated list that's too time-consuming to use. Also remember that the most important indicators are often not quantifiable.
- ***Enable analysis of differences***: Ensure that indicators reflect the need for gender disaggregated data, or data on other important differences such as age, educational level or caste.
- ***Remember their limitations***: indicators are not able to capture complex realities and relationships – they are good ways of measuring change but not of capturing the reasons behind such change. See indicators as just one part of a PM&E strategy - they can allow you to demonstrate progress towards defined objectives, but cannot tell you why, or what this means to people's lives.
- ***Consider using alternatives***: It may be useful to consider using alternatives to indicators, such as Most Significant Change stories and 'verifying assumptions'. In some cases, such alternatives may provide better ways to monitor significant and sometimes unanticipated or negative impacts associated with long-term CFSC goals.

Module 3: Research and PM&E methods

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- how to collect rich qualitative data to help you to understand your potential audiences and the impacts your programs have on them
- some key qualitative and short survey methods and when to use them
- what will make you a good facilitator, and how this is important in participatory approaches to M&E
- how to deepen and improve your data, and to probe important issues

Introduction

In order to collect useful and useable information (data) you will need to understand and use a range of (mainly) qualitative data collection methods, or tools. It is unlikely that you will be able to understand a particular issue thoroughly by using just one method. It is important to collect data using more than one method as you will get more useful and trustworthy findings, especially if you cross check your findings with other data sources. Certain methods tend to be good at collecting certain types of data, so think and plan your data collection accordingly, and use a range of appropriate methods. **Module 6** on PM&E planning will help you to do this, but for that to be useful you first need to understand what different methods are like, and what they are most useful for.

Here we introduce some of the key methods you are likely to use:

1. Participant observation and field notes
2. Participatory techniques
3. Interviews – in-depth and group
4. Most Significant Change technique
5. Short questionnaire surveys

These brief introductions will introduce the methods. If you decide you want to use these methods, you can learn how to by accessing the resources referred to in each of the methods or the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual**. After these brief descriptions, in this module, we will also talk about facilitation and listening, which are key skills in qualitative research, especially using participatory techniques. We also provide tips on how to become a good facilitator and listener.

Finally, this module will help you to make sure your data is rich, useful and meaningful, that you follow up and probe issues adequately. This is important, because unless you follow a rigorous approach to your data collection, it will remain superficial and equal only to anecdotal evidence, not the insightful and rich understandings that can really help your organisation, and demonstrate impact.

Whichever methods for data collection you use, you will need to first of all plan your work carefully (see **Module 6**), and when you are collecting data you will need to carefully record, label and manage that data so that it will be in the most useful and useable formats for data analysis (see **Module 5: Doing qualitative data analysis**).

Participant observation and field notes

Participant observation is a tool you can use at all times. It simply means being aware that everything you observe about, and do in your communities can provide useful research data. It can help you to understand the everyday lives of people. It is good if you interact with people in many different situations such as community meeting places and teashops, not just in formal group meetings or interviews. This participation and observation must be written about in what we call field notes. These field notes will record the details of what you did, who was there, what happened, what was discussed, and what you think about it.

You must learn to listen to what people say, but also observe what they do (which may be different) in order to get a complete picture of how things work in your communities. We often say one thing, but do another – this is human nature – we all do it! Your job is to capture not only what people say, but also what they do.

Everything you observe can be interesting and can help you and others to understand your communities. So, you should record as much as you can in your field notes.

- Learn to observe everything around you as if you have never experienced it before.
- Put as much detail as you can in your field notes.

Field notes are places where all the details about your work are written down. Field notes are a research tool that allows you to capture everything that is thought, said, heard, seen and felt while doing your work.

A good participant observer is continually engaged with those around him or her, listening and open to different ways of thinking about both the familiar and the strange. It is a way to try to understand everyday life from the perspectives of a range of different people – the range of people that your programs target. In order to understand them better, and target your programs more effectively, you first need to comprehend something of how things look and feel from their positions.

To learn more about participant observation and how to write detailed field notes go to http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/2-0.html and the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual**

Example of a field note from EAN

Day Two (15th November, 2007)

I woke up early in the morning and prepared myself for the first site visit. Chaughera is a place that is 2 kilometres away from Ghorahi, which is on the way to Lamahi, an emerging bazaar on the highway. We took three wheelers (Tempo) to reach Chaughera. From there we walked 15 minutes to reach the

Basantapur-4, Laxmipur VDC where we visited members of the Saksham Kisor Kisori Samuha (Capable Girls and Boys Group) in Basantapur.

Parbati Basnet (Community Reporter, GWP) and I met Kamala Subedi first. She is an active group member in Basantapur. Since one and half years Kamala has been listening to the radio program Naya Nepal and further told that she also likes the SSMK radio program very much. There we also came across a few listeners of the group and told them the purpose of our AC4SC research.

It was almost the end of paddy harvesting season. We were unable to meet the group facilitator, Pabitra Nepali, because she was busy in paddy harvesting. Pabitra is the inspiration of this group. She is from a lower caste (Dalit). At the age of 25, she started her formal schooling in class five and now she is studying in class seven. She says, "Education is important not your age." She constantly encourages her group friends and community's children to study and to do some social works.

After some preliminary discussions on our research plan, we left the village to come back early the next day to initiate the research work. Although I had a plan to stay in the village during the research work, I had to make my overnight stay in a nearby small roadside town as I was not carrying a sleeping bag with me and it was too difficult to get a reasonable accommodation in the village. Most of the people of Basantapur are very poor and winter was fast approaching.

We came back to Ghorahi. After lunch, I went to the Government of Nepal's Statistics Office to get some secondary data about the population of Dang district. After that I had a meeting with Lila Devkota and Amrit Gharti, two of the active listeners of SSMK clubs in Dang. Lila Ji is from Narayanpur VDC. We planned a SSMK club meeting in Narayanpur.

Participatory techniques

Participatory techniques provide an opportunity to engage with individuals, groups, communities and institutions in a simple and participatory way. Most importantly, these techniques are good at getting local people to participate in identifying their own issues and solutions. The methods are very effective at helping participants to realise their own problems and constraints and are useful in generating consensus opinions quickly where agreed or group action is required. They can also help to quickly understanding where consensus might not be easy or possible, and allow you to be aware of a range of perspectives and experiences, which you might need to take into account in your work. This can be very helpful for your M&E work, as it will allow you to better understand opportunities as well as constraints and barriers to positive social change, and allow you to plan activities accordingly.

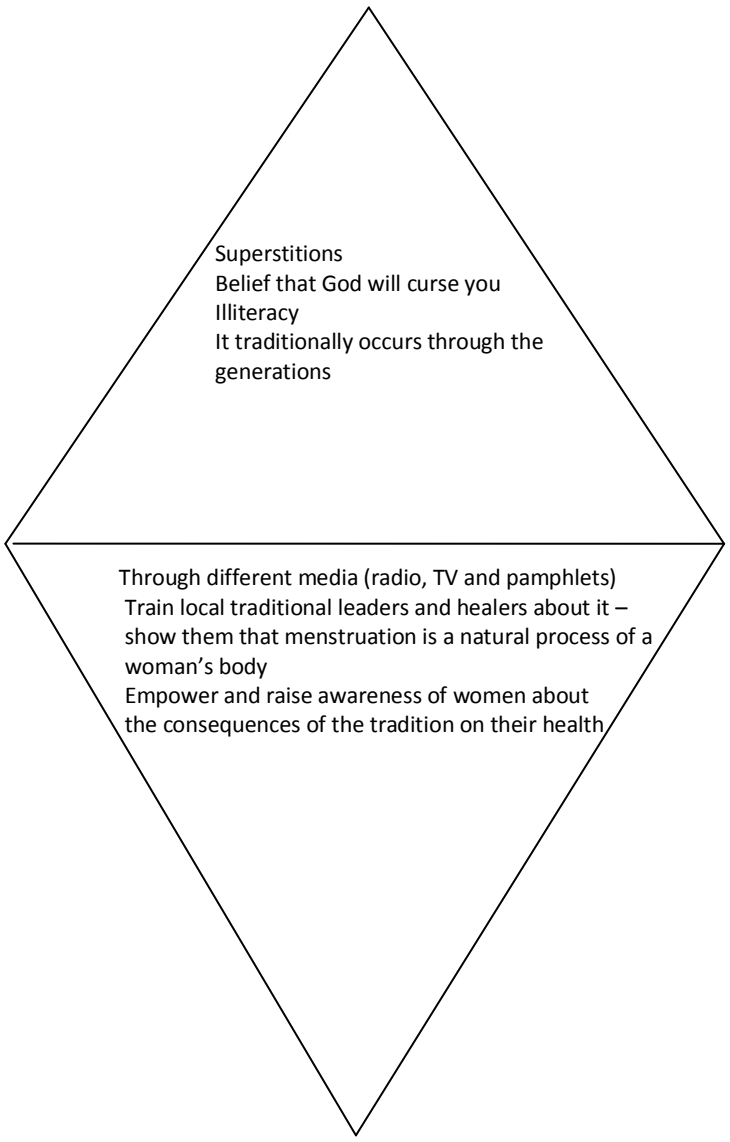
Participatory techniques involve the production of simple diagrams, charts and other ways of representing local conditions and relationships. Developed with participants through these techniques, these representations often provide a clear and simple way to communicate complex issues to others such as managers, local politicians and community leaders. These representations provide M&E researchers with a very good tool for both discussing and representing local realities.

Example of a participatory tool - Diamond

This is an analysis of the Chaupadi tradition* using the **Diamond** tool

Participants: Seven youth participants, all male
Name of clubs: Hajarimala SSMK Listeners Club and Navayuva Pragatisil SSMK Listeners Club, Dadeldhura
Date: 18 March, 2008

Why is the Chaupadi tradition still alive?



How to raise awareness of the community about this?

*The Chaupadi tradition refers to the practice of women in rural Nepal, during menstruation, having to spend four days imprisoned in a byre without coming in contact with any men and being excluded from any activities and socialisation, including cooking and eating dairy products. It is believed that during this period if they eat dairy products the cattle will die.

Participatory techniques are generally about:

- Mapping
- Grouping
- Ranking
- Comparing
- Sequencing

Some of these techniques take just a few minutes, some an hour or more. Typically, they work well with small groups of up to eight people. They can be used as part of focus group discussions.

Example of a Gender Division of Labour chart

Gender Chart (Division of Labour) of Silangi village, Samaijee VDC-4, Dadeldhura district
Participants: Five female and three males (two females are elderly women and the rest were youths)
Name of club: Hajarimala SSMK Listeners Club and Navayuva Pragatisil SSMK Listeners Club, Silangi village, Samaijee-4, Dadeldhura district.
Date: March 18, 2008

Time	Women (mothers)	Men (fathers)	Sons	Daughters
4 am	wake up and fetch water	still sleeping	sleeping	sleeping
5 am	clean the house	some still sleep and some listen to radio	some still sleep and some study	some still sleep and some study
6 am	eat breakfast	eat breakfast	eat breakfast	eat breakfast
7 am	take cattle out in courtyard	go to farm	play in home	play in home
8 am	cook food	busy in farm work	still playing	still playing
9 am	eat food	eat food	eat food	eat food
10 am	go to forest to collect forage for cattle and fire wood or works on the farm	employees go to job, some go to local bazaar, some gossip in local meeting places, some go to their farm, some take cattle to graze	go to school	go to school
5 pm	come home	come home or some are already at home	come home from school	come home from school
6 pm	fetch water	some gossip in local meeting places, some provide forage to cattle	play	play or some help their mother to fetch water
7 pm	cook food	listen to radio	study	study
8 pm	eat food, clean plates and utensils and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed

The Gender Division of Labour chart presented above demonstrates how this tool can be used to chart out the round the clock activities of each individual family member that can represent the usual activities of the entire community in relation to the typical division of labour between genders. This tool can help to identify such things as gender-related barriers to accessing information through radio programs and other means.

This chart shows that only men in the village listen to the radio while the wives are confined mostly to household and farm chores. This is a common practice in most rural communities in Nepal. A male household head usually possesses power of authority to make most of the household decisions. He imposes most of the exhausting and tedious routines on to their wives in a tradition that is deeply interwoven into the crux of the rural society. Married women can only listen to radio programs or watch TV shows that their husbands wish to tune into. Hence they often do not have their own favourite shows. To break out of this restriction, they are increasingly organising into groups to listen to their particular radio programs of interest or to undertake collective action. Youth in this community have also formed listener clubs where they can listen to programs such as SSMK without the presence of adults.

Participatory techniques are very good for getting you started in collecting data and quickly gaining an understanding of a local area, local people and local issues. They involve local people participating in defining their own issues. They are a useful way of starting your work in any particular place, or on any particular issue, and they can be drawn upon at any time to explore a place and issues in different ways, and to test findings or ideas generated using other tools.

To learn a range of participatory techniques, go to http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/4-0.html and the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual**

Interviews – in-depth and group

There are different kinds of research interviews. They range from informal chats to formal conversations.

- Some are *structured* – where you have a fixed list of questions that you ask everyone you interview.
- Some are *semi-structured* – where you have a topic to explore and a list of some questions that you want to try to cover with all the people you interview. Your aim is to guide the conversation while encouraging the interviewee to tell their own story in their own words. You will be open to exploring unexpected topics if they emerge.
- Some are *unstructured* – where you might have a range of topics in mind, but you want to see where the conversation takes you.

You will generally use ***semi-structured*** in-depth interviews and focus on a particular topic or theme, depending on the purpose of your research. Interviews can last up to or more than an hour, so that you can get into some depth. Although you will have topics and questions that you want to cover, many of your questions will be responses to what the interviewee has actually said. If this proves to

be a useful avenue of inquiry for your research theme, you might adapt your interview schedule as you go along and as you learn more from your interviewee.

In-depth interviews

There are many types of in-depth interviews that you might undertake:

- ***Household interviews*** – literally, interviewing people in their homes, where they are comfortable, and where you can see and talk with them in their own space. You might be interviewing just one person, or several members of the household. These can be quite intimate and personal, discussions about interviewees' feelings, their family relationships, their financial situation, aims, and so on.
- ***Interviews with 'key informants'*** or community figures – for example, you might want to interview people from the local radio station, teachers, business people, religious figures, health workers or political figures. These interviews might take place in their offices, and will probably be less personal. One of your aims might be to find out how they understand the community and its problems from their professional perspective and experience, or what changes they have observed, which might be connected to listening to your programs.

Example of an interview schedule

Introduce yourself (the interviewer)
Provide some brief information about your work and the objectives of the interview
Ask for the interviewee's consent for the interview
Note the name, address, caste, age, sex, occupation and education of the interviewee
Say how long you expect the interview to last
Note the interview date

Example of a questionnaire about the SSMK radio program

Let me introduce myself first. Are you fine with the interview?
What are you doing nowadays?
How much do you listen to radio programs?
What type of radio program do you like?
Which radio program do you listen to the most?
Why do you listen to SSMK?
How did you start listening to SSMK?
How long you have been listening to SSMK?
With whom do you listen to the program?
What do you like the most about the program?
Why you like this the most?
Have you ever applied any of the life skills that you heard about in the program in your own life?
Can you give me an example of this?
What difference did this make to your life?
Have you talked about this program or shared any of the things you learn on the program with others?
If yes, what feedback about the program did you get from others?
Can you tell me something about the drama segment that you liked?
What did you like the most about this segment?
Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?
Can you tell me more about those suggestions?

Thank you very much for your valuable time

- ***Interviews with listener group members, past and present*** – the aim is to find out how they relate to and use the group and the radio programs, what sort of activities they have undertaken and how effective they have been, and how this fits into and affects their lives and their community.

In-depth interviews will focus as much on things like feelings, meanings, opinions, experiences and understandings as they do on getting more routine information.

Rather than using a questionnaire, in-depth interviews use an ***interview schedule*** - a list of questions around your research theme. The aim is to cover your research theme in each interview in a flexible way, adapting the order of the questions to fit the flow of the conversation.

Interviews don't just focus on media and technology use in isolation: for example, we would not *just* ask about radio listening, but try to find out how radio fits into the interviewee's everyday life and things like the barriers to listening that they might be experiencing. This might mean asking quite wide-ranging questions.

Example of an interview transcript (extract)

Interview about women's access to justice
Place: Hatiya-8, Makawanpur district
Sex-Female, Age-44, Caste-Brahmin, Occupation-Agriculture, Education-Literate
Date: March 18, 2010

One of the main themes of the Naya Nepal radio program is women's access to justice and security. This is an interview conducted by Nirmal (CR) with Masali Khatiwada (MK) who has been waiting for a court decision on her disputed land for seven years.

CR: Can you please tell me what your case is about?
MK: I am fighting for land that belongs to me but I am suffering a lot to fight this case.
CR: How long was the court case?
MK: It took me almost five years for a decision.
CR: Did you get justice?
MK: It took me four years in the district court to get the decision and then again the case was put forward to the appellate court. I won the case again but the process is still ongoing as I don't have my land's papers yet.
CR: How much money did you spend for the process?
MR: I wish no one faces a court case. Everywhere you need money. I spent almost forty thousand rupees, can you imagine?
CR: What do you think about the process for justice?
MR: The process is long with lots of hassles and you need lots of money.
CR: What are the obstacles that you think women face to get justice?
MR: Out there you will find no one who talks in women's favour or gives any importance to it. The advocate looks down on the females that file a court case and most them are males. They even try to ignore what I have to say.
CR: Can you tell me more about the process of carrying out the effect of the court decision?

MR: It is seven years now since I have won the case. Neither, I got my land's papers nor I can I, to date, plant anything in my land. When I go to court to inquire about it, they always say come tomorrow. If I had been rich, educated and had adequate political support I would have got the justice way ahead of time.
CR: What needs to be improved in the justice system?
MR: For easy access of justice to everyone, the justice process has to be affordable and less time consuming and it should be totally absent from nepotism and favouritism. The judiciary system should be unbiased to neither rich or poor nor male or female.
CR: Thank you for your time.

Group interviews

Group interviews are sometimes called 'focus group discussions'. They are different to in-depth interviews because they always involve more than one interviewee and are designed to generate discussion among the interviewees around a certain topic. It may be useful to have 6-10 people in each group who are of similar social status, gender, marital status and education to get the best discussion. Occasionally, it can be interesting to mix the groups to see what differences emerge.

Example of notes from a part of a group discussion

Group discussion about **justice and security services**
Place: Narayanpur-1, Dang district
Participants: male - 3, female - 2; age 17-21; caste - Tharu (5); occupation - student
Date: 27 February 2010

One of the important themes of the Naya Nepal radio program is easy access to justice by everyone. This group discussion was conducted by Lila Devkota (CR) with a group of young community members (CM) to learn more about how rural youth are finding the current judiciary system. The male and female participants who replied have been identified. This helps to indicate issues such as whether particular groups have dominated the discussion.

CR: What are the things you do to get justice in the community?
CM (m): We commonly select a 'Matau', a community leader in the Tharu community to sort out our differences and cases of disputes. If there remains no possibility of reaching a common consensus through this traditional mechanism, only then do we go to the formal judiciary system.
CR: What are the things you do to get security in the community?
CM (m): We go directly to the police for security matters.
CR: What problems do you face obtaining justice and security in your community?
CM (f) :We are quite satisfied with the service we get from the police here. No problems yet. We don't know exactly, but we have heard about some cases which went directly from the community to the district court. We heard they were neglected and people did not get justice as things were stagnated for a long time.
CR: What are the reasons behind these great delays in the justice system?
CM (m): Carelessness of government employees together with lack of required support and help. Lots of cases go unheeded that are settled for exchange of money between two parties behind the court. A person with great wealth and political hold usually wins a court case in the formal system as per our experience and knowledge.
CR: Can you tell me about how delays and corruption can be controlled?
CM (f): Do not give or receive a bribe. Both such perpetrators should be punishable by law. Service providers should be responsible and accountable towards their job.

CR: Thank you for your time.

When choosing different people to take part in the group interview you need to consider issues such as gender, class, caste or religion. In some mixed groups, some people might feel more confident to talk than others. This will change the dynamics of the group and therefore influence the type of data that you gain through conducting the group interview. The idea of a group interview is to encourage discussions; therefore it is good to have groups made up of people who are likely to talk easily amongst one another.

The aim is to facilitate a meeting in such a way that the group develops its own conversation, raising issues through group interactions that might not emerge in a discussion with individuals. The interviewer's role in a group interview is a facilitator.

You will come to a group with a carefully defined topic to explore, and with 'stimuli' to get the discussion going such as a participatory technique. During the group interview, the researcher's role is to stimulate and guide discussion. The skill is in keeping the discussion on course without stifling unexpected and interesting developments. You need to listen very carefully.

It is important to take good notes during the discussion. Since it is difficult to keep notes and facilitate at the same time, it usually works better if you can conduct group interviews with another researcher. One of you facilitates while the other takes notes. Ideally, the initials of those who spoke will be written next to their responses. This will allow you to remember who said what, as issues could arise which you would like to return to or explore further at a later date. Having this information can also help to identify any problems that may have arisen during the discussion, such as particular people or groups dominating the discussion.

It is important to recognise that each method has its particular strengths and weaknesses. Some people may feel hesitant to speak about some things in a group. Alternatively, if a discussion or debate gets going it may provoke some people to talk about things that might otherwise have not been seen by them as relevant. Different data will emerge from individual in-depth interviews, and group interviews. You will need to think through which method is most appropriate for your purposes. It is often useful to use a mix of both to examine a particular issue.

To try using these methods, learn how to develop an interview schedule for an in-depth interview, and plan and facilitate a group interview go to http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/3-0.html and the **Equal Access Community Researcher manual.**

Tips on developing interview questions

Think about the people you will be interviewing before you develop your interview schedule. Your questions should be suitable for the specific people and situations involved in the interview. The way that your questions are worded should be appropriate and easily understood by all of your interviewees. Take particular care when your questions are on sensitive topics.

Ensure that each question has a purpose. It is sometimes tempting to include a long list of questions in our interview schedules. However, if you have too many questions your interview may take too long and may not be completed. So you need to consider the purpose of every question and how it relates to the overall aim of the research. If the question is not relevant it should be removed.

Order your questions in the best way. You should group each set of questions by the topic of the questions. The questions that are most important to your research should be put at the beginning.

Ask general questions first. It is good to begin an interview with general questions about the interviewees' background. This could include their age, the type of work they do, their level of education, how long they have been involved in their listener club or organisation, and other relevant information. Sensitive questions about the interviewees' background should be asked towards the end of the interview.

Avoid asking 'leading questions'. A leading question is one in which the answer is implied in the question and leads the interviewee to answer in a particular way. For example: 'What can our community do to discourage teenagers from drinking alcohol? This assumes that the interviewee is against teenagers drinking alcohol which could bias the response.

Ask one question at a time. It is better to ask two separate questions rather than asking two questions at the same time, which is likely to be confusing to your interviewees.

Most Significant Change Technique

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a tool that you can use to collect, discuss and select stories about the significant changes that people experience (directly or indirectly) as a result of listening to your radio programs and taking part in related activities. It involves people at different levels of your organisation, and in the communities you serve, discussing the stories and then selecting the stories they considered most significant. This process aims to promote ongoing dialogue and learning about programs and how they can be improved to better meet their aims. It also helps program staff and stakeholders to explore the unexpected or negative changes that may have happened as a result of the programs.

The ten steps to implementing MSC are:

Step 1: Raising interest
Step 2: Deciding on domains of change
Step 3: Deciding on the reporting period
Step 4: Collecting social change stories
Step 5: Selecting the most significant stories
Step 6: Feeding back results to key people
Step 7: Verification of stories
Step 8: Quantification of stories

Step 9: Secondary analysis and monitoring
Step 10: Evaluating and revising the system

MSC is a participatory approach to M&E that involves assessing the changes and impacts that have happened as a result of a program from the perspective of program participants.The process is participatory because program participants and stakeholders are involved in deciding what sort of change should be recorded, and in analysing the data (stories) that are collected. The MSC process happens throughout the program cycle and provides monitoring information that can help staff to improve the program. It also contributes to evaluation by providing information about the impacts and outcomes of a program that can be used to assess how well the program as a whole is working.

MSC involves participants sharing personal stories of change that are collected and interpreted at regular intervals of time. The stories are then analysed and filtered through various levels of an organisation until the stories that represent the most significant or important changes are selected. Outcomes of the story selection process and criteria for selecting stories are recorded and fed back to participants before to the next round of story collection begins. MSC aims to encourage continuous dialogue up and down the various levels of an organisation, from field level to senior staff and then back again. When this process works well, it can be a powerful tool for ongoing evaluation and learning.

Example of an MSC story

Interviewer: Lila Devkota
Place: Daruwa, Dang district
Interviewee: Female, 24
Education: Bachelor's Level
Date: November 18, 2009

Empowered to protest early arranged marriage

Now, I am studying in Bachelor's level. I have three brothers, mom and dad and myself in my family. My elder sister is already married and living with her family. When I was in grade eight, I started listening to the SSMK radio program. My elder sister and her friends used to listen to it and discuss about the radio drama that encouraged me to listen to it regularly. When my sister was in grade ten, my parent told her that her marriage is fixed and every one in our family was totally surprised.

Later when I was in grade ten, I came to know that parent have decided my marriage too. I went to my parent and told them that my reproductive health system has not developed yet and I am not mentally and physically ready about it. And most importantly I haven't completed my study yet. I told them that I would like to be independent first and then only I will decide when and where should I marry that is also is my right. I am now teaching in a boarding school.

I was able gather all the energy to protest against my parent's decision which is the most significant change for me. Most of the time in our society, our parent decides for us which I was able to protest. I cannot remember the particular episode now but I have heard a story in the SSMK drama about a girl who suffered after early marriage where she was unable to tell her parents that she wasn't prepared for it. This encouraged me to make my own decision and now as a result I am working as a teacher and at the same time completing my bachelor's level study.

The Most Significant Change technique is a very good way to engage a range of stakeholders in the impact assessment process. It does require a significant amount of planning, so that you are well positioned to collect a fairly large number of stories of change, which will require careful writing up to capture the various components of the stories. You will also need to arrange story selection meetings with various stakeholder groups, including communities. If this is an approach that you think suits your M&E needs, you can learn all about it here:

The MSC manual for M&E staff and others at Equal Access in this toolkit provides more details about how to use this technique. You can also find a list of resources about MSC in the **Useful resources** section.

Example of a story selection process at the community level

The key steps we used in this process were:

1. An M&E Officer (the facilitator) identified and invited suitable participants (he tried to get a good diversity of people with some knowledge of the radio programs).
2. The facilitator arranged the story selection meeting at an appropriate time and place.
3. Before the meeting M&E team members reviewed the stories collected in the Dang district over the past six months and removed any that did not directly discuss impacts of the radio programs. Next they selected stories that represented the domain of 'changes in personal development'.
4. The facilitator decided which story selection process to use and prepared a short facilitation guide.
5. After explaining the process, the facilitator read the stories aloud to the participants.
6. Participants wrote down key points and ranked the stories according to their significance.
7. Participants were asked why they gave those rankings and discussed the rankings they gave.
8. Stories that were poorly written were filtered out.
9. Participants agreed on the most significant story.

For this process we selected five stories of similar domains of change from the bulk of the research data sent by community researcher Lila Devkota in the Dang district over a six month period. All of the stories were related to impacts of the SSMK radio program, focusing on the domain of 'changes in personal development'. This domain includes being more able to make decisions about education, relationships and sexual and reproductive health rights, and increased confidence and motivation to improve yourself in various ways.

The facilitator (M&E Officer Bikash Koirala) read each of the stories aloud in front of the participants. The participants were given note paper and a pen to write down the major points related to the stories that they could recall while ranking them. Two of the participants who could not read and write well were helped by the other community researcher in the district (Puran Chaudhary) to write down some points about their opinion of the stories.

After all the stories were read, participants were asked to rank them according to the significance of the stories. Each participant was then asked respectively why they gave a particular rank to the stories. There was a healthy discussion among the participants about the ranking of the stories. Participants came to a consensus to select only three stories for ranking. Two stories were filtered out because they considered them to be poor stories that were not well written. Participants were then asked to rank those three stories in order of their significance. The story which was ranked first is shown in the example above. The reason given for ranking this first was: 'The story is interesting and well-written. The story teller broke the tradition of getting married early and took a decision to continue her study. Now she is studying at bachelor's level'.

Short questionnaire surveys

All of the methods above generate detailed information from a small number of participants. Short questionnaire-based surveys can allow you to generate less detailed information from larger numbers, and can help produce statistical information for evaluation reports to internal content production teams and external agencies. It is an especially useful tool for testing ideas emerging from other research activities or for verifying how widespread the themes and issues in qualitative data such as interviews and group discussions are.

Short questionnaire surveys can be used for a range of purposes, including:

1. To quickly get an idea of the differences in attitudes, opinions, knowledge and practices amongst different groups of people or people in different locations (such as rural and remote villages and towns).
2. To identify the different information/communications needs, patterns, resources, skills, etc of people in different socio-economic groups. What are they interested in? What general problems concern them?
3. To understand the listening patterns and preferences of different groups of people - for example, which segments of your programs people like the most and how often they listen to various radio programs.
4. To gather other feedback on your programs and suggested improvements to your programs.
5. For testing findings from other methods on larger numbers of people. For example, in-depth interviews are richer and generate more data but are time consuming and can only be completed with a small number of people. Through short questionnaire-based surveys it is possible to test whether some findings from other methods are true for a larger number of people, and if there are differences between groups of people.

This method will only give you a limited insight; it is good at generating numbers (for example, numbers of people with a TV, radio, telephone; or, percentages of people who regularly listen to your programs and say they find them informative for evaluation reports for internal program staff and external agencies) but will not tell us very much detail about patterns of use, reasons and reactions, or the particular impacts of your programs on people and communities.

Questionnaires should be short, fitting onto two or three A4 sheets of paper. A range of different people should be approached to complete the questionnaire, depending on the purpose of the research. They can be completed by respondents themselves or filled in by the researcher, depending on the literacy levels of respondents and other factors.

Short questionnaire surveys are structured – you ask the same set of questions to everyone. In order to be able to count responses you need to provide a list of possible answers to most of the questions, so these are closed-ended questions, rather than open-ended as with in-depth interviews. There might be tick-box responses, or options to chose from a range of predetermined responses, or scales. Rating scales are very useful for generating statistics that enable comparisons to be made between responses from different groups of people and to track changes in responses over a period of time.

Example of different types of survey questions

These are some of the questions included in a short questionnaire survey for SSMK listeners.

PART A: Listening profile

A1. On average, how regularly have you listened to SSMK over the past six months?

- ☐ every week
- ☐ every 2 weeks
- ☐ once a month
- ☐ once every 2 months
- ☐ less than once every 2 months

PART B: Feedback on the SSMK program

B2. Which segments of SSMK do you like the most? Please rank the following from 1 to 8 (1 is most liked and 8 is least liked)

- ☐ Interview with experts
- ☐ Dimag ko Batti Balnus
- ☐ Hey Yuwa Jay Yuwa
- ☐ Janda Jandai
- ☐ Drama
- ☐ SMS
- ☐ Chat between the hosts

B4. What topics would you like to hear about on SSMK in the coming two months?

_____

B5. What things need to be done to improve SSMK?

_____

PART C: Impacts of SSMK

C2. How much do you think the SSMK radio program has paved the way for open discussion on sexual and reproductive health rights issues?

1	2	3	4
not at all well	reasonably well	quite well	very well

C7. To what extent has listening to SSMK helped you in making any personal, family and community related decisions? Please circle the number. SSMK has been:

1	2	3	4
no help at all	slightly helpful	quite helpful	very helpful

C8 In which area you have used these skills and knowledge the most to make decisions?

- ☐ Personal
- ☐ Family
- ☐ Community

Please explain briefly how SSMK has helped you: _____

The questionnaire needs to be tested (piloted) with a small number of people who are similar to the people you want to complete the survey. This will allow you to check that people can easily understand the questions and the survey produces the kinds of research data that you are looking for. Adjust the questionnaire if necessary following the pilot.

A good tip is to always include some basic 'demographic background' information at the end of the survey – age, gender and location of respondent for example. You may want to be able to say something about the listening patterns or media uses of different age groups, different genders, and so on.

In most cases, the bulk of the analysis of short questionnaires will be summary figures broken down in terms of social divisions, such as gender, ethnic group or age group. For example, it might be found that 60% of the households in a survey have access to a portable radio, which might be interesting. But it might also be found that when this figure is broken down a little more, only 20% of those in a particular ethnic minority have this access, or that the percentage is – contrary to expectations – roughly equal for both richer and poorer households. That kind of finding would be interesting and useful, and other methods can be used to find out what lies behind such a result.

For evaluation of the effectiveness of your initiative for external agencies, you may want to conduct this kind of survey before, during and after a particular intervention, so that you can see what difference your intervention has made which can be measured against pre-determined indicators (see **Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators**).

For more information about how to construct questionnaires see the **Useful resources, information and tools** section.

Facilitation and listening

Using participatory research methods means that the researcher must try to involve a wide range of people in the community who are most relevant to your M&E research work. Facilitation is about helping people to understand and take part in a research and evaluation project. Facilitators help other people discuss something or use a research method. Facilitation is an important skill for successful research with groups of people from your communities.

A facilitator is like the chairperson of a meeting, but a facilitator does not direct a group without the approval of all group members. All people in a small group can share the facilitator's job, but one main facilitator is best for a larger group of more than four people. The facilitator explains the purpose of the group's meeting and guides the group members' discussions. A facilitator helps the group achieve the meeting's goals, but does not influence or change the group's decisions and answers.

The facilitator writes a report about the meeting and the group's decisions. The facilitator shares the report with other members of the research and evaluation project and with all the community members who took part in a discussion or research method. Such reports may best be shared verbally with community members and at community feedback forums on your research work.

Tips for effective facilitation

Prepare before the research activity begins

- Think about people's literacy, education and understanding and use an activity that suits them
- Think about the local culture and environment, because this affects people's attitudes and could lead to conflict or misunderstanding
- Work out the best way to organise the research activity and how long each part will last
- Find a comfortable place to do the activity

At the start of the research activity

- Introduce yourself and explain your role as facilitator
- If the group does not know each other well, give people a few minutes to talk to each other before the activity
- Ensure that everyone in the group understands the purpose of the activity and how they will work together as a group
- Agree on the way everyone will work together. For example:
    - All contributions are valued
    - We all share responsibility for facilitation
    - One person speaks at a time
- Identify any missing people or groups
- *Start with a story:* it is good to begin a research activity by telling a brief story that is relevant to the focus of the activity

During the research activity

- Manage the research activity so that everyone can participate and contribute
- Use appropriate language and give respect to all people
- Make no judgements about what people say and encourage people to see each other's point of view
- Use 'powerful listening': listening very attentively to people helps them to speak more clearly and powerfully, especially quieter or less confident people
- Write a summary of any information or decisions on large sheets of paper or blackboard so that everyone can see
- Collect all of the information from the group, *then* make decisions about it
- Give careful attention to the aim of the research activity and intervene if people do not keep to these aims or if parts of the activity take too long

At the end of the activity

- Encourage appreciation for everyone's participation and ideas
- Ensure that everyone knows if they must do anything after the research activity
- *Review the activity*: Ask what worked and what did not work? Ask how people would improve future research activities?
- State and report people's comments and issues accurately

You can learn to be a good facilitator by carefully watching more experienced facilitators and by practicing facilitation. Think about what works and what does not work very well when you are a facilitator. Use this experience to improve your facilitation. Ask people in the group about your facilitation. Their advice will help you become a better facilitator. A good facilitator will:

- Clearly explain the meeting's purpose to all group members
- Help the group complete any activities and discussions at the meeting
- Help the group work together successfully

- Ensure everyone contributes to the meeting and feels part of the group by helping everyone talk and listen to what other group members say
- Help group members learn from each other
- Encourage the group members to talk about the meeting and say how they think it could be improved.

Facilitators plan a group meeting before they start. They will think carefully about how they use the different research methods or how they will do a group discussion. The box above provides tips and information about doing effective facilitation.

You can find details of a listening exercise that can help you to become a better facilitator in the Appendix at the end of this module.

Deepening and improving your data

Using more than one method, using appropriate methods for what you are interested in finding out about, and building a body of data, inevitably leads to richer understandings of an issue, a place, or a problem. It will help you to improve your M&E activities, and get more out of them for your organisation. However, often issues will emerge that require follow up research, delving deeper into the issue in order to fully understand it, and understand the implications to your organisation and it's work. There are many ways in which you can deepen your data.

Here are just some suggestions:

Use participant observation to identify topics to follow up on: When you take part in everyday or more formal activities in communities, stay alert for interesting topics of discussion that you could follow up on. You could use methods such as in-depth individual interviews or group interviews to do this follow up. Use your field notes to record what you see and hear on a regular basis. This is the raw material for your research reports. Things that you at first thought were not interesting or important may later become of interest to you.

Involve a wider range of key informants: In order to understand the impacts of the radio programs and related activities, you need to consider all the possible people or groups in your community who can provide useful information. As well as speaking to listener club members, you could gather significant change stories from parents of listener club members, schoolteachers, or people working in areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention.

Hold more in-depth interviews: A good way to get more detailed information is to hold several in-depth interviews with a broad range of community members and leaders. You need to select people who you think can answer your research questions well. For example, if a woman in a group activity talks about an interesting example of change that resulted from listening to your organisation'sprogram, you could conduct a follow up interview with her to get more detailed information. As with all of your research work, you will need to prepare well for these interviews and to keep asking more probing questions, such as those listed in Box 2 below.

Keep probing for more information from participants about the radio programs and their impacts. For example, if someone says 'I'd like new information included in your program' ask him or her 'What type of information would you like included in the program?' If someone says that they think your program 'helps them solve problems' ask them 'What kind of problems does it help you to solve?' and 'How does it help you to solve these problems?'

In summary, the best methods to get more in-depth data include:

- **Individual in-depth interviews** with key informants (i.e. people in the community who can provide lots of useful information and comments on an issue, or who have been actively involved in actions to create positive social change). Each interview might take around an hour or longer, to ensure in-depth discussions of issues.
- **Group interviews** with up to ten key informants. You will need to ensure that each participant has an opportunity to speak and that all of the important issues raised by participants are written down. It may be easier to conduct group interviews with another researcher. One of you would facilitate the discussion while the other would write down what people say.
- **Keeping field notes***:* if you write about three pages of observations in your note book every day that you are in the communities you have selected for your research work (if possible), you will eventually have a large amount of detailed information about these communities. You can later draw on this information when you write your reports.

Tips for getting more detailed information

Take plenty of time. You may need to spend a longer time on each tool to get more detailed data. Taking more time gives everyone the chance to speak, for all their comments to be written down, and to discuss whether what was written is correct or not. Take as much time as you need to on each tool. The outcomes will be always be better if you are relaxed and not rushing the process.

Keep the group fairly small. You will gather more detailed information and everyone will have more chance to speak and be heard if you keep the size of groups to no more than about 12 people. If a large number of people want to take part, it is better to divide the group into two or three smaller groups. Each small group should have a facilitator and a note taker who can perform these tasks well.

Keep asking more questions. To get more detailed information and concrete evidence of social changes in your community you will need to keep on probing participants. To do this, you need to ask questions such as:

- Why did that happen?
- Why do you say that?
- What effect did this have?
- What particular problems are you talking about?
- To what extent do you think this problem is increasing or decreasing?
- Can you give me an example of the change you're talking about?

Describe clear examples of change. After you've gathered some clear evidence of changes that can be connected to listening to your programs, write a few sentences that clearly describe specific examples of change or impacts that have happened. Say how these changes came about and why. The Most Significant Change technique is a good way to capture people's stories about change.

Be more precise in your reports. Avoid writing vague statements in your reports such as 'lots of people are uneducated' or 'participants like such and such a program'. State which particular groups in the community you are talking about and give more details about which parts of your programs they like the best and why.

Appendix: Guide to conducting a listening exercise

Outcomes of this exercise:

1. Understanding of the concept of 'powerful listening'.
2. Increased facilitation, story-telling and listening skills.
3. Increased awareness of the importance of listening and the role of story-telling in the facilitation process.

The topic that is discussed in the exercise can be varied to suit the group involved.

Step 1: Information on powerful listening

Provide the following information to the training group:

Powerful listening

- Powerful listening is an essential element of facilitation and story collecting.
- In a group context we are listening most of the time.
- The power of listening results in powerful speaking – this is because people become more aware of what they are saying.
- Training yourself to listen more powerfully includes being aware of the quality of your listening, asking 'what am I listening for?' and learning to be silent.

Powerful listening is missing when group members are:

- Blaming
- Complaining
- Ignoring
- Making light of things
- Putting people down
- 'Group thinking'
- Having side conversations
- Talking over one another
- Talking past one another
- Unable to remain in silence

Step 2: Practicing powerful listening and story telling

Participants form into small groups to practice the key facilitation skills of powerful listening, building empathy with others, and story-telling (this can be a useful way to begin a facilitation process). The process also aims to help build a sense of community and connection between participants.

The process involves:

1. Each person prepares for the session individually (allow 10 minutes). Instructions are:

- Think about your life and list four or five 'goals for the future'.

- Pick two that you'd be willing to talk about in the small group and write a brief description of these goals and why they are important to you.
- Describe how you imagine your life will be different as a result of meeting these goals.

2. Form groups of about four people that include people who know each other least well.

Each person tells one story each (3 minutes per story) for two turns while the others give them 100% attention (this should take 25 minutes).

3. Hold a 5 minute discussion (in their small groups) on:

- Did the exercise make a difference?
- What was it that made the difference?

Step 3: Debrief

Hold a five minute debrief on this exercise with the whole group. Invite participants to comment on the process and how useful listening is to facilitating the story collection processes.

Module 4: Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- why radio programs targeted to communication for development need Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions (CLFS) built into the organisation
- how CLFS can improve your radio programs
- the steps involved in undertaking CLFS
- how the process can be used with listeners in the community
- how the process can be used for pre and post tests of your radio programs
- how CLFS outcomes can be triangulated with other findings to get more rigorous results
- some of the challenges and limitations in using this method

Introduction

Critically listening to radio programs needs to be one of the major components of communication for development radio projects because this can help radio programs to better spread their messages among target audiences and to be more influential in terms of social and behavioural change. Listener's feedback through community research, surveys, letters, emails, phone calls, face to face meetings and SMS polls provide information which needs to be verified using different methods. That is why CLFS was developed. It can provide a process that helps to meet the objectives of a radio program.

Since July 2009, the M&E team at Equal Access Nepal (EAN) have been conducting such critical listening and feedback sessions on a bi-monthly basis for each radio program. The idea of each session is to randomly choose any one episode of a broadcasted radio program and ask all the staff at EAN to listen critically and participate in a feedback session. This has encouraged program team members to consider their radio programs more critically and to improve the programs accordingly. These sessions also enable content team members to share challenges and limitations while producing particular radio programs selected for the session. The M&E team facilitates the whole process from invitation to report sharing.

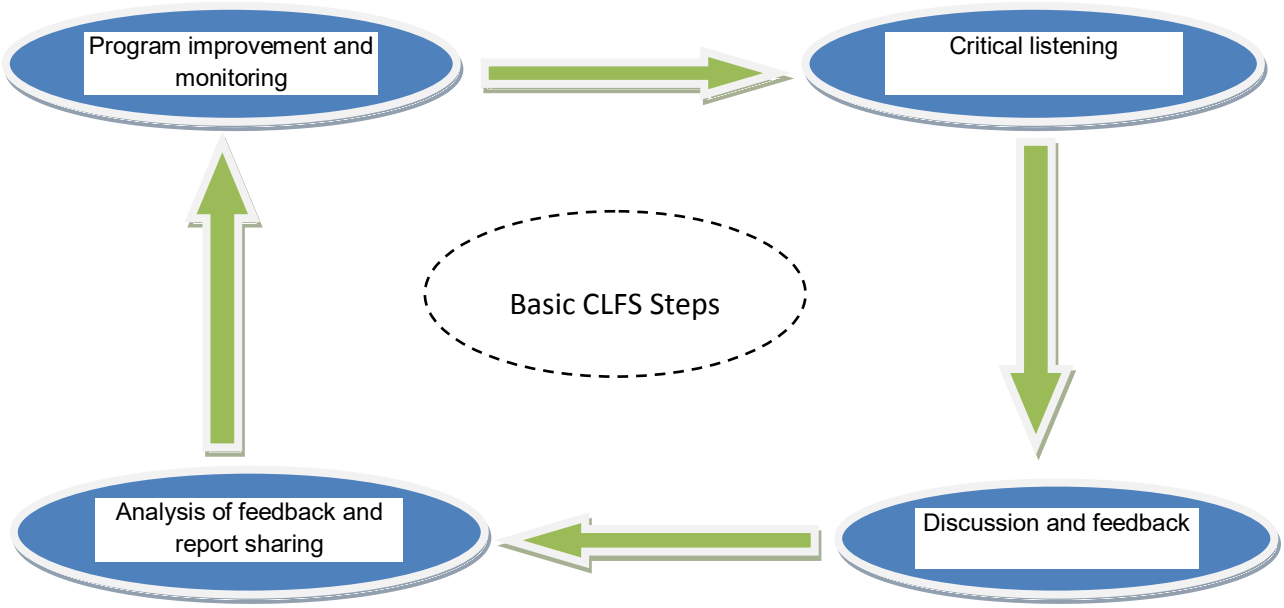
Why use CLFS?

CLFS is one of the major methods that can improve your radio programs. This method can provide instant feedback to you about how effective your program is. It is a kind of meta-monitoring of your program. The overall objective of these feedback sessions is to gather feedback to understand the strengths and identify any shortfalls of your radio programs and to reach an agreement about how to

improve the radio programs. Different program components such as content, presentation style and skills, format, innovation and technical aspects are taken in consideration during the session.

The CLFS process

The diagram below shows the basic CLFS process which begins by engaging in critical listening and results in the implementation and monitoring of changes suggested by staff and listeners, in an ongoing action learning and program improvement cycle.



Step 1: Invite staff to critically listen to a program episode

In EAN, an email is circulated to all staff which invites then to critically listen to a particular episode of a radio program either individually or in a group before they come to the CLFS session. The email provides details of the different components to listen critically to and to identify strengths and areas of improvement to discuss in the session. Time and availability for the session by all staff members is taken into consideration when planning the session. Different program teams work for different radio programs based on different themes with different format. Therefore, most program team members who work on a range of radio programs are highly encouraged to take part in the session. This helps to ensure that new ideas and suggestions are generated. An email invitation is sent out one week prior to the event and a reminder email is sent one day prior to the event. Sometimes, all staff are personally reminded about the event at staff meetings.

Step 2: Conduct the feedback session

The process begins by asking all participants to provide their feedback on each of the topics in the feedback form (see Appendix) which include:

- Content (depth and appropriateness of the program theme)
- Presentation style of the program host
- Innovation and creativity
- Which segment of the program is liked the most and least

A facilitated discussion on this feedback then takes place. Agreement is reached on the main areas in which the program could be improved and the key recommendations are noted down. At the end of the feedback session, each participant fills in an evaluation form (see sample form in the Appendix).

Step 3: Analyse feedback and prepare report

The M&E team collects the evaluation forms and then analyses them. The mostly quantitative data obtained through the evaluation form is then triangulated with the feedback obtained during the face to face discussions in order to identify the key findings and areas of agreement. A brief report on the feedback and suggested improvements is then prepared. An example of the headings in a brief report on a CLFS is provided later in this module, as well as an extract from a feedback report. This gives an example of the kind of immediate action that is often taken related to improving a radio program, following the end of the process.

Step 4: Share the feedback report

After the feedback session has been undertaken, the M&E team should share the findings of the report on the CLFS process to all program team members and community participants for further discussion and agreement on what changes will be made to the programs.

Step 5: Monitor improvements

Once the report has been shared, the M&E team regularly monitors the improvements that are made. This is done by improvements mentioned in email by content team members, checking content calendar, and follow up CLFS of same radio program in 2 months of time. It also includes feedback gathered through research data and letter database.

Holding CLFS in the community

As well as in EAN's head office in Kathmandu, critical listening and feedback sessions are held in the community. Sessions are organised by visiting EAN staffs or community researchers or youth reporters based in regional hubs that enable community members to listen to a selected episode in a group and later provide their feedback. One week prior to the session held in the community, community members

(most probably listeners) were informed about the session. Like at EAN same process used and they also asked to complete the feedback form. Analysis of the feedback provided at these sessions can enable you to assess how different or similar the feedback provided by listeners in the community is compared with the feedback provided by staff members.

Main headings for a brief report on a Critical Listening and Feedback Session

Radio Program: ..... Date: .....

Conducted on:

Selected episode no:

Main theme of the radio program:

Presenters of the radio program:

Session participants:

Objective:

Program Summary

Presentation of findings

1. Content analysis
2. Format of the radio program
3. Presentation (host's quality)
4. Drama
5. Interview
6. Song/message
7. Technical aspects
8. Innovation/creativity
9. Information/education value
10. Research work
11. Overall rating

The most liked and least liked components of the radio program:

Suggestions and recommendations:

Using CFLS to conduct a pre and post test

This process can also be used to conduct a pre and post test of a radio program's production values within a project cycle. EAN has recently used CLFS in this way in both the EAN head office and at the community level to monitor the quality of a radio program. If a radio project is conducted over one year and broadcasts radio program episodes for 26 weeks then one episode can be selected from the first five

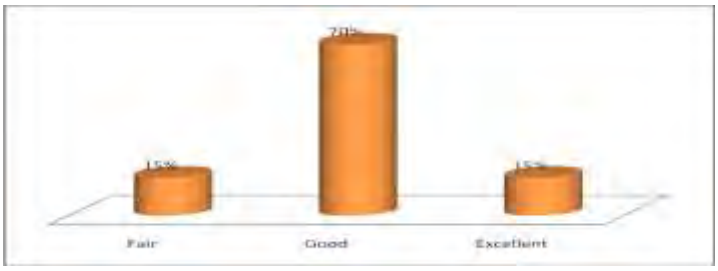
episodes for CLFS for the pre test of the radio project and one episode can be selected from the last five episodes for the post test. EAN has found that this has helped to regularly maintain the quality of a radio program until the end of the project. To lessen biases and increase rigour, the same process is also used at the community level.

Extract from a report on a Critical Listening Feedback Session

Conducted on: Thursday, 28 October 2010, 3:00 - 4:30 pm
Session participants: 18 (15- Program/Content, 1- Admin, & M&E-2)
Radio Program: Sangsangai
Selected episode no: 35
Main theme of the radio program: Violence Against Women

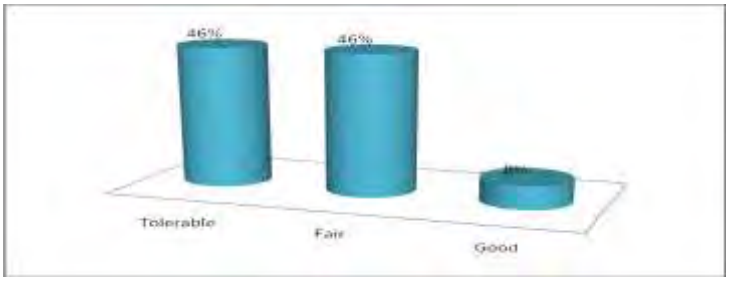
Format of the radio program

Format is the most liked component of the radio program which includes a local change maker as the presenter of the radio program. 15% of participants found it excellent, 70% found it good and 15% found it fair because the format was adapted for the first time. It gave an opportunity to have a voice to the people who are directly involved in changing social ills such as VAW in the community. However, the experience sharing sometimes became monotonous because of regular dialogue delivery.



Presentation (host's quality)

The host was not a professional artist. Although a few of participants (8%) found the presentation interesting and rated it as good because it included local people as the presenter of the program, most of the participants (92%) (combining half each of the fair and tolerable category) indicated that it needed some improvement because the program seemed like a local version rather than a centrally produced one.



Immediately after the session a content team member wrote the following email to the participants:

Dear All,
First of all I would like to thank you all for your valuable comments on the radio program Sangsangai. As per your comments and suggestions, we are trying to incorporate your valuable feedbacks and change the format of our radio program from episode no 47. You can get the program on \\server2\Re-Writable\ReWritable.
Looking forward to hearing your constructive feedbacks and comments.
Regards,

Triangulation with other feedback

The results of CLFS can be triangulated with findings from your analysis of other feedback methods such as letters and emails and feedback data gathered directly from listeners via focus group discussions and interviews. This process of triangulation strengthens the feedback and more effectively helps program teams to understand the shortfalls and strengths of the radio programs so that they can develop better programming in the future. This can help to improve all aspects of program development and packaging.

Challenges and limitations

Although there are many ways in which radio programs can be improved after conducting regular CLFS, like any monitoring or evaluation method, there are also some of challenges and limitations which need to be considered, such as:

- It is sometimes not possible to change the format and content of a radio program because of limitations in the project, such as those which were defined by the donors.
- During the sessions at EAN some content team members felt humiliated and took the feedback personally. Therefore, good facilitation of the sessions is vital to ensure that all feedback is received in a constructive way.
- Although the content teams may want to improve the quality of a program this is sometimes difficult because of unprofessional artists or inexperienced guest presenters from the community that can decrease the quality of the program.
- Sometimes it is difficult to manage the time in the feedback sessions and to limit the amount of repetition of comments.

Some final words

There are many different methods and tools available to obtain feedback on radio programs such as focus group discussions, short questionnaire surveys, letters, emails, phone calls and SMS. However, CLFS is the only process which enables people to interact face to face in order to gather critical feedback about radio programs. This method provides instant feedback which can be used to make immediate improvements to your radio programs. We have found that regularly conducting CLFS in the way we have outlined in this module has greatly helped to maintain the quality of radio programs at EAN.

Appendix: Sample CLFS evaluation form

Equal Access Nepal

Critical Listening Feedback Form

Date: ……..

A. Radio Program:

Name of the Program: ……..…… Episode No: ……..……..……..

B. Program Component Rating (please mark only one option):

1. Content (depth & appropriateness of theme):

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

2. Presentation Style (host's quality):

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

3. Drama:

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

4. Interview:

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

5. Report & Feature:

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

6. Technical Aspects (noise, mic levelling, signing tune and music):

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

7. Innovation & Creativity:

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

8. Research Work (preparation efforts):

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

C. Which segment of the radio program you like the most and least:

I like (the most): ……..

I did not like (the least): ……

D. My overall rating of the program:

Poor ◯	Tolerable ◯	Fair ◯	Good ◯	Excellent ◯

Note: This should correspond with the above ratings you have given.

Module 5: Doing qualitative data analysis

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- how good quality qualitative data analysis (QDA) can help you identify impacts of your programs to better meet your objectives and the needs of the community
- the steps involved in undertaking basic QDA, including repeated reading, analysis and interpretation
- the value of involving others in the QDA process
- the difference between description and interpretation
- the value of seeking feedback on your analysis and using triangulation to increase the trustworthiness of findings

Introduction

Once you have collected data, what do you do with it? How do you learn from it?

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) is the process of turning written data such as interview and field notes into findings. There are no formulas, recipes or rules for this process, for which you will need skills, knowledge, experience, insight and a willingness to keep learning and working at it.

There are many different ways of doing QDA. They include the case study approach, theory-based approaches, and collaborative and participatory forms of analysis. We encourage you to try to involve others in the process and to discuss and review your findings as much as possible. This will help to make your findings more useful and trustworthy. No matter what method of analysis and interpretation is used, your aim should always be to produce good quality findings.

One of the challenges that you're likely to face is getting others to accept to value of qualitative data compared with quantitative data, which is seen by some are more 'scientific' and valid. Getting others who are involved in your programs to take the time and interest to become engaged in the QDA process is likely to be another challenge that you'll face. However, we hope that the information in this module will help you to overcome some of these challenges.

This module aims to provide basic step-by-step information and examples about effective ways of organising, managing and analysing qualitative data. This information draws on our experiences of working closely with the M&E team at Equal Access Nepal for the past four years. We hope the guidelines and examples in this module are useful to those who are beginning the journey of learning about qualitative analysis. Additional examples and exercises related to data management and analysis can be found in the EAR handbook (see http://ear.findingavoice.org/dealing/index.html).

Why conduct QDA in communication for development programs?

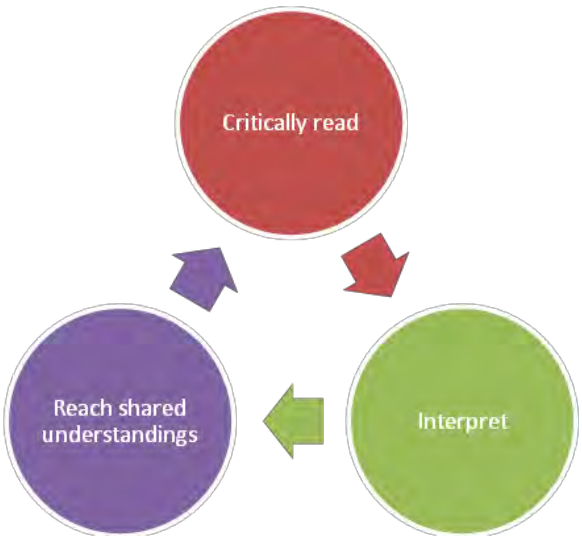
Some good reasons for analysing qualitative M&E data collected about your communication for development programs include:

- To identify any *significant changes* in people and communities that your programs may have contributed to, whether directly or indirectly, expected or unexpected, positive or negative, and to tell your stakeholders what *impacts* your programs are having in bringing changes to community people and what people are gaining in the process.
- To better understand the subtle *indicators of social change* that have emerged from your data, which you and others may not have thought about.
- To identify ways in which your programs can be *improved* or changed to better meet their objectives and the needs of the community.
- To gain knowledge about *emerging issues* that can help you to understand your data better and can be included in your programs.
- To *enrich your findings* with lively and detailed information that quantitative data does not always provide.
- To *better understand* the culture, experiences, and activities of diverse community members and the *context* of people's lives and the communities where they live, which can help or hinder social change.
- To find out about *listening patterns* related to your programs and changing patterns of media consumption and use.
- To understand *who is included and who is excluded* from community dialogue, participation and decision making related to the topics discussed in your programs.

What are your main aims in analysing qualitative data about your programs?

QDA process

Qualitative M&E data such as Most Significant Change (MSC) stories (see **MSC manual for M&E staff and others at Equal Access**) and notes from focus group discussions (FGDs) are quite 'messy' and unstructured. QDA does not happen in a linear way; it is not a neat and simple process. Rather, it involves a repeated process of critically reading, interpreting and reaching shared understandings of your data, as shown below.



Qualitative data can provide a rich picture of the impacts of your programs (expected and unexpected, positive and negative) compared with quantitative data about things like the number of people who listened to your program. This can help you to highlight the success factors of your program. The process of collecting and analysing qualitative data provides good opportunities for program staff and stakeholders to be actively involved in the PM&E process. Meetings held to discuss data can include discussions about how well your programs are working and how they could be improved.

Setting up data organisation, management and analysis systems

Setting up data collection, organisation and management systems that work well and everyone understands is vital for good quality QDA. This is because it enables you and your programs to use the data you have collected effectively, to improve your activities. Such systems can be quite simple or more complex. However, the important thing is that they work effectively and meet your particular needs.

Having good systems in place can also help you to better understand the impacts of your activities on different groups of community members over time. Data collected at certain points in time, which can readily be found and identified, can be compared to assess longer term changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. It can also show changing patterns in such things as listening to your radio programs and the use of ICTs by various groups in the community.

Templates used at EAN to manage research data are provided in the appendix to this module

> *What sort of data organisation, management and analysis systems do you currently have in place?*
>
> *How could these systems be improved?*

Example of the M&E data collection, organisation and management systems at EAN, set up as part of AC4SC

There are eight community researchers (CRs) in five districts who conduct research in the community and send research data to the M&E team on a monthly basis. They have been given a simple template to collect and enter data on the research participant's profile and other qualitative and quantitative data. After they receive this data, the M&E team file them and code them. Provision has been made to allocate up to six codes per piece of data. Those codes are put into the database entry template. This template also contains space for data on the participants' profile (ethnicity, age, gender, education, occupation), date of data collection, location of research, research tools used, relevance of research, and radio program discussed.

Based on this information, the database has been designed (using an SQL server as the back end) as well as an interface for entering data into database, which was designed using Visual Basics 6.0. This overall database system has been mainly designed to manage the research data and easily retrieve the required information with the help of different searching criteria like codes, education, age, ethnicity, date (time period), and gender. Each piece of data (such as an interview) is given a unique identification number which is essential for data management, retrieval and analysis purposes.

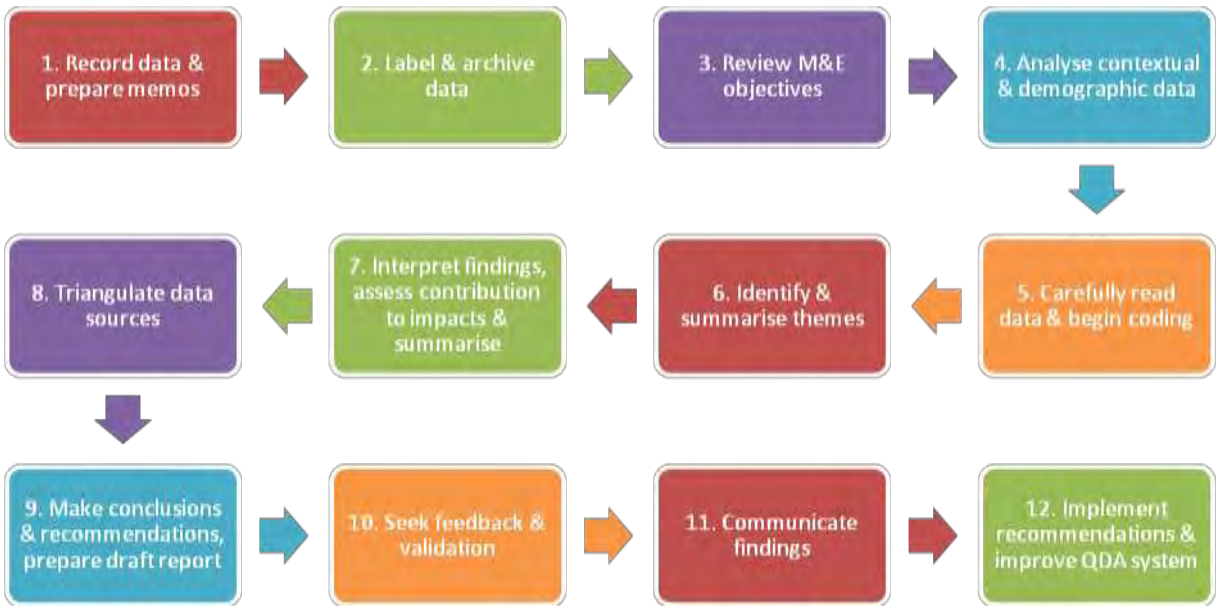
Some challenges and issues

Much of the data that we received initially from the CRs were not directly related to the program objectives. Most of this data was written up based on the use of different participatory tools and techniques but the in-depth data which the project required was not always provided very well. The concept of the template and database was introduced later on and we planned to enter all of the CR data received since May 2009. Since some of this earlier data was not very useful, it had to be excluded from the database entry. On reflection, it would have been better if such an approach had been initiated from the very beginning of the project implementation.

Another challenge has been getting the CRs to gather all of the information about participants to maintain their profile and enable us to more rigorously conduct further cross tabulation analysis. Addressing this issue has required giving constant feedback and mentoring to some of the CRs.

Basic data organisation, management and analysis steps

The diagram below sets out the 12 steps involved in doing basic QDA which are described in this module. Of course, these steps are not usually undertaken in such a linear way, and you will find that you will need to engage in smaller cycles of doing analysis, critically reflecting on your findings and discussing them with others, and then revising your findings.



Step 1: Record your data and prepare memos

You must keep an accurate record of all the data you collect. Documentation is an integral part of the research and evaluation process. This means keeping a clear and detailed record of all the data you have collected in the form of detailed notes, transcripts, diagrams, maps or other materials. The more detailed and clear your notes are at the time of doing your research, the easier it will be to use your data later on.

Writing up your data in detail can take some time but is a vital part of the qualitative research process. Time in your working day should therefore be allocated to this activity. The following steps should be followed:

During the field visit:

- Prepare rough notes of interviews, FGDs etc
- Make audio and/or visual recordings
- Gather any materials developed during participatory activities

Immediately after the field visit:

- Type your field notes as soon as possible (a template for field notes may be useful)
- Prepare memos based on an initial analysis by the data collector (see explanation and example in the box below).
- Listen to the audio tape of your interview, FDGs etc (if made) and note the time into the tape that an important or interesting topic was raised then fully transcribe this passage. Quotations can then be later used to illustrate key findings in your M&E report.

The value of memos

- Memos are short notes (about two lines long) that capture the essence of what you learned from an activity. This can be helpful in identifying the main codes for a piece of data analysis (i.e. education, gender etc.). Here is an example of a memo about the data collected by a community researcher from Nepal:

  This interview shows how listener's interest changed regarding the content and preferences related to listening. New codes like conflict and constituent assembly and listening pattern (individual versus group) emerged which needs more research now. It also provides feedback on how to convert learnings into behaviour.

  Extract from interview: 'We formed an SSMK club and started listening to SSMK because it has good information. I stopped listening to SSMK because I knew about HIV and AIDS and problem solving. My interest is now increased towards politics. This is because of the conflict and the constituent assembly. SSMK is fruitful for young ones. People prefer individual listening than group because they have to manage time for group listening. People who are busy at work listen to the radio while others watch TV. People prefer to listen on their local FM radio station because of the clear sound. To turn their learnings into behaviour, it is better to encourage listeners to take part in activities'.

  Male, 30, Dang (22 August, 2009)

- Writing memos as soon as possible after a field visit or research activity is a useful way of recording important learnings and information which can then be shared with others. This practice is a useful aid to remembering the key issues and to beginning the process of coding and analysis. It is, in effect, the first step in the analysis process.

- Meetings of M&E and program staff could be held once a month to review memos and to encourage everyone to talk about the issues in the memos and to inform the initial data analysis.

Step 2: Label and archive your data

You now need to organise your data to make it easy to use for analysis. This means labelling all data, so that you know where it came from and how it was collected. You also need to set up an archive or database to help you easily find your data. This is most effectively done using a computer program such as Excel but could initially be paper copies of your data held in a lever arch file or something similar.

All data must have the following basic information:

- Who? – name of interviewee and researcher
- Where? – location of interview etc.
- When? - date and time of interview
- How? - methods used (ie. interview and observation)

Record archive - This will help you to find your data

- Create a unique identification number
- Develop a filing system

- Design a record database for basic information

Your data is unique and valuable and should be protected. You should make copies of all your data and put the master copy away in a secure place for safekeeping. Some researchers like to make one copy of their data for writing on as they do the analysis and another that can be used for cutting and pasting (this can also be done on a computer).

Step 3: Review your PM&E objectives

Before analysing your data, you should always start by reviewing your evaluation goals, i.e., the reason you undertook the evaluation in the first place. This will help you to organise your data and focus your analysis.

For example, if you wanted to improve your program by identifying what is working well and what is not working so well with it, you can organize data into these two categories: 1. What works well; and, 2. What does not work well. As you read through your data you can develop suggestions for improving the program.

If you're conducting an impact evaluation, you could categorise data according to the indicators you have for each program objective.

Step 4: Analyse contextual and demographic data

It is important to have a good understanding of who the data was collected from, what tools were used to collect the data, and the local context and issues that are relevant to the focus of your evaluation. This information will help your analysis and interpretation of the data and is particularly important if your data is collected by different researchers in various locations.

Demographic data about research participants can be put into a template like the example provided in Appendix 1 at the end of this module, and then statistics prepared on the age, gender, caste or ethnic group, occupation, education level and other relevant details about your research participants. This information can later be included in your evaluation report. This will help the readers of your report to understand more about how many people took part in your research, how wide a diversity of people were involved, and what their backgrounds were. Such information also helps to validate your results and conclusions.

Step 5: Carefully read through the data and begin coding

Begin the process of analysis by carefully reading through all your field notes, interview transcripts etc and making comments in the margins about the key patterns, themes and issues in the data. A **pattern** refers to a descriptive finding such as 'Most of the participants reported that they lacked time to listen to the radio due to school and household duties'. A **theme** is a broad category or topic such as 'barriers to listening'.

You could use coloured pens to **code** different ideas or themes in your data. Some people like to use Post-it notes or coloured dots in this process. You can also do this using a word-processing program. You will need to read your data several times before it is completely coded.

A **code** is a way of organising data in terms of its subject matter. You are likely to use many codes, some general, and some more specific. For instance, a general code might be 'education' and you could use it to identify data that is relevant to education. A more specific code might be 'higher education' which you use because the data refers to improving the quality of higher education.

You will need to go through your data in detail, coding it according to the types of themes and issues that emerge. For example, the codes 'education' and 'health' will probably be relevant to most research at some point. By coding data as 'education' or 'health' you are marking it in a way that means you can find it and return to it later, knowing that this particular piece of data is about 'education' or 'health' (it could be about both, in which case you will have applied both codes to it). In this way the code will help you to identify relevant bits of data that you can pull together later to say something about 'education' and/or 'health'.

Coding is more than simply organising data. Coding also helps you to begin the process of systematically analysing it, working out what the data is telling you and the relationships and patterns in your data.

As your research develops you will define many codes, building up an increasingly detailed understanding of the data. If you are working as a team on the process of coding, it is important to develop a shared understanding and agreement on the names of codes and what they mean. The codes you develop are likely to change as your research proceeds and you develop new understandings of the topics you are researching. An example of part of a codebook developed by the M&E team at EAN is provided below. This shows some of the codes identified as part of their analysis of the community researcher data.

Extract from codebook developed by Equal Access Nepal

SN	Code	Brief definition	Full definition	When to use
1	Listening Pattern	Frequency and type of radio program listening and related broadcast issues	Information relating to the frequency of listening to the radio programs, the listening mode, the broadcast station, the preferred broadcast time of these programs, and barriers to listening	Use this code for all references which illustrate patterns of listening to the SSMK or NN radio programs, listening mode (i.e. individual or group etc), feedback or comments about the radio station that the programs are listened to on, the preferred broadcast time of these programs, and any barriers to listening
2	Feedback	Feedback on radio program format and content	Negative or positive suggestions, appreciation or other feedback about the format, style and content of the radio programs	Use this code for all the references which illustrate suggestions, appreciation or other feedback about the format, presentation style, presenters and issues discussed in the SSMK or NN radio programs
3	Awareness	Changes in awareness or knowledge	Any changes in listeners' awareness or knowledge, brought about by listening to the radio programs	Use this code for all references which illustrate any changes in the awareness or knowledge of listeners that was directly brought about by listening to the SSMK or NN radio programs

Developing a comprehensive codebook can take some time and effort. If you don't have the time and resources to undertake a full coding process, there are other options that can be used to manage and begin analysing your data. For example, the MSC manual sets out a process for sorting Most Significant Change stories into 'domains of change' such as 'Changes in knowledge or awareness' and 'Changes in attitude and behaviour', and then selecting the most significant stories and recording the reasons for this selection. This type of process could also be used to analyse qualitative data such as extracts from interviews or FGDs.

Step 6: Identify and summarise themes

Once you have an initial list of codes, and agreed definitions of these codes, you can begin organising your data into similar categories such as 'listening patterns', 'feedback on programs', 'program impacts' and 'suggested improvements'. These headings can later be used when you prepare a report on your findings. Next, you can summarise the main themes, drawing on contextual data and other information that can help you to better understand your findings.

Example of major themes from an analysis of community researcher data

The following themes have been adapted from two reports on the analysis of mainly interview and focus group data collected by eight community researchers in five research districts of Nepal over a five month period in 2009. 150 pieces of data were collected during this time.

Listening pattern
Unlike the previous report, the data collected in this period showed that most of the participants in four of the five of the research sites were listening to SSMK at least once every two weeks. This change appears to have come about because the community researchers in all research areas have been encouraging participants to regularly listen to both the SSMK and Naya Nepal radio programs.

Feedback on program presenters
Similarly in the earlier report, many participants in one group discussion in Dadheldura involving seven male and three female students aged 16 to 18 commented that the presentation of the new SSMK team did not draw their attention well enough. However, since that data was collected there has been a noticeable change in their attitude towards new team. Now, they all listen to the program and said they appreciated the efforts of the new team to improve their presentation style, following the feedback given to them. They also gave useful suggestions about improving a few things that did not work well in the program such as the use of too many English words or the 'urban-centred' themes that did not represent the reality or rural life very well.

Impacts of SSMK
In a group discussion held in Palpa with six female and five male participants aged 17 - 20, most of them said that the SSMK program had taught them to walk towards a more positive path in life rather than a negative one. They said that adopting a more positive outlook has helped them to realise their responsibility towards their community. Taking inspiration from the program, they conducted street-dramas which aimed to raise community awareness about water borne disease and safety measures for women. After listening to the program, some of them also said they had changed their attitude towards caste discrimination and have openly discussed sensitive issues such as untouchability at home with their parents, brothers and sisters.

Note how frequently each pattern or theme occurs and who talked about this theme (for example, people of a particular gender or ethnic group or those in a particular location). It is usually best to look for the range of views expressed by participants rather than trying to quantify the responses. However, if your data clearly shows which participants made particular comments, it can add rigour to your analysis to include some quantification of responses where it is appropriate to do so. An example of the main themes from the analysis of interview and focus group data collected by community researchers in Nepal is shown above.

Step 7: Interpret findings, assess contributions to impacts and summarise

The next step involves attempting to put your data into perspective. This means comparing your results with what you expected, and with your original program objectives, indicators and research questions. You would then summarise your main findings, under broad headings such as 'Listening Patterns' and 'Program Impacts'.

Interpretation goes beyond description. It means attaching significance to what your data is telling you, making sense of your findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions and lessons learned, and imposing order onto a complex and messy world. Your findings should aim to do the following:

1. Confirm what you know that is supported by the data.
2. Get rid of any misconceptions.
3. Illuminate important things that you didn't know but should know.

You also need to consider the **extent to which your program may have contributed to the impacts** identified, based on the **evidence** that you have collected and analysed. This means understanding how various aspects of your programs (including grassroots activities by listener clubs and NGOs) work over time in combination with other activities to produce certain impacts and effects.

You may start with very limited data, which only tells you about a certain group of people in a certain place. This is fine as a beginning as long as you make it clear in your reports that the findings are limited to these people in this place. Gradually, over time, you can increase the scope of your research, talk to more people from different backgrounds, in different locations. The important point is to be aware of the limitations of the research you have done, and make this clear to readers of your reports. The next step is to investigate issues of interest further.

It is always best to take a cautious approach to the interpretation of your data. This means avoiding leaping to conclusions or making assumptions about why something happened. This is why it is always useful to discuss your interpretations at length with others. Learning how to produce a good interpretation of your data can be challenging and is likely to take some time but is worth persevering with as an effective and rigorous interpretation can really improve your data analysis reports. Seeking feedback and support from others with more experience in this area should help you to improve more quickly.

Example of the interpretation of data about the impacts of the SSMK program

The data in the following example was collected using the MSC technique in four research sites in different parts of Nepal. Interviews were conducted with four to six people in each site over a two month period. A total of 19 stories were collected from 10 females and 5 males aged 16 - 19 and three women and one man aged 35 - 45. Some details in the examples have been added to better illustrate the level of detail that you should try to achieve in your reports.

Impact of SSMK

Improved Communication Skills

In five of the stories listening to SSMK encouraged four young people and one older woman to more openly discuss important issues with members of their family and to communicate better with others, as the following examples illustrate:

I started listening to the SSMK radio program and gaining knowledge from the drama segment. I made the habit of open discussion with my daughters and started treating them as friends. My daughters were happy with me and they even started helping me with work, and sharing their feelings and their school activities. (Housewife, aged 49, Chhetri caste, Dadeldhura)

With the help of critical thinking [learned by listening to SSMK] *I was able to communicate with my aunt. Her husband works away from home and even she has to go to work during the morning. I put forward my proposal - I told her that I shall look after her daughter till morning when she goes to work and once she is back she will go to school. For that she should pay me for my school. She agreed and right now I am staying at her home and my study is going fine.* (Female student, aged 20, Dang)

Increased Motivation to Study

Six of the stories also showed that SSMK is helping some young people to increase their motivation to study, as the following quotation demonstrates:

I am a regular listener of the SSMK program. I listen to the drama related to the importance of education. I was affected by the drama that was aired about how a person who neglects his studies suffers in the later phase of his life. This drama, as well as pressure from my mother and brother, helped me to realise the importance of education. I find that I have an increased interest towards studies these days. Earlier, I used to secure just-pass numbers in class 5, 6 and 7 but in class 8 I stood second. This is all due to the help of the SSMK radio program and my family, that I have reached this place. (Male student, aged 17, Chhetri caste, Dang)

Interpretation

The impacts mentioned above are part of our analysis of MSC stories which are regularly collected by community researchers. They indicate that the SSMK program is effectively meeting its objectives of building the life skills of young people and empowering young people to make good decisions. Our analysis of these stories indicates that listening to SSMK has had a positive impact on some listeners in increasing their skills in communication and critical thinking. These new skills, and the encouragement they have gained from listening to the program, have helped to improve relationships among family members. Some young people were also more motivated to study and later became more financially independent and better able to contribute money to their household. As the quotations above indicate, the drama segment of the program appears to have the most powerful effect in encouraging listeners to develop a more positive attitude and to make empowering changes in their life. They also show that these impacts are magnified by the encouragement of other family members who may not have listened to the program, but have indirectly experienced some positive effects of the program such as improved communication and relationships with their son or daughter.

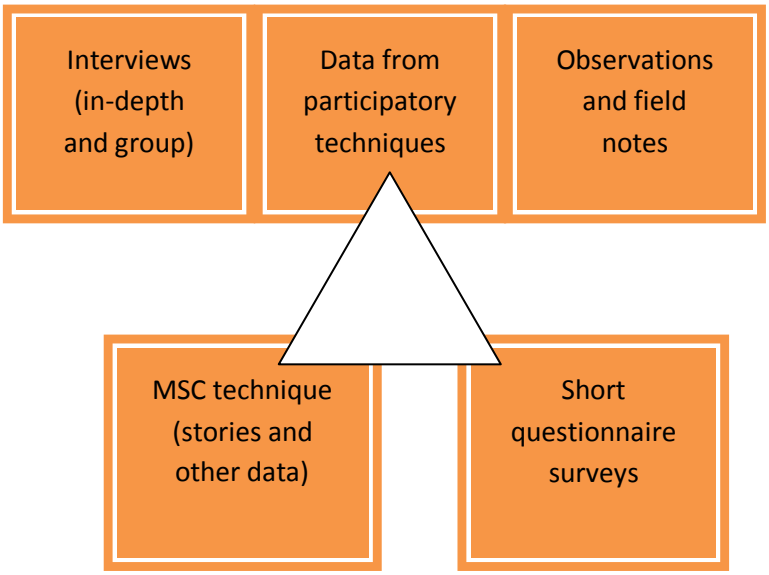
Step 8: Triangulate data sources

Triangulation is a crucial step in the evaluation and impact assessment process. Triangulation is the process of combining multiple methods and perspectives with various types of data sources in order to cross-check the results of your research. It can also mean using several different researchers in an evaluation. An example of triangulation is provided below.

Once you've completed an analysis of a large amount of qualitative data of different types it is very useful to triangulate this data. Qualitative data can also be triangulated with quantitative data. This process helps to strengthen your evaluation and make your findings more useful to others by providing different information and perspectives about the topic of your evaluation. It also enables you and others to check the validity of your data and your findings, thereby making your findings more trustworthy.

Triangulation of different sources of qualitative data, such as those shown in the diagram below, could involve:

- Drawing on quantitative data from your analysis of short questionnaire surveys to cross-check the findings from your analysis of qualitative data and to indicate how wide-spread certain impacts and outcomes are.
- Using different participatory techniques to measure the same indicator and then comparing the results. If the results are similar they are more likely to be accurate.
- Comparing the themes in your observations (written in field notes) with the themes in interviews and noting any changes over time. Ask participants to explain these changes.
- Checking the consistency of what people say about the same topic over time.
- Comparing the perspectives of people who have different points of view (for example, listener club members, staff of your partner organisations, and parents of young listeners).
- Checking interview and FGD data or MSC stories against program documentation and other written evidence that can verify what interviewees reported.



Triangulation of different sources of data

Example of the triangulation of various types of M&E data about the impacts of the SSMK and Naya Nepal radio programs

Along with our analysis of MSC stories, and notes from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted by community researchers, data from our short questionnaire surveys and the many listener letters we receive indicate that both the SSMK and Naya Nepal programs are effectively meeting most of their key objectives. In a recent survey of 61 SSMK listeners, 44% reported that the program helped them the most in making decisions about personal change, while 40% said the program helped them the most in making decisions about education. Likewise, in a survey completed by 33 NN listeners, 45% indicated that the program gave them the most encouragement to conduct community level activities such as organising interaction programs and taking part in meetings to overcome delays in justice and security provision. The vast majority of respondents (90.9%) said that NN encouraged them the most to conduct the community activities, compared with four related radio programs which were given ratings of between 18 and 36% for this question.

Our qualitative data indicates that the drama segment of both the SSMK and NN programs has the most powerful effect in encouraging listeners to take action and make empowering changes in their lives and in their communities. This finding was verified in our recent survey, which provided several examples of positive changes that resulted from listening to the drama segment and found that 82% of SSMK respondents and 83% of NN respondents rated it as the most liked segment of these radio programs.

Step 9: Make conclusions and recommendations and prepare draft report

Now that you have identified your main research findings and summarised the results of your analysis, you can begin to make some conclusions and recommendations about the ways your programs can be improved and any follow-up research that is needed. You should show how your interpretations justify your conclusions and recommendations. In addition, you should translate your recommendations into action plans that set out who will do what and by when.

An example of the main headings in a data analysis report by EAN is shown below:

Report on Analysis of Community Researchers Data
Sixth Data Analysis Report
Equal Access Nepal
January 1 to May 31, 2010

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Example of feedback on a data analysis report

The following example illustrates the feedback on a draft report on the M&E team at EAN's data analysis of community research data received from the SSMK and Naya Nepal content teams (provided in Track Changes in the report). This helped to increase the trustworthiness of our analysis.

On a bi-monthly basis the M&E team shares the data analysis report with content team (CT) members for comments and feedback. Comments and feedback provided by the content team members are often related to doing more follow up research on the same issue or asking for some new issue to research. This process has helped to make the findings and analysis reports more trustworthy and useful to the content team members.

Extract from report: One of the interviewee from Dadeldhura thinks that the program deals with the present situation of the country. If the program would also include more of the community issues like their problems, infrastructures, employment etc, it would be much better.

Comment from CT: This is of course a good suggestion. NN does not deal with each and every issue though. So I would request the community researcher to talk about the audience limitations of the program so that the audience will be able to identify local issues based the topics NN deals with.

Extract from report: As per the various community discussions held in research sites, we found that the listening trend of the program is gradually decreasing. The popularity of television programs (*) is found to be the major factor for the drop in listenership. Another factor is that people are more attracted towards local languages program covering their issues, aired from local FM stations (**).

Comments from CT : * What is the major reason behind this? ** What are the local issues? Did they identify any particular issues?

Step 10: Seek feedback and validation

Once you have prepared a draft report on your evaluation, it is important to ask program staff and others to critically review your initial analysis, recommendations, learnings and conclusions.

The process of **cross-checking** your findings and evidence of impacts with others is important to enable valid judgements to be made about your findings. This can highlight biases and specific interests and can reveal contradictions in your data that may not be easily explained.

Based on the feedback on your draft report and the validation process, you should revise your analysis and finalise your report.

Step 11: Communicate your findings

The next step is to share your findings with program staff and stakeholders, community members and donors. These findings can be used to help your program to better respond to local community needs and expectations, increase sustainability, and work more effectively.

They can also be used to identify areas where further research is needed. At this stage, you will need to think about:

- What you have found out and how can this information be of use to the overall development of your programs?
- How can you best put your findings to use?
- How can local community people benefit from this research and your findings?
- How can this research best be used to identify other issues you need to explore?
- What is the best way to share your findings with different groups?

Analysis is an important step in putting your data to work and allowing it to be utilised in the community and by your organisation. This is an evaluation of part of your organisation's work and what it has achieved, and it identifies its strengths and weaknesses. It is important to acknowledge successes as well as failures and negative impacts as this is the best way to learn more about how well your programs are working and how they can be improved.

While program staff and donors may prefer to receive a written report, it is likely to be more useful to share your findings with the community using a range of methods such as community forums, newsletters and wall newspapers. This is also an excellent way to check the validity of your findings.

Step 12: Implement recommendations and improve QDA system

Now that you have shared your findings with others and obtained their feedback on your report and its recommendations, those responsible can begin to implement the recommendations. You can also begin to conduct any follow up research that may be needed.

In addition, you should regularly review your QDA systems and processes to identify anything that's not working well and how it could be made more effective, efficient and sustainable in terms of the resources and time you have available.

Some final words

This approach to QDA allows you and your programs to ground your evaluations in the wider social context in which your programs are working and to engage others in the QDA process. This makes it possible to describe direct and indirect, expected and unexpected impacts of your programs in great detail. This is a hugely valuable and rare resource and it places program staff and others in a good position to decide what needs to be done to improve your programs and projects. With such findings, you can PLAN actions, DO them, and continue to OBSERVE and REFLECT (i.e. research) how these new actions work or don't work.

Some of the steps in QDA can be quite challenging, and some activities might be very time consuming, depending on what is required, but you always need to share what you have learned, and what you think is important to pass onto others. Good quality QDA allows you to get a good understanding what works and what does not work so well in your programs. This can help you to better meet your objectives and the needs of different social groups in the community.

Appendix 1: Reporting formats for community researchers

Example of a template for collecting information about participants and the research conducted

Summary Report

Daily Report

Date:

Name of Place:

Number of participants:

Male: Female:

Ethnic: Dalit: Madheshi: Brahmin: Chhetri: Others:

Age range (maximum participants).....to.....years

Objective:

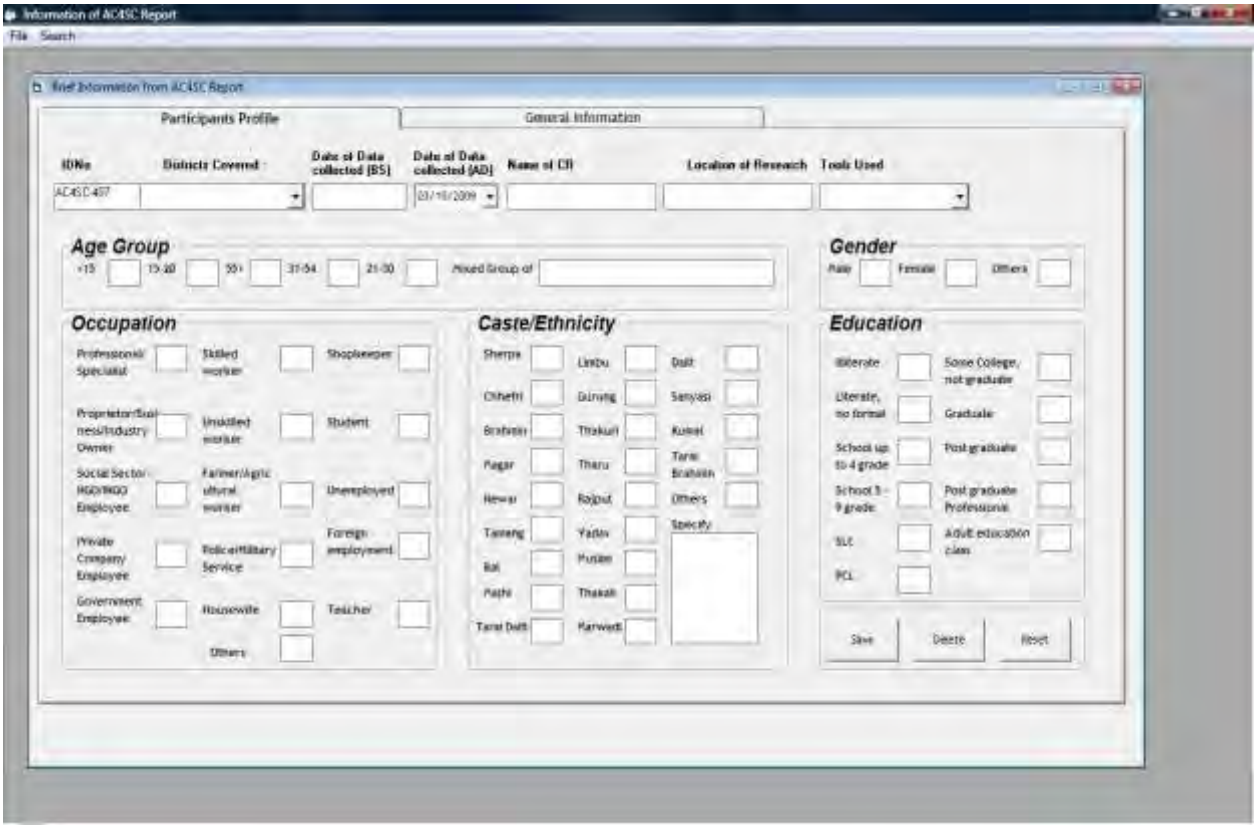
Tools used:

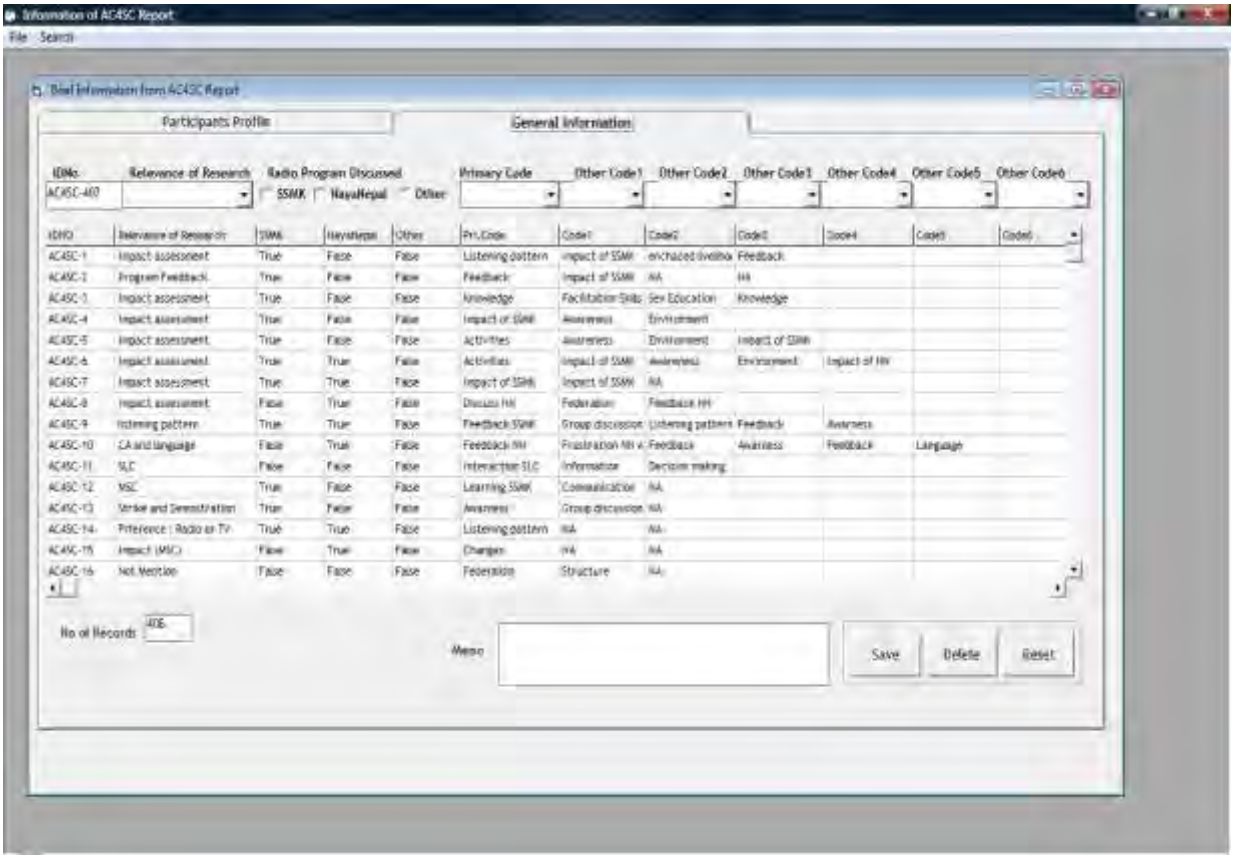
Major issue discussed:

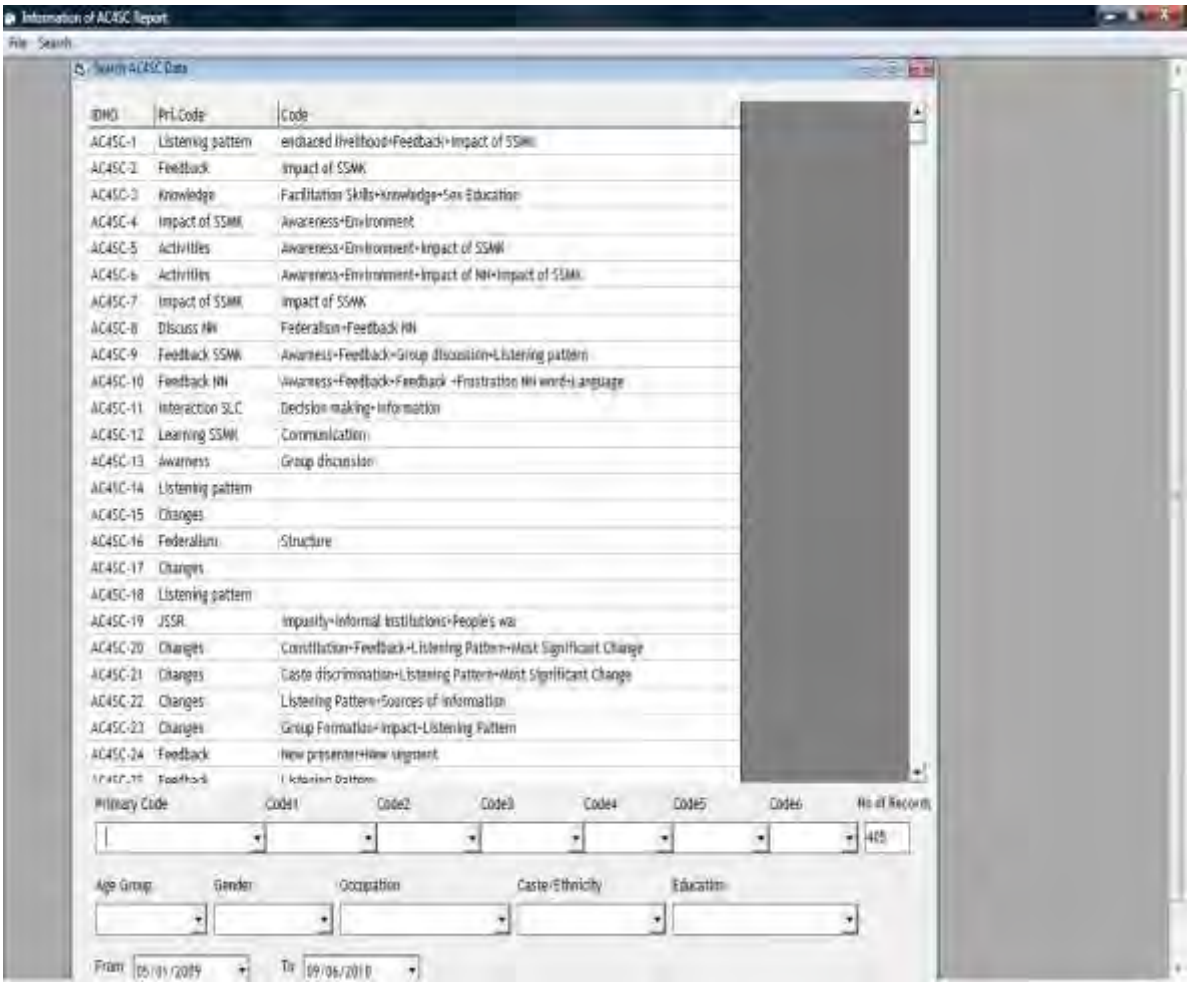
Example of template for collecting demographic data about research participants

S.N.	Name	Address	Age	Education	Occupation	Listening pattern	
						NN	SSMK
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

Appendix 2: Database interface used by Equal Access Nepal







Information of AC4SC Report

File Search

Search AC4SC Data

IDNO	Pri.Code	Code
AC4SC-1	Listening pattern	enchaced livelihood+Feedback+Impact of SSMK
AC4SC-2	Feedback	Impact of SSMK
AC4SC-3	Knowledge	Facilitation Skills+Knowledge+Sex Education
AC4SC-4	Impact of SSMK	Awareness+Environment
AC4SC-5	Activities	Awareness+Environment+Impact of SSMK
AC4SC-6	Activities	Awareness+Environment+Impact of NN+Impact of SSMK
AC4SC-7	Impact of SSMK	Impact of SSMK
AC4SC-8	Discuss NN	Federalism+Feedback NN
AC4SC-9	Feedback SSMK	Awareness+Feedback+Group discussion+Listening pattern
AC4SC-10	Feedback NN	Awareness+Feedback+Feedback +Frustration NN word+Language
AC4SC-11	Interaction SLC	Decision making+Information
AC4SC-12	Learning SSMK	Communication
AC4SC-13	Awareness	Group discussion
AC4SC-14	Listening pattern	
AC4SC-15	Changes	
AC4SC-16	Federalism	Structure
AC4SC-17	Changes	
AC4SC-18	Listening pattern	
AC4SC-19	JSSR	Impunity+Informal institutions+People's wa
AC4SC-20	Changes	Constitution+Feedback+Listening Pattern+Most Significant Change
AC4SC-21	Changes	Caste discrimination+Listening Pattern+Most Significant Change
AC4SC-22	Changes	Listening Pattern+Sources of information
AC4SC-23	Changes	Group Formation+Impact+Listening Pattern
AC4SC-24	Feedback	New presenter+New segment
AC4SC-25	Feedback	Listening Pattern

Primary Code | Code1 | Code2 | Code3 | Code4 | Code5 | Code6 | No of Records 405

Age Group | Gender | Occupation | Caste/Ethnicity | Education

From 05/01/2009 To 09/06/2010

Module 6: Getting started and planning for PM&E and impact assessment

Outcomes from using this module

You will understand:

- The key steps to effectively developing and implementing a PM&E plan
- How to plan in terms of time, people and resources
- How to deal with power, gender, literacy and sensitive issues
- The ethical issues you need to consider when doing PM&E

Introduction

This module aims to help you get started with developing a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) and impact assessment framework that will result in a practical, well thought out plan. It explains how to do research and evaluation based on ethical principles and an awareness of key issues such as power, gender and literacy.

Each time your organisation develops a PM&E plan you need to ask a series of questions:

- Why are we undertaking this evaluation?
- What information are we seeking?
- What methods are best suited to each PM&E activity?
- Where will we carry out these activities?
- What resources will we need?
- How will we analyse the data?
- How will we use the results?
- How will we share the results with others?

Asking these questions will ensure your PM&E activities have a focus and achieve their anticipated goals. It encourages you to plan based on why you are doing PM&E, how you will do it, and what you will do with the findings.

Once you have asked yourself these questions, you can develop your plan. The selection of methods and participants is just one part of the PM&E planning process, which also includes developing a theory of change, setting objectives and indicators and developing a communication and reporting strategy.

Your plan will specify what methods you will use, what questions you will ask, who you will ask, and when. Once you start to implement the plan, you may decide you want to add some questions, or methods, or groups of people to involve. This is fine, you can adjust your plan as you go – but you

must have a plan to start with, to ensure you are able to make the work meaningful for your organisation.

As with all of the processes outlined in this toolkit, you are encouraged to actively involve your key stakeholders in each stage of the development and implementation of your PM&E plan.

Steps to developing a participatory M&E and impact assessment framework

The process of developing your PM&E plan should be seen as flexible, open to change and revision, and based on ongoing learning from regular reviews. Some steps may happen in a different order to that presented below. It depends on many things, such as the reporting requirements of donors. We have identified 14 steps to developing a PM&E and impact assessment framework:

Step 1: Identify stakeholders*
Step 2: Develop a theory of change
Step 3: Clarify expectations and outcomes from the evaluation*
Step 4: Clarify the boundaries and scope of the impact assessment
Step 5: Identify objectives and indicators*
Step 6: Identify key questions*
Step 7: Develop monitoring and evaluation tables
Step 8: Decide which methodologies and methods to use*
Step 9: Consider the resources and support available*
Step 10: Develop your communication and reporting strategy
Step 11: Develop your PM&E training plan
Step 12: Develop your implementation strategy*
Step 13: Develop your learning and improvement strategy*
Step 14: Develop your critical review strategy

It may be useful to begin with the basic, essential steps (marked by an asterisk above). You can later add more of the steps as you better understand the process and the strengths and limitations of the various methodologies and methods.

These steps are based on the principles of the Communication for Social Change approach to communication for development and the principles of PM&E, which were set out in the Introduction to this toolkit. They emphasise taking a participatory approach to the planning process, and encourage you to include as many different staff and stakeholders in your M&E work as possible.

Step 1: Identify stakeholders

This step involves identifying key stakeholders and staff members who you want to participate in your PM&E planning and capacity development activities. These are the people who are important to achieving the changes or outcomes that are sought from your programs.

They could include:

- Representatives of your outreach partners and other relevant organisations in the community
- Content Advisory Groups
- Local community reporters
- Community researchers
- Organisational staff (M&E, content production and outreach staff)
- Donors and other supporters

This process includes:

- Holding a meeting with staff to come up with an initial list of stakeholders
- Identifying ways that each of the groups and individuals could be involved in the process and what sort of time they are prepared to commit to the process
- Considering the ways that they can be involved.

Modules 1 and 2 show examples of different ways of identifying stakeholders. **Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators** includes an example of how Equal Access Nepal identified various stakeholders and the ways they wanted to involve them. A key aim should be to make the process as manageable and effective as possible. You might identify the 'champions' who would be vital to the success of the PM&E process. You can decide on the best number and type of stakeholders to participate in the core planning process in order to make it as effective and streamlined as possible, while allowing some flexibility in the process. You could also use various stakeholder analysis methods and the analysis of your organisational networks. (see **Useful resources, information and tools** section).

Step 2: Develop a theory of change

This step assumes that your program or project does not yet have a clear theory of change or program logic that can be used in the impact assessment process. Ideally this step should be taken before a program is actually implemented but a retrospective theory of change can be developed.

Developing a theory of change is an important step in impact assessment and project development. We recommend using the Theory of Change (TOC) approach as it fits well with the PM&E framework and the principles which this toolkit is based on. You might already be using a Logical Framework (logframe) approach, and if that works well for you, you can simply try to incorporate some of the more participatory aspects of a TOC.

Whichever approach you use, it is important to see your model of change as dynamic and flexible and open to regular revision:

What changes are you trying to bring about?

Example of the development of a Theory of Change

The following describes the process we used at EAN to begin developing a Theory of Change (TOC) for the SSMK and Naya Nepal programs. It was adapted from the TOC process developed by Keystone (see **Useful resources** section). The aim was that this process would help to develop a shared understanding of the kind of change that the radio programs want to achieve and to identify a shared vision of what success would look like. Once this was agreed, the pathways to achieve this vision of success could be thought through.

We envisaged that this process would allow the programs to develop indicators of success (or impact) in ways that would allow EAN to demonstrate or prove impact (or success) as well as to improve (through careful consideration, reflection and research) how it is working towards that vision of success. We expected that this would help the programs to be clearer about what they are trying to achieve, and to help the M&E network to support them in moving towards this. We also thought the process would be useful in helping to define objectives and set the kinds of indicators that would be useful in M&E activities.

A one day workshop was held with management, SSMK and Naya Nepal program production staff and the M&E team. It was facilitated by one of the M&E team and one of the AC4SC research team. The TOC process was presented to participants as a road map. We explained that the process will include identifying all of the stakeholders who can help, or play a role. It will set out what needs to happen along the way. It would allow them to work out how to measure success, and assess their role in social change. Other stakeholders would also need to take part in the process of developing the TOCs. We emphasised that the radio programs were only one part of what will make the vision of success happen. Once the TOC was completed, it needed to be regularly revisited, since it should be seen as dynamic, not static.

We worked through two main steps in the TOC process.

Step 1: Vision of success
To develop a vision of success we first did the 'epitaph' exercise. This is a way to express how a program would like to be remembered:

The **SSMK epitaph** was: *A "voice" which grew as a "youth culture" that helped young people of Nepal to believe in what they were capable of by challenging the boundary of traditional society*. The **Naya Nepal epitaph** was: *Naya Nepal created a forum for dialogue for sustainable peace in Nepal, helping people to participate in political change, be aware, and empowered.*

Given how they would like to be remembered, the groups next worked on creating a vision of success. What will they leave behind - what does it look like? The **vision of success for SSMK** was: *Youth are aware and empowered through 'life skills' and have created different mediums of sharing ideas and views in society; creating an atmosphere where youths are free to speak their minds and act for the change they believe in*. The **vision of success for Naya Nepal** was: *Responsible and well-informed citizens working together with different groups/organisations and government bodies towards sustainable peace and institutionalisation of democracy.*

Step 2: Pathways to success
Once the shared vision of success had been imagined, we started to work on planning for that success. This involved thinking about what the pathways to success would be. Who would be involved? What conditions would need to be in place for this success to happen? We made some progress towards building the TOCs for each program, but they were not completed.

More meetings were later held with the SSMK and Naya Nepal teams to add more details to the TOC maps that were developed and to refine the vision of success. The maps we later developed are shown in the Appendix to this module.

Your program will change over time as you make revisions based on the PM&E process or you receive funding for the development and implementation of new program themes.

Benefits and challenges in using the Theory of Change approach

The following feedback was given on the EAN workshop to develop a Theory of Change for the SSMK and NN programs:

Some program makers found this workshop productive for identifying the vision of success and stakeholders, while others didn't find the process very productive. Some of the SSMK and NN content team were concerned that the outcomes of the process could be unproductive because they couldn't use the tool practically ('practically' in the sense that EAN cannot control or address all the conditions related to other stakeholders to achieve the vision of success). The content teams felt that the TOC was slightly abstract since they were talking about things that they have very little direct control over.

The M&E team thought it would be difficult to involve all the different stakeholders in the process and to influence them. The process was also seen as time-consuming to fully complete. However, workshop participants thought the epitaph, vision and initial mapping stage were useful. The M&E team thought the process could potentially be used to help them to develop logframes in project proposals. Participants also thought the process was a good way of bringing the M&E and content teams together to think through the social change process, and how the radio programs contributed to that change, in a holistic way.

You will need to ask yourself the same question at regular intervals, so that your work is always relevant and up to date. *What changes are you trying to bring about NOW?*

PM&E methodologies such as the Most Significant Change technique and participatory techniques such as Roadblocks and Problem Trees can help you to understand what 'success' or 'change' means at the local level.

An example of the TOC approach developed by Keystone Accountability is shown in the box above. It is designed to help you to ask:

- What are the local factors and relationships that are important to our work?
- What pathways are there to bring about the change we want?
- How can we track changes?
- Who are the stakeholders in the process?

A theory of change provides a picture of how your program works (in theory) and reveals the assumptions underlying your program. This may not be based on what actually happens in the community. It can help you to create a bigger and clearer picture of the process of change. This process of developing a TOC is very useful since it requires your stakeholders and staff to work together to clarify their long-term vision for the outcomes of a program and what needs to happen and who needs to do what to make it successful.

Step 3: Clarify expectations and outcomes from the evaluation

It is important to clarify what your key stakeholders (including funders) expect from the PM&E and impact assessment process and what sort of information they need. Findings must be useful to you and your stakeholders and other interested groups (such as listener club members). Use findings to improve your programs and to improve your understanding of social and behaviour change and the role of your programs in bringing about change, whether directly or indirectly, and whether changes are positive or negative, expected or unexpected.

Example of clarifying expectations of evaluation with EAN stakeholders

EAN has both internal and external stakeholders who expect different things from the evaluation of the programs we produce. Donors, content team members and listeners at the community level are our major stakeholders in an evaluation. Donors always expect you to identify the impact of radio programs and to complete project activities, including evaluations, on time. They are more interested in behavior change which is shown through stories, presentations, descriptions, and quotes from listeners. They are interested in both qualitative and quantitative results. The content teams want you to present evidence of the impact of radio programs, gather feedback for program improvement, and identify new emerging issues. Lastly, listeners want the evaluation to identify the issues and information that they are interested in and want to hear on our radio programs. They also provide regular feedback that helps us to improve our programs, and stories and other information about change impacts.

During the development of the six month research plan, a question asked to both Naya Nepal and SSMK content team members was:

What are the key things that you need to find out about audiences/programs in the next six months?

Based on this question, the M&E team met with both groups to list the research questions. The NN team came up with sixteen research questions on security issues, and twelve research questions on justice issues, which they would like to know more about.

The SSMK team came up with twelve general research questions related to the ongoing issues their program covers, ten research questions on sport, sixteen on disability, five on Early Childhood Development, and sixteen on nutrition.

Again, the M&E team met with each program team in order to prioritise the major questions (limiting repetition), for the first six month research plan.

Nine research questions for NN and eleven research questions for SSMK were agreed upon. These research questions focused on understanding program listenership, information on activities conducted by listeners at the community level, how well liked different segments of the radio programs are, ideas for program improvement, the popularity of the programs, the issues listeners would like the programs to cover, and the impact of the radio programs in general.

This step includes asking:

- Who is the evaluation for?
- What is it for?

- What expectations do various stakeholder groups have for the evaluation?
- What information do they need?
- Why do they need this information?
- Who are the intended users of the evaluation?
- How will the findings be used by different stakeholders?
- How will the process itself empower those involved and strengthen communication for social change processes?

Step 4: Clarifying the boundaries and scope of the impact assessment

Be clear about what you are trying to find out. Link your PM&E to your program objectives and your TOC or program logic. Which aspects of your work are you evaluating?

You should aim to capture expected, unexpected, positive and negative impacts. To capture unexpected impacts it is important not to limit your questions to 'Have we achieved our objectives?' but rather, 'What has changed in people's lives?' It is also necessary to consider who the impact may be on and what level the impact assessment will focus on: individuals, households, particular groups such as listener clubs, community organisations or whole communities.

Be clear about the geographic and time boundaries of your evaluation so that everyone is clear about the limits to the areas in which impacts have happened and the time period that is being assessed. Be realistic about what types of impact can be expected within certain timeframes.

Key questions to ask in relation to the scale and scope of the evaluation and obtaining the most trustworthy and meaningful results are:

- How many participants or respondents are needed?
- Which particular groups of people need to be involved? (i.e. female and males, people from different caste or ethnic groups, older and younger people etc.)
- How many communities or sites need to be involved in the evaluation?
- How can we best select those sites?

Step 5: Identifying objectives and indicators

It is essential to clarify and agree on your program objectives before you begin the process of indicator setting. You also need to decide which particular program objectives your evaluation and impact assessment will be focused on in a given period of time (for example, as part of a six month M&E plan). Otherwise you might spend a lot of time collecting data that is not useful.

As we explain in more detail in **Module 2: Setting objectives and indicators**, there are different ways of setting indicators. Where possible, indicators should be developed through participation and dialogue so that they are locally meaningful. This process can highlight the different information needs and ideas of change that different stakeholders have. Creative approaches to indicator setting such as those using pictures or stories can be particularly useful when working with community groups that include people with low levels of literacy.

It is more useful to develop a small number of meaningful indicators which can be reviewed regularly and carefully than a long list of indicators which is too time-consuming to use effectively.

You should be aware that indicators are good ways of measuring change but not of capturing the reasons behind social change. For this reason, you may want to consider sometimes using alternatives to indicators, such as Most Significant Change stories or 'verifying assumptions', which can be more useful in assessing the impacts of your programs.

Step 6: Identifying key questions

What do you want to know?
Which questions do you need answered?

Do not have too many questions at any one time, and to try to answer these questions thoroughly. This process could involve making a list of the key information that various stakeholders need and holding a workshop to decide which of these questions are the most important to focus on in the initial phase of the PM&E.

Example of the process of selecting research questions

The following process was used at EAN to identify broad and focused research questions for SSMK, to be answered during a six month period from April to September 2010. They were developed as part of the process of developing a six month M&E plan.

We began by identifying the broad, ongoing objectives of the program and the more specific objectives which were related to program themes that were to be broadcast such as disability and sexual and reproductive health rights. Next we identified indicators for each of these objectives. After this step we worked out research questions that related to these objectives and indicators. We also identified the various methods that could best be used to collect information on these questions and other details such as the target number of participants or survey respondents. Once the draft plan was developed we shared this with the SSMK content team and made revisions based on their feedback and new developments in the program content.

The **broad/ongoing research questions** we identified included:

1. To what extent did SSMK listeners, in the past 6 months, take part in or organise one or more activities such as collective action and individual participation in social debates?
2. To what extent can SSMK listeners give examples of using skills and knowledge to make informed decisions at personal, family and community level about any SSMK issues?
3. To what extent can SSMK listeners give examples of being involved in decision making at family and/or community levels?
4. What type of improvements do listeners think would make SSMK a better program?

The **focused research questions** we identified included:

1. To what extent are changes observed in attitude and behaviour amongst differently-abled young people and young people around disability issues?
2. To what extent do you think that the SSMK program has paved the way for open discussion on sexual and reproductive health rights issues?
3. To what extent do you think the SSMK program has helped spread the message of hope among youth in the present transitional period?

Step 7: Developing monitoring and evaluation tables

Based on the information gathered in the steps above, the next step is to develop tables that allow you to capture your monitoring and evaluation goals, indicators, research questions, source of information etc. in an easy to understand format. An example of a monitoring plan and an evaluation plan in table format are shown Appendix 1 and 2 in this module. The idea here is that there is a clear separation between monitoring and evaluation activities and that monitoring data feeds into the evaluation. As we noted in the introduction to this toolkit, if monitoring systems are working well, evaluation of programs is needed less often and is much easier to carry out.

This step includes identifying existing information that your organisation or other organisations hold which could provide answers to the key questions you have developed. You should always try to gather some contextual information that can help you to better understand the communities you are researching and any barriers to social change. From this process you can assess what new information you need to gather.

Step 8: Decide which methodologies and methods to use

A number of questions need to be asked when selecting the most appropriate methodologies and methods to use in your PM&E:

- What methods and methodologies can help you answer your questions?
- How well do they engage our primary stakeholders?
- What mix of methodologies and methods will you use?

Key questions here are:

- Will the particular methodologies and methods provide the type of information you want, when you want it?
- Will they help you answer our particular questions?

To ensure the methods and methodologies you have selected are appropriate, ask yourself the following questions…

Do the methodologies and methods selected:

- Help you actively and meaningfully include a range of stakeholders?
- Provide an opportunity to strengthen PM&E capacities?
- Help you understand the wider social, cultural and communication context and its effect on the program?
- Help you understand how and why social change happens?
- Help you look at the issues of concern from multiple perspectives?

Engaging stakeholders

How well will the methodologies and methods you choose engage your stakeholders?

Ask yourself:

- Are our stakeholders engaged with and interested in these methodologies and methods (including program staff and listeners)?
- Which methodologies and methods have you used before, and how well did they work?
- Which methodologies and methods will work best for the particular groups involved? (i.e. taking into account issues such as the local culture, gender, age, literacy and education levels)

Mix of methodologies and methods to suit your PM&E needs

Which particular mix of methodologies and methods will best fit the evaluation outcomes that you are looking for? You need to be clear about why you have chosen each methodology and method and understand their strengths and limitations or constraints.

Example of selecting methods

The methods chosen depend on the resources available to you and your stakeholders. After we developed the six month research plan, we (the M&E team at EAN) decided it was important to have regular meetings with the program teams, which include content team members, so that we could decide together which research questions to select for each two month cycle of our six month research plan.

For this process, the M&E team share all of the research questions that we want to cover in the six months, and we discuss them with the program teams. Collaboratively, questions are prioritised for the coming two month research cycle. For the last cycle, following the prioritising of questions, the following methods were chosen to address them:

- Short questionnaire surveys (SQS)
- Group discussions (focus groups)
- Individual interviews
- MSC stories
- Participatory techniques (including Diamond, Gender chart and Chapatti)

The participatory techniques were chosen in part as a way to quickly verify findings generated by the other methods. We recognise that any one particular method cannot provide enough data to produce rigorous findings. Different methods are chosen to triangulate data, and enrich findings.

Different methods are used for different purposes: SQS was chosen to provide some qualitative and quantitative information related to program listenership, program impact and improvements; focus groups were chosen to generate critical reviews of the programs and the issues they raise; individual interviews provide a different type of more personal data on these issues; and MSC is about collecting stories of impact, or change. Participatory techniques were also used to get in-depth data on issues, and also to rank different segments of the radio programs, to find out which are the most popular, and why. These methods help to build rapport with community members, and quickly gain a general understanding of a local area, local people, local issues and the impact of our radio programs.

The methods chosen involve local people in defining their own issues, and sharing stories about the impact or change brought about by the programs. This mix of methods provides richer data, but there are also limitations, in that they require a well trained person to facilitate the discussions, collect and report the data. It also takes up time for participants, which may not always be convenient.

Developing our use of mixed methods has helped us to generate more in depth data and rich findings. The overall process has helped to generate dialogue across EAN, between program teams and M&E staff, and establish a healthy communication environment. Maintaining consistency of quality and amount of data remains a challenge for generating our data analysis reports. It is a time consuming process.

Consider limitations or constraints and whether these are outweighed by the strengths of the methodology or method. Ask yourself how well different methodologies and methods balance or complement each other. The **Useful resources, information and tools** section of this toolkit lists publications that provide this information.

If you find that some methodologies or methods are not as useful as you had thought they would be, or do not help you answer the questions you have, change them. A good PM&E design needs to be flexible, and should enable you to explore interesting things as they emerge.

Step 9: Consider the resources and support available

A crucial stage of the planning process involves thinking through the different resources and support that you will need.

Key questions you need to ask are:

- TIME: How long will it take to complete each part of the PM&E plan?
- PEOPLE: Who needs to be involved in each part of the PM&E plan, and how will you encourage their participation?
- RESOURCES: How much will it cost in money and other resources to complete each part of this plan?

Time

In your plan, think about how you will collect your data. For example, will you be conducting interviews, administering short surveys or using participatory techniques? No matter what methods you use, you need to consider the amount of time each requires.

Each method is different and therefore you should consider this when planning how many interviews, surveys or participatory techniques you want to use, and consider how much time you have available. When creating your PM&E plan it is important that you not only think about the time it will take to collect the data but also remember to think about how long it will take to document, transcribe, code and analyse this data.

The process of data collection, analysis and writing up usually takes longer than we think it will. Therefore it is important to be realistic in your planning and to allow plenty of time to carry out each of your tasks. Careful attention to detail during the planning stage will ensure you don't put yourself under undue pressure!!

The complexity and quality of the data you need to gather affects the time needed for data collection and analysis. Participatory and qualitative methods often require more time than for quantitative methods. However, when we look at this from a long-term perspective that considers the many benefits of taking a participatory approach, this time and other costs involved can be easily justified.

Key questions to consider here include:

- How much time do you have to conduct the evaluation?
- How much time do you need to prepare?
- How much time will be needed to gather and record the data?
- How much time will be needed to analyse and prepare reports?

People

Participatory, qualitative research relies on good communication with those who work in your organisation and local communities. How many people do you have access to that would be happy to help with your research and evaluation tasks?

Developing a strong evaluation culture within your organisation and the communities you serve may mean that you train others to assist you in some of your research and evaluation tasks. If people know you are prepared to listen to them, and try to understand their issues, it may mean that people will turn their everyday skills and knowledge into research data for you by keeping field notes or diaries. A range of people can be engaged in the PM&E process. The more local support you have the easier it will be for you to conduct your research.

You might greatly benefit by strengthening the capacities of staff, community researchers and others to undertake the research and evaluation.

Key questions to consider include:

- What skills, knowledge and experience in particular methods do the staff and others who will take part in the PM&E process have?
- What sort of training might be required in particular methods to increase the quality of the process, the data collected, and the analysis and reporting of that data?

Organisational support

The support of management and program staff in conducting the evaluation is also very important to success, especially if you want to use unfamiliar M&E methodologies and methods. Key questions here include:

- How open is your organisation to the use of 'alternative' or unfamiliar approaches to M&E?
- If it is not very open to alternative approaches, what strategies could be used to help foster greater support?
- What level of technical and other support can your organisation provide that could help your team to more effectively conduct the evaluation?

Resources: Budget and costs

What are the cost implications of your PM&E plan?

Always ask the question 'how much will it cost?' when planning the different stages of your evaluation. The costs associated with your evaluation may include travel expenses, administrative

costs, and the cost of equipment that is necessary for your research. It might also include expenses or wages to pay for community researchers.

One way to avoid the anxiety of financial stress in evaluation is to keep it simple. Try to be simple but realistic in terms of the planning and the carrying out of the research. If there is a support organisation involved, be sure to work out what support they can offer at the start of the project and then map the PM&E goals around that.

If you are realistic your plan is more likely to be successful. There could be costs involved in such things as travel and this may have a significant impact on whom you can visit and research, where you can conduct your research. If you need to travel to far away or remote communities, you will need to think through the cost of this, and consider the need for this in terms of the evaluation.

Scale and scope of the evaluation

The various factors outlined above will determine the scale and scope of the evaluation and what those involved in the process can realistically and practically deal with. The evaluation should be proportionate to the scale of the program.

Ask yourself these key questions:

- How many participants are needed?
- Which groups of people need to be involved?
- How many communities or sites need to be involved to provide meaningful and useful findings?

Step 10: Develop your communication and reporting strategy

Effective communication is absolutely essential to the success of PM&E, as we noted in **Module 1: Effective communication, feedback and reporting systems in a PM&E process.** It is important to find ways of communicating your PM&E results in effective, appropriate and timely ways in order to meet different stakeholder and organisational needs.

There are many questions to consider here such as:

- Are there any communication barriers that may be affecting our PM&E process?
- Can we improve communication flows and connections between the M&E team and various stakeholder groups?
- What is the best way to communicate our PM&E findings and recommendations to different stakeholders?
- Are you able to communicate findings to different stakeholders?

Going through the various exercises, tips and examples in **Module 1** will help you to answer these questions.

Step 11: Develop your PM&E training plan

Some ongoing training of staff and community-based researchers will be needed if you are using new or unfamiliar methods and techniques. This needs to be part of your planning process. Ask yourself these questions:

- What level of skills, knowledge and experience in the methodologies and methods we have selected do those who will conduct the research have?
- Where are the gaps in their skills, knowledge and experience that need to be filled?
- What level should our training be aimed at? (i.e. beginner level or more advanced level)
- What sort of ongoing mentoring or support will we need to give community researchers?
- How can we best provide this support?

An example of the assessment of training needs of EAN staff is provided in **Module 1**.

You also need to think about how you can maintain research and evaluation capacity with your organisation. Involving a wide range of staff in your training and PM&E capacity development activities is a good strategy that can help to reduce the impact of regular staff turnover and encourage staff to see evaluation as part of the overall, day to day activity of your organisation that everyone can take part in, not just the M&E staff.

Step 12: Develop your implementation strategy

Now that you have developed your PM&E framework, you can prepare a plan for implementing the key steps in this framework, over an appropriate timeframe. It is a good idea to develop a Gantt chart (or something similar) that shows all the key tasks down the left hand side and the time frame along the top of the page. The time taken for each activity is shown by a line on the chart. It is important that your monitoring and evaluation activities are well integrated with each other and using such a chart can help you to do this. You can find an example of a Gantt chart of a implementation plan for a six month PM&E plan in Appendix 4 of this module.

The training and support needs of staff and others involved in your PM&E process should be assessed before your plan is implemented. The aim should be to ensure that good quality data is gathered and that you have processes in place to deal with any problems with low data quality and to continually develop participatory research and data collection, analysis and reporting capacities.

Step 13: Develop your learning and improvement strategy

Evaluation is a constant learning and program improvement process. The outcomes of your PM&E activities can regularly inform the development of new knowledge about your program, your listeners and their communities and the most effective way to influence social and behaviour change in those communities.

A learning and improvement strategy could include:

- Holding bi-monthly Critical Listening and Feedback Sessions (see **Module 4**)
- Preparing quarterly reports that identify key findings from your PM&E work and suggest ways that programs could be improved or refined.
- Holding quarterly staff and stakeholder meetings to discuss the contents of your quarterly reports and how programs can be improved or refined.
- Holding annual stakeholder meetings to share your learnings and identify other strategies and ideas for improving your program and your PM&E processes.

Step 14: Develop your critical review strategy

An effective PM&E or EAR process includes ongoing critical reviews of the effectiveness of these processes and the capacity development strategies used by your organization. The aim here is to encourage continuous critical reflection on your research, monitoring and evaluation processes and how they can be done more effectively and appropriately to meet the aims of gathering good quality evidence and stakeholder empowerment, participation and inclusion.

Example of a critical review process

Regular reviews of the M&E process were held with EAN as part of the AC4SC project. These reviews allowed EAN to reflect critically on what they had been doing, what had worked well, what had not worked well, and what changes needed to happen to their processes. These changes sometimes included changing practices and approaches, adding new methods, and running training workshops.

Regular meetings of the AC4SC project, with people from EA international and the Australian academics helped to reflect on progress and any problems. Regular Skype chats between EAN M&E staff, and sometimes program staff, helped to reflect on how things were working, and provided an opportunity to provide additional training and advice, and to share information.

After training workshops, participants were asked to evaluate the training. After each stage of the research, and each data analysis report, those involved reflected on how the M&E and the reports might be strengthened in the future. On at least one occasion, someone external to EAN ran a reflection session, to evaluate how well the M&E systems and processes were working. This highlighted some particularly persistent problems, and alerted everyone to the need to pay attention to them.

The creation of this toolkit provided the most comprehensive reflection process, and encouraged EAN M&E staff to think carefully about how to pass on what they have learned, what works well, how, and why it is important. It also allowed them to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses or challenges inherent in a PM&E approach and to be very open and honest in their reflections.

Dealing with power, gender, literacy and sensitive issues

Power issues

Issues of power arise when we conduct participatory research and evaluation. This is because power relationships are present in all social situations. This happens even when we try to treat everyone

equally and design activities that aim to be empowering for everyone. Some people are of a higher status or caste and others will defer to them rather than saying what they think. Some people know more about a topic or are very outspoken and will dominate the discussion. Some women and girls may be afraid to speak out due to their lower status in society and lack of confidence.

We need to be aware of these issues as they can affect who gets to speak and be heard in your PM&E activities and who is silenced and feels disempowered. Dealing with these issues also requires confidence and good skills in facilitation. You will find that this will gradually improve with practice.

Gender issues

Gender and power issues are closely related to one another. It is important to take gender issues into account when you are conducting your research. This is because they are fundamental to social change and development. As you know, women and girls are usually those who are the poorest, who work the longest hours, and who suffer discrimination that affects their health, wellbeing and opportunities.

You also need to consider whether it would be better to conduct some group activities with mixed gender groups or with single gender groups. It may be difficult for women and girls to talk about sensitive topics in the presence of men and boys. Men or boys may also tend to dominate discussion on some topics. It is important to gather data on the experiences and opinions of women and girls, as well as men and boys and to disaggregate this data so that you can identify any gender differences that are important to understanding your results and the process of social change. Each of these groups has different experiences that affect their view of life and how their situations and those of others could be improved.

Literacy issues

Some of the people who take part in your research may have a limited ability to read and write. Some participants will be able to read and write in the dominant language of your country while others may only know their own local language. You should consider this when you are selecting research tools and methods. Visual methods such as community mapping and the use of drawings or symbols to represent things may help people with poor literacy skills to take part more easily. Oral methods such as group discussions and interviews should also be used.

You should try to find out about the literacy level of participants before you plan your research activities and work out which methods will be most suitable. You will need to be creative and adapt some methods so that people who are illiterate can join in. For example, you could pair people who are illiterate with those who are literate so that the literate person can read instructions or other information to the illiterate person or write down their ideas and opinions.

Sensitive issues

Some of your research may involve looking at very sensitive issues such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, and homosexuality. Such issues may be difficult for some participants to talk about. For

example, some women may have experienced domestic violence or rape and may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable talking about their experiences.

You will need to take a lot of care when planning and conducting research on sensitive or taboo topics. You should be sensitive to the needs and lives of vulnerable groups. Before beginning your research it may be useful to seek the advice of more experienced researchers or health workers who are involved in these areas. They can give you helpful tips on how to hold a discussion on these issues in a sensitive way that does not cause any harm to participants or make them feel more excluded.

Example of an effective method for discussing sensitive topics

Ritu wanted to learn more about women's experiences of menstruation. She had found that it was difficult to get women to speak openly and easily about this topic.

To try to generate a sense of safely and trust, during a focus group discussion on this topic, Ritu closed all the windows and curtains in the room and asked the women who were participating to sit in a circle. The note taker sat to one side out of view. Ritu began by softly telling a story about her own experiences with menstruation. She then encouraged all of the women in the group to speak. Each of the women gradually spoke about their experiences. The discussion ended up going on for several hours.

Try not to make moral judgements about sensitive issues. It is important to use empathy and respect when doing research on topics such as HIV/AIDS. You also need to know the facts about such things as how HIV/AIDS is spread and how it can be prevented so that you can provide accurate information on this topic if required. Reading materials provided by Equal Access and other reputable organisations can help you to obtain such factual information.

Creating a safe environment and choosing a safe location for the discussion is very important. For interviews, this may be a person's home or another place which is very private. The example in the box above gives you an example of a good way to create a safe environment. It will work best if you use a conversational style of interview. Building trust and rapport is also important. You should try to make sure that taking part in the research makes a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable people. This may include providing information or helping them to have a voice and be heard by others who have discriminated against them.

Research ethics

As the above section has indicated, doing participatory research can be difficult and challenging. For this reason you must be aware of the following important ethical issues:

Explain yourself: Before doing any research and evaluation activity you should tell people briefly but clearly:

- Why you are doing the research
- What you are trying to find out
- How you will use the information they give you.

Respect confidences: You must never tell people who are not involved in the research what people from your community tell you.

Treating people sensitively: Some research activities may create strong emotions in the people who are involved. Some people in the group may already have or may form close relationships. They must be treated sensitively.

Exploring sensitive issues: You must be prepared to explore sensitive issues in your research. You must respect other people's opinions and even if you disagree with them. You must understand other people's point of view and beliefs.

Never put people at risk: Reporting what people say and do can have real and serious consequences. You should think carefully about what could happen if others learn about what people said during your research activities. Your research is NOT more important than people's lives or livelihoods.

Never put yourself at risk: You must be aware of dangerous situations and you should not put yourself in danger.

Seek approval: If you attend a community meeting or event and want to use some of the outcomes from that meeting or event in your research reports, make sure that you have permission to do so.

Respecting anonymity: You must always ask research participants if whether they are willing to have their name used in research reports or not. Usually it is better to keep participants names anonymous or to change a participant's name if your report would be improved by using names.

Some final words

Taking the time to carefully plan your PM&E activities is vital to their success. As this module has indicated, there are many different issues to think about in the planning process. All of them are important to doing effective PM&E work. Since you need to make the best use of your time and other resources, you should try to make this process as manageable as possible. Involving your key stakeholders in the planning process will help to focus your plans on the most important aims of the evaluation. It will also encourage stakeholder ownership and active participation in the evaluation. Try to draw on the skills, knowledge and ideas of others as much as you can to develop useful and effective plans and to help spread the work load around.

Try to keep your plans as flexible as possible so that you can adjust them as necessary. Your PM&E process should be adapted and refined as you implement your plan and learn what works and what doesn't work.

Do you need extra training and support to improve the quality of your PM&E outcomes?

Can you do things differently to achieve better results?

Experiment with different ways of doing things and regularly review and critically reflect on your work until you find the processes that work best for your organisation. As well as using well-known M&E methods, don't be afraid to try some of the many creative and innovative approaches to M&E that have now been developed! You could find that they provide interesting and valuable results and help your research participants have some fun and feel a greater sense of empowerment from taking part in your research.

Appendix 1: Part of a monitoring plan for the SSMK radio program

Note: This is partly based on EAN's two month research plan for SSMK, April – May 2010

Objectives	Indicators	Research and data collection methods	Target no. of data	Responsibility	Timeframe for data collection
1. Maintain or improve a high level of listenership among youth in Nepal	At least 30% of target group who take part in research have listened to SSMK at least two times in a month over the previous six months or more	SQS MSC (listening history questions)	80 15	M&E team CRs	5 April – 28 May 5 April – 28 May
2. Program content, format and issues meet the needs of the target audience	At least 50% of the target audience like the program content and format say that it reflects the issues of most interest to them	SQS FDGs CLFS	80 12 One session in five research sites and one in head office	M&E team CRs M&E team (head office session); CRs (community sessions)	5 April – 28 May 5 April – 28 May Sessions to be held bi-monthly
3. Increase awareness and knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS, and other related issues	At least 50% of the SSMK target group researched can identify the main risk and preventive measures of HIV and STIs	MSC FDGs SQS	15 12 80	CRs CRs M&E team	5 April – 28 May 5 April – 28 May 5 April – 28 May
4. Raise awareness among young people about disability issues	At least 70% of the young people researched were aware that differently abled young people have equal rights as others	FDGs SQS	6 50	CRs M&E team	5 April – 28 May 5 April – 28 May

Appendix 2: Part of a proposed six month evaluation plan for the SSMK radio program

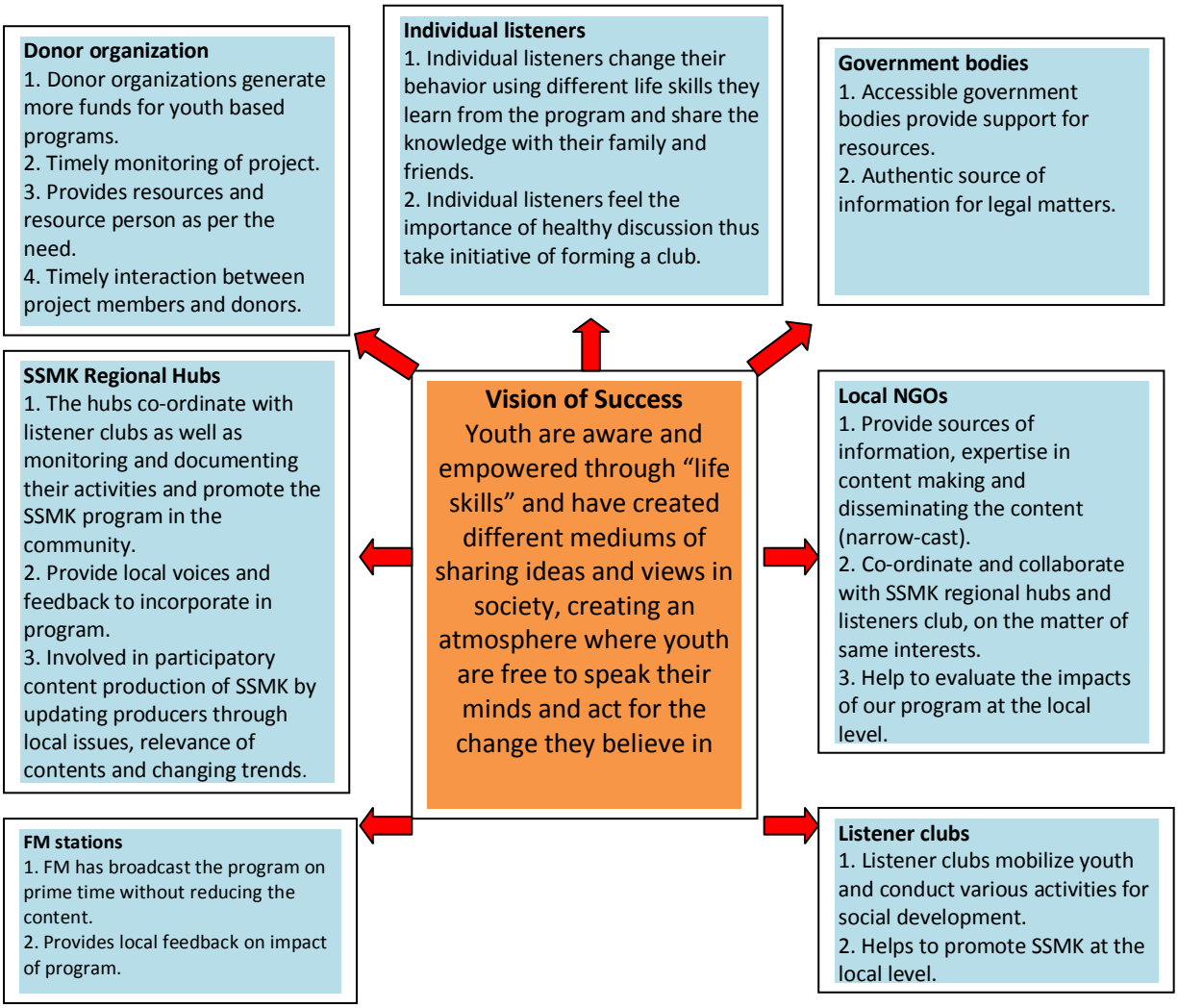
Note: This is partly based on the first six month research plan for SSMK, created as part of the AC4SC project

Evaluation questions	Sources of information from monitoring	Sources of information from evaluation data collection methods	Target number of data	Timeframe
How appropriate was the program for the target audience? • How well did the issues covered in the program meet the needs of the target audience? • How well did the target audience find the program content, format and presentation interesting, informative and appropriate?	• M&E reports on analysis of CR data • Analysis of listener letters • Analysis of feedback from CLFS	FDGs conducted by the M&E team in other research sites	6	April - May
How well have the objectives of the SSMK program been met? • To what extent did SSMK listeners, in the past six months, take part in one or more activities such as collective action and individual participation in social debates? • To what extent can SSMK listeners give examples of using skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about any SSMK issues? • To what extent can SSMK listeners give examples of being involved in decision making at family and/or community levels? • To what extent have changes been observed in the attitude and behaviour of differently abled young people and young people around disability issues?	• M&E reports on analysis of CR data • Analysis of listener letters	• FDGs and interviews conducted by M&E team in other research sites with program listeners and others who can verify these activities • MSC stories collected by the M&E team and SSMK program team in other research sites • Data collected by community organisations	FDGs: 6 Interviews: 10 MSC stories: 15	May - July
How can the SSMK program be improved? • How can the program better meet the needs of a	• M&E reports on analysis of CR data • Analysis of listener letters	• FDGs (incorporating participatory techniques) and interviews by the M&E team in other research sites	FDGs: 8 Interviews: 12	July - August

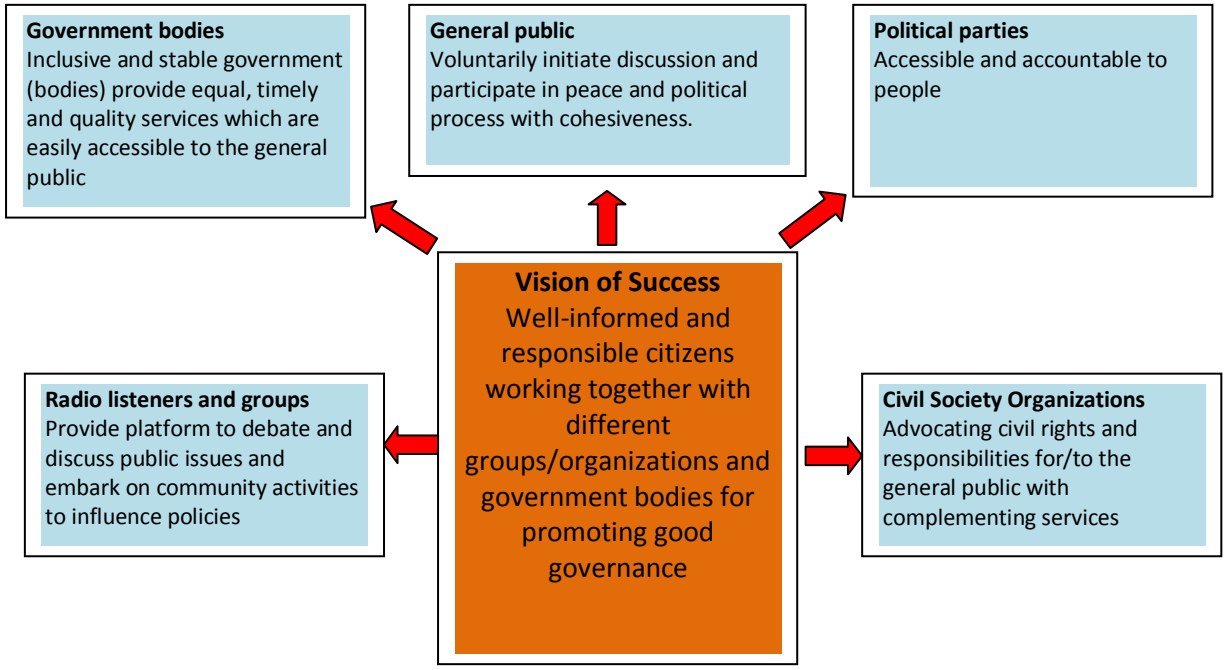
diverse range of young people, including youth in rural areas? • What contemporary issues are important to youth in the research sites? • What issues would listeners like to listen to on the program in the coming two months? • How would they like this information to be presented?	• Analysis of feedback from CLFS			
How well are our outreach activities contributing to reaching the objectives of the SSMK program? • How well are listener clubs working to help reach the objectives of the program? • How active are the listener clubs in the community? • How can we better support and train listener club facilitators? • What impacts are the activities of community reporters having?	• Field work reports • Feedback on training • MSC stories	• FDGs and interviews conducted by M&E team in other research sites with listener club members, community reporters and others who can verify their activities • MSC stories collected by the M&E team and SSMK program team in other research sites	FDGs: 6 Interviews: 10 MSC stories: 10	August - September

Appendix 3: Examples of partial theory of change maps for the SSMK and Naya Nepal radio programs

SSMK: Vision of success and stakeholder activities



Naya Nepal: Vision of success and stakeholders



Appendix 4: Sample Gantt chart for the implementation of a six month PM&E plan

ACTIVITY		Month															
	J	Feb		March		April		May		June		July		Aug		Sept	
•Develop 6 month plan: •Review objectives; adjust as necessary •Review indicators or set as required •Develop research questions •Select methods. •Consult with stakeholders and revise plan as required •Conduct training as required •Prioritise first 2 month cycle questions and chose methods																	
•Implement first 2 month cycle																	
•Review first 2 month cycle •Plan 2nd 2 month cycle •Prioritise questions •Select methods •Analyse data from 1st cycle •Write analysis report •Circulate and discuss report																	
•Implement second 2 month cycle																	
•Review second 2 month cycle •Plan 3rd 2 month cycle •Prioritise questions •Select methods •Analyse data from 2nd cycle •Write analysis report •Circulate and discuss report																	
•Implement 3rd 2 month cycle																	
•Review third 2 month cycle •Review 6 month plan •Develop next 6 month plan •Consult with stakeholders and revise as required •Conduct further training as required •Analyse data from 3rd cycle •Write analysis report •Circulate and discuss report																	

Useful resources, information and tools

Evaluation toolkits

A Manager's Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluation by the UN Women Evaluation Unit
http://unifem.org/evaluation_manual/

This is a practical guide to help those initiating, managing and/or using gender equality and human rights responsive evaluations. It is intended for all international development professionals who deliver or manage programs and projects, including those whose primary focus is human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, and those where human rights and gender equality are mainstreamed or crosscutting.

Learning to Live: Monitoring and evaluating HIV/AIDS programmes for young people by Douglas Webb and Lyn Elliott
http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/LHON-64LK6C/$file/SaveTheChildren_AIDS_ME_January_2002.pdf?openelement

The specific aims of this handbook include:

- To introduce the concepts which underlie project M&E (including stakeholder identification, situation analysis and indicators).
- To demonstrate how these are practically applied in HIV/AIDS projects.
- To provide an overview of existing good practice in key sectoral areas, and how these practices have been identified.
- To give examples of methods and procedures which can be used in monitoring and evaluating HIV/AIDS projects (including developing a logical framework, and using KABP surveys and focus group discussions)

This handbook includes a very detailed section on indicators and has a focus on measuring impact.

Toolkits: A practical guide to monitoring, evaluation, impact assessment by Louisa Gosling and Mike Edwards
(This can be ordered from http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/toolkits-practical-guide-planning-monitoring-evaluation-and-impact)

Designed to promote a systematic approach to planning, reviewing and evaluating development work, Toolkits has proved popular and useful to countless development workers around the world. Covering the whole process of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment, it includes a range of practical tools that can be adapted to suit different circumstances. This second edition, which has been substantially revised and updated, brings a common sense approach to recent developments in monitoring and evaluation. One of the chapters looks at impact assessment and there is also a

chapter and tool on monitoring and evaluating advocacy. This practical guide will be of use to anyone involved in development work.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook
http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/W-K-Kellogg-Foundation-Evaluation-Handbook.aspx

This handbook provides a framework for moving from a shared vision for effective evaluation, to a blueprint for planning, designing and conducting evaluation, to actual practice. It has a particular focus on project-level evaluation. *Part One* includes recommendations for creating a better balance between proving that programs work and improving how they work, based on ongoing learning. *Part Two* describes the three components of project-level evaluation that can assist project staff to address a broad array of important questions about their project. It provides a blueprint for planning, designing, and conducting project-level evaluation. This section highlights the important steps to take, including identifying stakeholders, developing evaluation questions, determining data collection methods, analysing and interpreting data, and communicating findings and insights. Real examples are provided of ways in which evaluation can support projects.

Evaluating Communication for Development

Measuring Change. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in Media and Development Cooperation, 3rd Symposium Forum on Media and Development, Catholic Media Council
http://www.cameco.org/files/measuring_change_1.pdf

This publication includes a paper by Birgitte Jallov on the use of the Most Significant Change technique to evaluate the impacts of community radio and a paper by Serena Rix Tripathee from Search for Common Ground Nepal on 'Monitoring a Moving target: Peace building soap opera in Nepal'.

Measuring Change: A guide to participatory monitoring and evaluation of Communication for Social Change by Ailish Byrne and others
http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/publications-resources.php?id=282

This guide was developed by the Communication for Social Change Consortium. It was developed for all those involved in CFSC processes, but especially for people who are facilitating the dialogue and implementation processes. It aims to be useful when monitoring and evaluating CFSC processes and evolving change, such as shifts in the dominant norms or beliefs in a defined community. It is based on a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) process based on dialogue and sets out six stages for implementing a PM&E process. It aims to help participants, including those most affected by change, to ask and consider essential questions about what they propose to change, whether or not desired change has been accomplished, and how successful the initiative has been.

Monitoring and Indicators for Communication for Development by DANIDA
http://webzone.k3.mah.se/projects/comdev/_comdev_PDF_doc/Danida_ComDevt.pdf

This technical note includes general guidelines for monitoring and indicators on communication for development, and analyses the process of identifying indicators in programmes (1) where communication in itself is a vehicle for social change (media development), and (2) where communication is an integral part of a sector/development program (development communication).

Participatory research, planning and evaluation toolkits

Ethnographic Action Research Training Handbook by Jo Tacchi and others
http://ear.findingavoice.org/

This handbook was designed to train EAR researchers to continually develop and deepen their understandings of communication in local contexts. It includes an introduction to EAR and how to use the handbook. It also has sections that help you to get started with using EAR, provide details of various research tools and techniques in the EAR Toolbox, and help you to deal with EAR data. This practical handbook includes numerous real examples of different forms of data such as field notes, interview transcripts and communicative ecology mapping.

Evaluate Together. In How to Mobilize Communities for Health and Social Change by Lisa Howard-Grabman and Gail Snetro
http://www.healthynewbornnetwork.org/sites/default/files/resources/How%20to%20mobilize%20communities%20for%20health%20and%20social%20change.pdf

The evaluation section of this online field guide covers the following steps to undertaking a participatory evaluation:

- Determine who wants to learn from the evaluation
- Form a representative evaluation team with community members and other interested parties
- Determine what participants want to learn from the evaluation
- Develop an evaluation plan and evaluation instruments
- Conduct the participatory evaluation
- Analyse the results with the evaluation team members
- Provide feedback to the community
- Document and share lessons learned and recommendations for the future
- Prepare to *re*organise

Outcome Mapping: Building learning and reflection into development programs by Sarah Earl and others
http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/959-3/

Outcome Mapping can be used to create planning, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms that enable organisations to document, learn from, and report on their achievements. It is designed to assist in understanding an organisation's results, while recognising that contributions by others are essential to achieving the kinds of sustainable, large-scale improvements toward which the organisation is working. Outcome Mapping provides ways of overcoming some of the barriers to learning faced by evaluators and development partners. Section 1 presents the theory underpinning

OM — its purpose and uses, as well as how it differs from other approaches to M&E in the development field, such as logic models. Section 2 presents an overview of the workshop approach to OM, including the steps of the workshop, as well as how to select participants and facilitators. Sections 3, 4, and 5 outline each of the stages of an OM workshop, suggest a process that can be followed by the facilitator, and provide examples of the finished 'products'.

Participatory Impact Assessment: A guide for practitioners by Andrew Catley and others
https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/FIC/Participatory+Impact+Assessment

This guide provides a broad framework for carrying out project level Participatory Impact Assessments (PIA) of livelihoods interventions in the humanitarian sector. This framework does not aim to provide a rigid or detailed step by step formula or set of tools to carry out project impact assessments, but describes an eight stage approach, and presents examples of tools which may be adapted to different contexts. The guide aims to demonstrate how PIA can be used to overcome some of the inherent weaknesses in conventional humanitarian M&E and impact assessment approaches, such as: the emphasis on measuring process as opposed to real impact, the emphasis on external as opposed to community based indicators of impact, and how to overcome the issue of weak or non-existent baselines. The guide demonstrates and provides examples of how participatory methods can be used to overcome the challenge of attributing impact to actual project activities. It also shows how data collected from the systematic use of participatory tools can be presented numerically, give representative results, and provide evidence-based data on project impact.

Participation and Social Assessment. Tools and Techniques by Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken and Deepa Narayan
http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1996/04/01/000009265_3980624143608/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf

This resource kit presents information and experiences on participatory methods in order to support the adoption of participatory approaches in World Bank-supported projects and studies. It provides core information about the different methods and applications, with the primary focus on providing practical guidance and case examples. The kit includes modules on social assessment, stakeholder analysis, participatory methodologies, and PM&E. Participatory methodologies showcased are Participatory Rural Appraisal, SARAR (Self-esteem, Associative strength, Resourcefulness, Action planning, and Responsibility), and Beneficiary Assessment.

Tools Together Now! A toolkit of 100 participatory tools to help facilitate community mobilisation by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance
http://www.eldis.org/go/home&id=23797&type=Document

This toolkit is intended to help organisations and community groups mobilise and work together to address HIV/AIDS issues. It provides a selection of 100 participatory learning and action (PLA) tools which can be used for HIV/AIDS programmes: interactive activities which enable communities and organisations to learn together about HIV/AIDS in their community, develop a plan, act on it and evaluate and reflect on how it went.

Assessments of key M&E approaches and methods

The following resources provide information on the strengths and limitations of various M&E and impact assessment frameworks, approaches, methodologies and methods:

Monitoring and Evaluation: Some tools, methods and approaches by the World Bank
http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd/me_tools_and_approaches.html

Compendium on Impact Assessment of ICT-for-Development Projects by Richard Heeks and Alemayehu Molla
http://ict4dblog.wordpress.com/2008/12/03/impact-assessment-of-ict4d-projects/

The 2002 User Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation by Joy Westat
http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057.pdf

The section 'Review and comparison of selected techniques' on pages 49 – 62 provides an overview of various evaluation techniques including surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, key informants and case studies, and their advantages and disadvantages.

Most Significant Change technique

Most Significant Change website
http://mostsignificantchange.org/

This website was created in response to the need for knowledge management and dissemination of the use of the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique. The portal is envisioned as a networking portal as well as clearing house for all MSC related information for the global community of practice. It is supported by UNICEF, India.

Training Package for Implementing MSC Trainings by UNICEF India
http://mostsignificantchange.org/manuals.html

This training package is a synthesis of almost two years of UNICEF's hands-on experience in implementing the Most-Significant Change technique as part of the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of a Behaviour Change Communication Program in India. The aim of the package is to enable MSC trainers to design and deliver trainings on MSC to an array of stakeholders, targeting specific needs.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique. A guide to its use by Rick Davies and Jessica Dart
http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

This is the original MSC manual which describes each of the ten steps to implementing the MSC technique. It includes sample story collection formats, examples of significant change stories and a sample story reporting format. There are also chapters on troubleshooting; building capacity for effective MSC; using MSC within a monitoring and evaluation framework; validity and voice issues; and new directions for MSC.

A Self-Help Guide to Implementing MSC by Jessica Dart
http://www.clearhorizon.com.au/publication/a-self-help-guide-for-implementing-the-most-significant-change-technique/

This aim of this guide is to help groups design an MSC system for their program or project. The guide splits MSC design into 8 steps. Each step is described, then some questions are asked in relation to the step. The aim is that answering these questions will help your group develop an appropriate MSC process. This document was designed to be used as part of a one-day training workshop in MSC - it was not intended to be a stand-alone document.

Stakeholder identification and analysis

Method and Steps for Identifying Stakeholders
http://ac4sc.org/en/wiki/scoping_and_community_research_work#toc1
(***Note***: this is currently only accessible to authorised users of the AC4SC website)

This set of steps and methods was developed as part of the AC4SC project and includes a checklist for stakeholder identification. It was adapted from the 'Stakeholder Identification' section of *Social Analysis Systems* (see http://www.sas2.net/documents/tools/techniques/stakeholder_identification.pdf)

Participation and Social Assessment. Tools and Techniques (listed above) includes a section on stakeholder analysis.

A Manager's Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluation by the UN Women Evaluation Unit includes the following section on Identifying Stakeholders and Reference Groups
http://unifem.org/evaluation_manual/evaluation-preparation/idenitfying-stakeholders-reference-groups/

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (listed above) includes a section on identifying stakeholders

The Keystone Theory of Change guide includes a section called 'Analysing individual actions and creating a collaboration profile' which helps your organisation to think through its relationship with various potential partners (see page 27 in http://www.keystoneaccountability.org/sites/default/files/2%20Developing%20a%20theory%20of%20change.pdf)

Developing a Theory of Change

Developing a Theory of Change. A guide to developing a theory of change as a framework for inclusive dialogue, learning and accountability for social impact by Keystone Accountability. http://www.keystoneaccountability.org/sites/default/files/2%20Developing%20a%20theory%20of%20change.pdf

This guide includes information about developing a vision of success, mapping the preconditions of success and system mapping. It also includes an appendix that compares the logical framework

(logframe) approach with a theory of change approach. We found that this theory of change process needed to be adapted for use in the AC4SC project.

Definitions of key terms used in the Keystone Theory of Change guide
http://www.ac4sc.org/en/wiki/m_e_systems#toc3

This document lists definitions of the key terms used in the Theory of Change guide which were adapted for use AC4SC and provides a brief overview of the TOC process.

Other useful M&E resources

Assessing Impact without Indicators, Case Study from Vietnam by Demetrio Innocenti (2008). Paper presented at the *3rd MES International Evaluation Conference. Workshop: Impact Evaluation: Challenges for Decision-making, Accountability and Quality*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
www.ideas-int.org/documents/Document.cfm?docID=111

Evaluation South Asia (2008) edited by Bob Williams and Meenakshi Sankar
http://unicef.org/rosa/ROSA_Evaluation_Journal.pdf

This publication contains eight papers on evaluation in the South Asian context. They include a paper on an evaluation of HIV/AIDS programs in Bangladesh, Nepal and Indonesia that used participatory and mixed methods approaches, and a paper on the development of new participatory tools to measure attitude, behaviour, perception and change.

Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development results by UNDP
http://undp.org/eo/handbook

You can find information about how to set different types of indicators using the SMART indicator concept on pages 61-69 of this comprehensive UNDP handbook.

How Do You Choose Indicators to Measure Social and Economic Changes? A fact sheet by Regional Natural Resource Management, Queensland Government
http://www.regionalnrm.qld.gov.au/research_sips/social_economic/knowledge/understanding/change_indicators.html

This short, easy to understand fact sheet provides a useful overview of different types of indicators (formal/informal and objective/subjective), some examples of different kinds of indicators, and using the SMART and SPICED test to assess your indicators.

Questionnaire Design: Asking questions with a purpose by Ellen Taylor-Powell
http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/G3658-2.pdf

This very useful, easy to understand guide to questionnaire design helps you to construct a questionnaire that is useful and effective in an evaluation. It asks you to think about what kind of information you want to collect (for example, information about knowledge, attitudes, behaviour

and attributes of people); and how to word questions and format your questionnaire. It also includes advice about pretesting questionnaires.

New thinking on evaluating communication for development

Byrne, A. (2008). Evaluating social change and communication for social change: New perspectives. *MAZI, 17*. http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/mazi-articles.php?id=385

Byrne, A. (2009a). Pushing the boundaries: New thinking on how we evaluate. *MAZI, 19* http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/mazi-articles.php?id=399

Byrne, A. (2009b). *Evaluating social change communication*. Brighton, England: The Institute of Development Studies. http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/pdfs/evaluating%20social%20change%20communication%20brighton%20may%2009%20-%20unaids.pdf

Selected papers on the AC4SC project

Lennie, J., Skuse, A., Tacchi, J. & Wilmore, M. (2008). Challenges, issues and contradictions in a participatory impact assessment project in Nepal. Paper presented at the *Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference*, Perth, 12 September 2008. http://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/conferences/2008/Papers/p14.pdf http://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/conferences/2008/Presentations/June%20Lennie%201000%20-%201030.pdf

Lennie, J., Skuse, A., Koirala, B., Rijal, N. & Wilmore, M. (2009). Developing a participatory impact assessment approach and action research culture within a communication for social change organisation in Nepal. Paper presented at *the Perspectives on Impact Evaluation: Approaches to Assessing Development Effectiveness International Conference*, 2 April 2009, Cairo, Egypt. (For a summary of the paper go to http://eprints.qut.edu.au/26034/)

Lennie, J., Tacchi, J. & Wilmore, M. (2010). Critical reflections on the use of meta-evaluation in the 'Assessing Communication for Social Change' project. Paper presented at the *Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference*. Wellington, New Zealand, 3 September 2010. http://www.aes.asn.au/images/stories/files/conferences/2010/Papers/AES_2010_paper_Lennie_et_al.pdf

Tacchi, J., Lennie, J. & Wilmore, M. (2010). Critical reflections on the use of participatory methodologies to build evaluation capacities in international development organisations. *Proceedings of the 8th World Congress on Participatory Action Research and Action Learning*, Melbourne, Victoria, 6-9 September 2010. http://www.alara.net.au/wc2010/proceedings