Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit

Module 3: Research and PM&E methods

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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

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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.
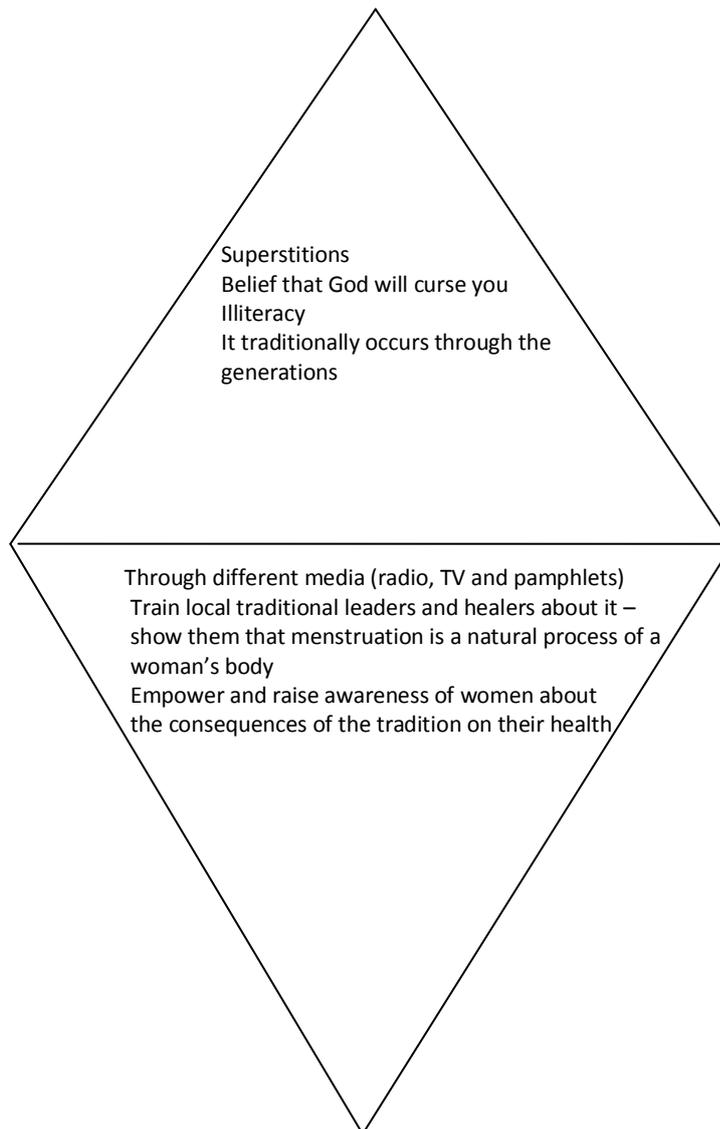
Example of a participatory tool - Diamond

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?

Superstitions
Belief that God will curse you
Illiteracy
It traditionally occurs through the generations

Through different media (radio, TV and pamphlets)
Train local traditional leaders and healers about it – show them that menstruation is a natural process of a woman's body
Empower and raise awareness of women about the consequences of the tradition on their health

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.**

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.