



Impact Assessment of ICT for Development Projects

Way back in 1992, when the world of ICT was still very nascent, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), had initiated a research study to answer a fundamental question of the link between information and development, particularly to build upon the various experiential perspectives from case studies of projects implemented, and develop a common methodology for the diverse and wide-spread projects that they support.

Most supporting or donor agency perspectives for assessment of ICT for Development projects pertain to problems of sustainability, measuring the extent of empowerment to communities, linkage between ICT goals and development goals and accountability of institutions. Questions pertain to whether it can be

demonstrated that the use of ICTs for Development is an essential resource for social and economic development of developing countries. The potential value of the use of ICTs is still not very self-evident.

Expressions like "ICT is a critical resource and plays a fundamental role in development", are axiomatic expressions. However neither data nor empirical evidence to support the above statement are possible unless one reviews the intricate issues in greater detail. Though several simple quantitative performance evaluation tools and methodologies exist to numerically measure a few indicators, many of the techniques do not go further than the statistics. Impact or 'outcomes' as they are often referred to, differ from 'outputs'. This research has since evolved

into a refined methodology called "Outcome Mapping" which is a process that combines monitoring, evaluation, learning and dynamic modifications to achieve the best impact.

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring is a systematic collection of data to provide management, donors and other stakeholders with an indication of project progress.

Evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, including its design, implementation, and results. Evaluation leads to more informed decisions, allowing those involved in the project to learn from experience and to be accountable to donors and stakeholders.

Both Monitoring and Evaluation should be used to demonstrate accountability and to understand the dynamics of the program. The differences in the objectives, methodology and purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation are shown in the table below. It is important to keep in mind that Monitoring does not replace Evaluation.

There can be five types of assessment indicators:

1. Performance indicators, relating inputs to outputs
2. Effectiveness indicators, relating outputs to usage
3. Cost-effectiveness indicators relating inputs to usage
4. Cost-benefit indicators, relating inputs to outcomes
5. Impact indicators, relating usage to outcomes and domain characteristics.

After the assessment data is gathered, analysed, and the relationships between inputs, outputs, benefits/outcomes has

Differences between Outcome Monitoring and Outcome Evaluation

	Outcome Monitoring	Outcome Evaluation
Objective	To track changes from baseline conditions to desired outcomes.	To validate what results were achieved and how and why they were or were not achieved.
Focus	Focuses on the outputs of projects.	Compares planned with intended outcomes achievement. Focuses on how and why outputs and strategies contributed to achievement of outcomes. Focuses on questions of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and change.
Methodology	Tracks and assesses performance (progress towards outcomes) through analysis and comparison of indicators over time.	Evaluates achievement of outcomes by comparing indicators before and after the intervention. Relies on monitoring data to information from external sources.
Conduct	Continuous and systematic by Task Managers, Project Managers and key partners.	Time-bound, periodic, in-depth. External evaluators and partners.
Use	Alerts managers to problems in performance, provides options for corrective actions and helps demonstrate accountability.	Provides managers with strategy and policy options, provides basis for learning and demonstrates accountability.

Source: Adapted from UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results

been determined, a strategy must be developed for communicating the findings to the target audience(s). This is a critical part of an effective monitoring and evaluation strategy. Both quantitative and qualitative measures are possible. In ICT4D projects, often case studies and feedback reporting by beneficiaries/end-users of the project supplement quantitative analysis by the project implementers.

Evaluation can be done in four ways:

- *Internal or self-evaluation*, which means the same people implementing a project are responsible for evaluation
- *External evaluation*, meaning that the evaluation is conducted by an individual or group outside the implementing organisation

- *Internal evaluation with the use of an external consultant*, which is undertaken by the team implementing the project with the



