

PIM Booklet 2: NGO-Based impact monitoring

by Dorsi Germann and Eberhard Gohl

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Participatory Impact Monitoring (PIM) is a concept for guiding self-help projects in development cooperation. The actors involved carry out the monitoring themselves. Because PIM assumes that these actors are autonomous, it has several strands or "strings" - the monitoring systems of the self-help groups and the development organizations are separate. The strings are periodically compared: the actors reflect on their observations and assessments, adapt their planning accordingly and deepen their dialogue with one another.

PIM was developed as an alternative to conventional planning, monitoring and evaluation procedures. It does not presuppose the availability of good planning documents, nor does it postpone reflection to a late evaluation.

The main purpose of PIM is to document socio-cultural impacts. By doing so it initiates and reinforces learning processes, and complements more technically or economically oriented monitoring. At the same time, it is compatible with many other monitoring concepts.

PIM was designed in a joint study by workers in development cooperation from the Philippines, India, Bolivia, Argentina and Germany, and tested in 1993/94.

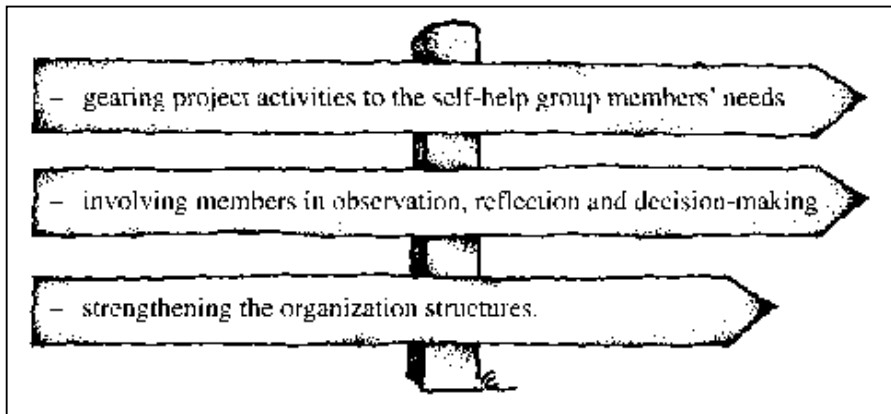
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Does your NGO or development organization need a new tool to manage its projects?

Thank you for your interest in Participatory Impact Monitoring. Just call it "PIM" - it's much easier!

PIM is designed to make self-help projects and organizations more successful by



Booklet 1 is written for leaders or members of self-help groups and describes how group-based impact monitoring works.

Booklet 2, on NGO-based impact monitoring is addressed to staff members of development organizations, i.e. national organizations such as NGOs, federations or government organizations which promote self-help groups.

- Do you need a monitoring instrument to manage your projects?
- Do you want to document the socio-cultural impacts of your work?
- Do you have to justify the success of your work perhaps because of some technical or economic error?
- Do you want to improve interaction between the self-help groups and your own?
- Do you need more information on learning processes within the self-help group and your own?
- Do you want more transparency in your organization and decision-making structures?

If so, why don't you read this booklet and try to implement PIM!

PIM is not a magic solution which works automatically. In fact, it only works if certain conditions are fulfilled. Please consider for a moment whether your NGO fulfils these conditions:

- Your team should be willing to promote people's participation, i.e. increasing the autonomy of the self-help group.
- There should be mutual trust and a desire to manage the project transparently by participatory impact monitoring.

- Your team and other organizations and individuals involved should be willing and able to accept changes in the project, i.e. to adapt your plans and contributions to people's needs.
- Your team should also be willing and able to invest a little time probably more than before - in monitoring. (You will then avoid wasting time on pointless activities.)

The self-help group should also fulfil certain conditions; they are mentioned in Booklet 1.

In PIM, two independent monitoring systems are regularly interlinked to ensure that the NGO really is supporting what the self-help group needs and wants.

Your NGO-based impact monitoring, which is outlined in this booklet (no. 2), should therefore be linked to the autonomous group-based impact monitoring described in Booklet 1.

1. General ideas on monitoring

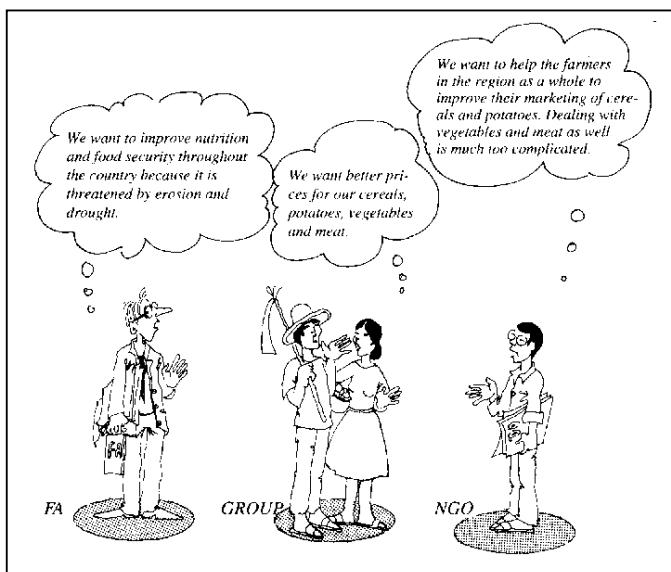
1.1 Three types of organization

In self-help promotion, we distinguish three main types of organization:

- 1. self- help groups or people's organizations (GROUP)
- 2. Development organizations, NGO or self-help support organizations (NGO)
- 3. Funding Agencies or donors (FA)



Each of them sees a certain set of problems, which can be solved by a combination of activities. This combination of activities is called a project. Each organization (i.e. each actor) has "its" project, so there are at least three different projects. The basic interface linking them is the project agreement.



Marketing Project

Project agreement: Storehouses and marketing assistance for cereals and potatoes; training courses on food processing and nutrition.

Each of these organizations is interested in monitoring and managing "its" project. Naturally, each has a different point of view:

The groups are primarily interested in tangible improvements in their living conditions. They want a storehouse in the village, or better prices (technical and economic impact). They may want to be able to negotiate more effectively with the intermediary, or to know more about storage and processing of their products (socio-cultural impact). However, aspects concerned with "capacity building" are not normally mentioned explicitly, although it may be felt necessary to link them to technical and economic changes.

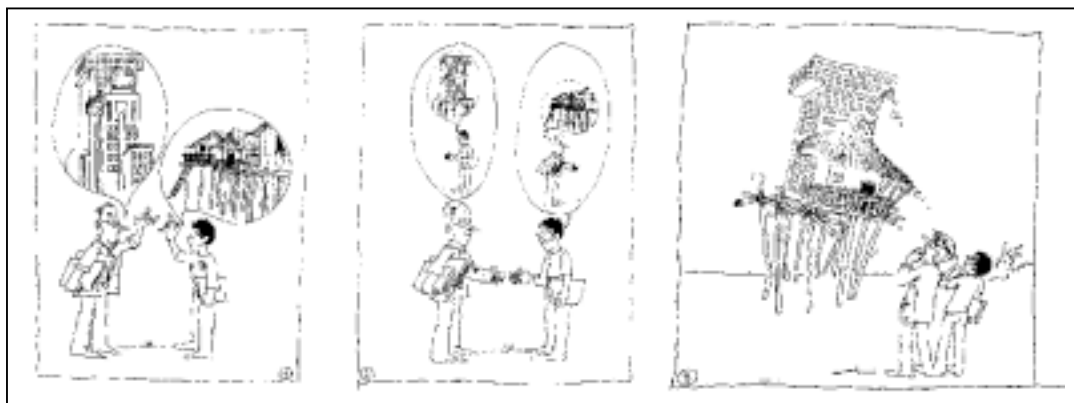
NGO and funding agencies, on the other hand, are interested in the long-term effects of their assistance. Of course they want to offer immediate assistance to the people to improve their living conditions, but for them self-help projects have only one overall goal, i.e. to enhance people's capability to act and in the long run to help themselves.

While these views are not contradictory, they are not congruent either. To some extent the projects of the various organizations overlap.

Participatory management

Three types of organizations are involved in management. But how deeply is each participant involved? What does participation mean in this context?

Often, in reality, the cooperating partners are very different. They own different amounts of money or power or have different educational, social and cultural backgrounds. There are multiple communication problems (see picture).



Need for good communication

said is not yet heard
heard is not yet understood
understood is not yet approved
approved is not yet applied
applied is not yet continuously applied
continuously applied is not yet being satisfied

To find joint (and most appropriate) solutions to problems which have been identified, we need to

listen to each other and to learn from each other, and we need mutual acceptance, mutual trust and confidence. We need motivation, commitment, creativity, and good and open cooperation between all people concerned.

Participation in this context means that each group of actors is autonomous in its decision-making, and the actors have to reach agreement on a basis for cooperation. The result must be joint action, and the principal actors should be the people themselves. If the outsiders take the lead, there is an enormous risk that the self-help group will be nipped in the bud. This is why participatory attitudes are a precondition for the work of DOs and FAs. They need knowledge and experience in using participatory techniques.

Participation does not come naturally. No management tool can be participatory in itself. The utilization of a tool is an art! Participatory methods have to be developed and learned, and PIM may also be regarded as a tool for learning. implications with regard to the actors:

We assume that the actors belong to one of three standard categories: - self- help groups or people's organizations, - NGO or development organizations, - funding agencies.

Each group of actors has "its" project which it wants to manage.

These projects probably overlap but are not congruent.

In self-help projects, the principal actors should be the people themselves.

"Participatory Management" can be learnt.

1.2 Monitoring

Purposes of monitoring and evaluation

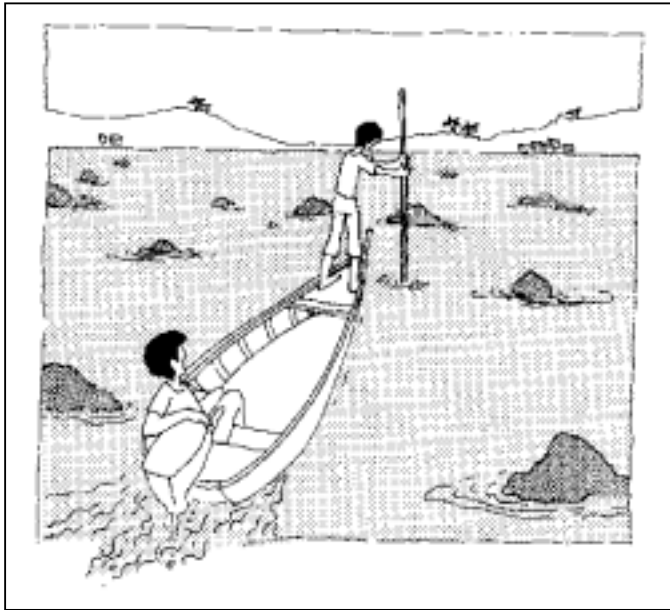
First approach to monitoring: emphasizing periodical reflection

Second approach to monitoring: based on evaluation

How can monitoring be systematized?

Monitoring means observing and collecting information, and reflecting on what has been observed, to check whether we are still "on course" to achieving our aims and if necessary to change course. It is like navigating a ship (our project) between reefs and through shallow water towards an attainable goal.

As we have seen, all the organizations involved carry out "their" projects. Consequently, in one way or another, they also perform their own monitoring. But their monitoring is often felt to be unsatisfactory: perhaps it is not systematic, or too time-consuming, or data are "not available".



Purposes of monitoring and evaluation

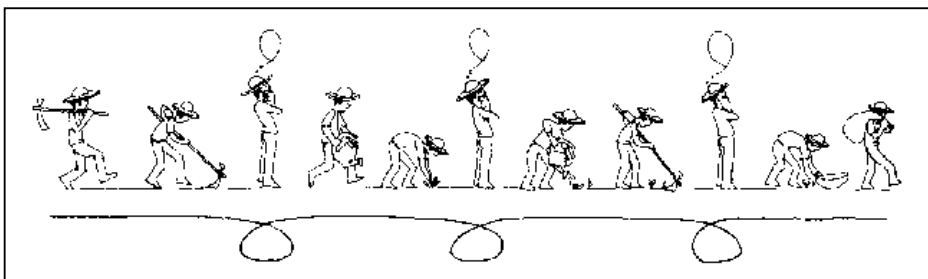
How can monitoring and evaluation contribute to management? Generally, monitoring has two purposes:

1. checking: Does everybody carry out her/his duties as laid down in the project agreement or in the adjusted plans? What is the ratio of input to output (efficiency)? How good is the outcome (effectiveness)?
2. reflection and learning: What can we learn from our successes and failures? What have we learned to do ourselves since we started? To what extent are we capable of helping ourselves?

In the participatory approaches to self-help promotion, the emphasis is naturally on reflection and learning. Checking is primarily understood to be self-oriented.

Briefly, by two approaches, we will try to explain how monitoring is understood:

First approach to monitoring: emphasizing periodical reflection



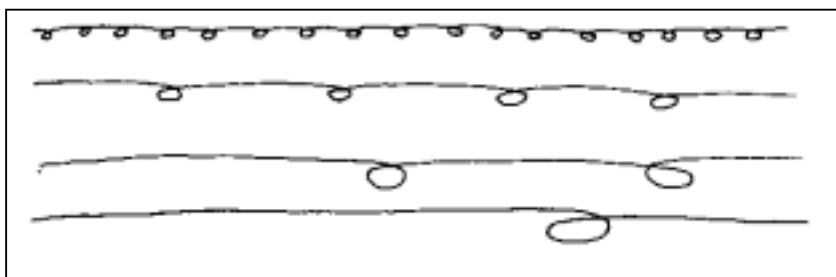
We are all familiar with the action - reflection - action sequence

In simple terms, it involves a continuous flow of activity and a self-critical assessment of our actions.

This implies that a self-critical assessment should be made before and after each important action.

In an organization or a group there are more activities, which may also be more complex: the periods of reflection will vary according to the organization and the decision-making level. example

Each team member probably reflects daily on the activities he performs within the organization. The team may reflect weekly on its duties. Other meetings at departmental level may be held monthly. And once a year, there may be a general review of the long-term concepts of the whole organization (and every 6 years an external evaluation by a funding agency?!. Each organization makes its own rules for these reviews: of course, they may also be irregular or have quite different time-spans.



Example

Second approach to monitoring: Based on evaluation

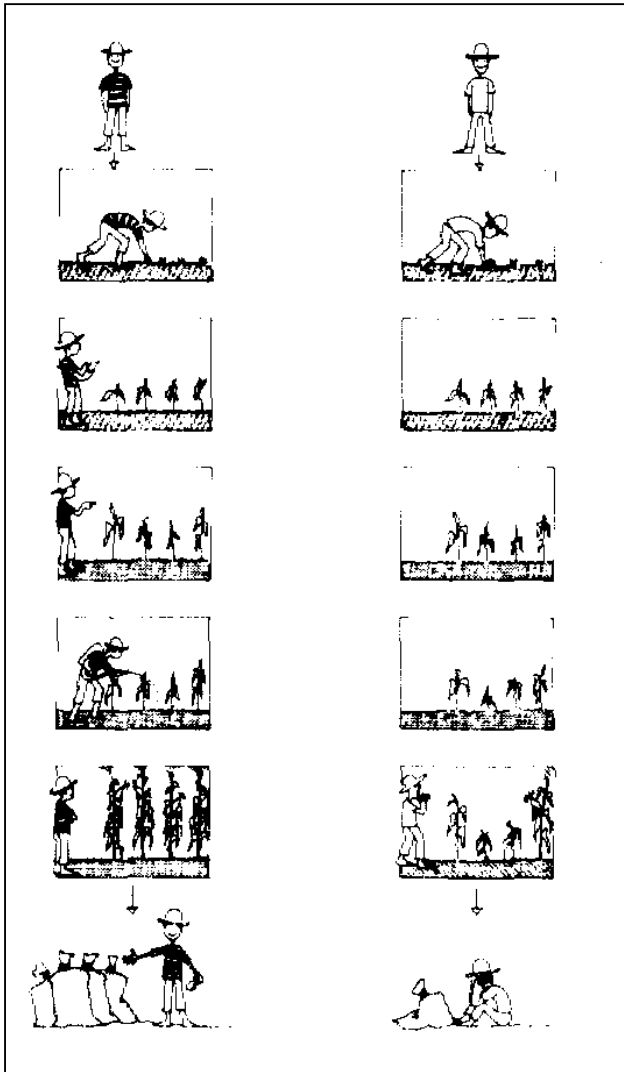
Many of us are familiar with monitoring and evaluation. Clearly' they differ in depth and periodicity (see above). But apart from that, what exactly is the difference? Let's try the following definitions: monitoring: a process of systematic and critical review of an operation with the aim of checking operation and adapting it to circumstances.

This implies that monitoring is a more frequent form of reflection, mainly at operational level, subject to a limited range of decision-making. evaluation: involves comprehensive analysis of the operation with the aim of adapting strategy and planning to circumstances.

This implies that evaluation is a less frequent form of reflection, it is deeper and leads to more fundamental decisions.

In our example "Two farmers growing corn" (see booklet 1) we compared two farmers:

Farmer 1 observes the plants growing in his fields at regular intervals. When he notices that some plants are diseased and are becoming stunted, he immediately sprays them with a (biological!) remedy. His harvest is good and he is satisfied. Farmer 2 does not look at his field while the crop is growing. At harvest time he is shocked when he realizes that most of the crop is lost. He is disappointed.



Example

In this example, monitoring as continuous observation and correction was practiced by Farmer 1, not by Farmer 2. After the harvest, both made an evaluation and reflected on their strategy and plans for the next period. But Farmer 2 made the evaluation only after a failure and without having monitored.

As monitoring and evaluation are thus two sides of the same coin (often referred to as "M+E"), differing only in frequency and range of decisions, monitoring often goes hand in hand with evaluation.

However, we believe that it is useful to separate them for the purpose of analysis, and for greater flexibility and more conscious evaluation. The following activities are typical elements of monitoring:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| ongoing review | to observe changes in project implementation, |
| systematic documentation | to document this process of change, |
| analysis and decision-making | to reflect, to adjust and to rectify the operation. |

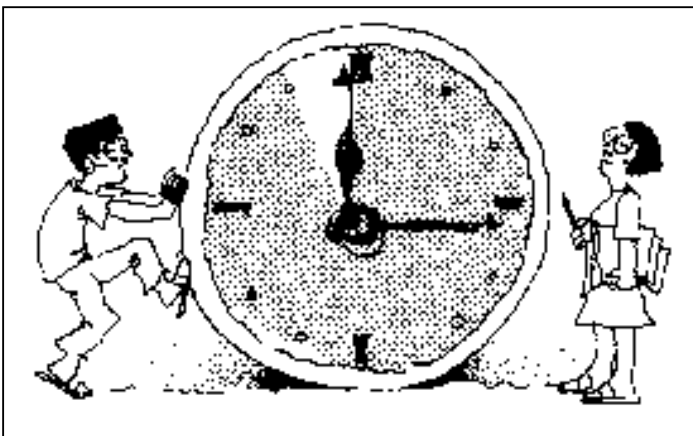
Monitoring: frequent and systematic periodical reflection

Monitoring means frequent and systematic periodical reflection in order to manage a combination of activities of an organization or a group. It is self-conducted, and promotes continuous development of personal capacity, team development and organizational development.

How can monitoring be systematized?

If you try to observe too many things, monitoring can take up too much of your time. A few things may be sufficient, and can be documented and analyzed jointly and more easily (see example in booklet 1). Often you only need to know the trends.

Each organization formulates its own rules for periodical reflection. All individual forms of personal reflection are valid.



Reflection takes time

Don't forget: reflection takes time! You have to set aside between 5 and 10 per cent of your working hours and a portion of your budget for reflection - otherwise you will drown in work and have no time left for thinking!

In this way, reflection also saves time, because it helps you avoid wasting time on pointless activities.

Implications for the monitoring concept

- monitoring in self-help promotion encourages reflection and learning

- periodical reflection is necessary before and after action

- a clear distinction between monitoring and evaluation is not necessary

- we have chosen the term monitoring to emphasize frequent reflection with permanent observation systematic documentation and finally, the taking of decision continuously during the action

- you have to allow some time of reflection- to avoid wasting time on pointless activities!

Many projects will benefit from the introduction of a monitoring system, especially if the tasks are complex or if, in a complex setup, there are various actors who need information on the processes.

It is also useful if the previous reflection or monitoring concepts have failed or have been unsatisfactory and a more systematic or formalized approach seems necessary.

1.3 Impact monitoring

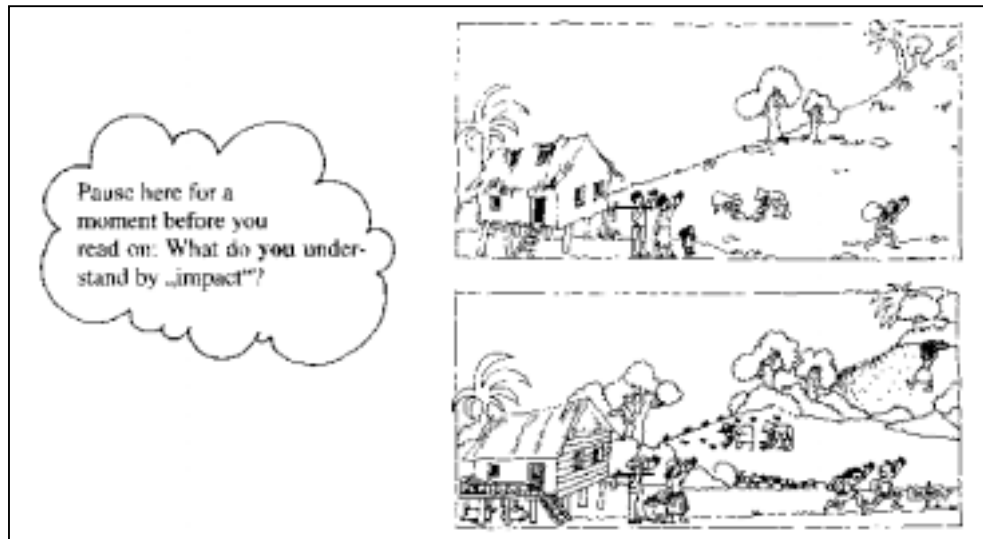
What do you want to monitor?

You can monitor

1. the budget: this is very important but requires specific instruments. To describe them here would be beyond the scope of this publication.
2. the activities: sometimes, if people are not used to responsible and independent work, you have to check what they are doing all day; but that is not the task of participatory impact monitoring.
3. the project objectives: then we refer to planning documents, and may have indicators for results, project purpose and overall goals, as well as for key assumptions or risks.

The last-mentioned example (3.) referred to a logical framework suitable for setting up a conventional monitoring system. With this approach, impacts are understood as lasting and significant effects at the level of the overall goal. They are only identifiable some time after completion of a project.

We don't think it is helpful to use the term "impact" in a restrictive sense. To define an impact monitoring concept it is better to include a wider range of interpretations of "impact".



Impact monitoring

All subjectively important changes associated with the project may be impacts. All of the individuals, groups or organizations involved have their own reasons for taking action, their intentions. These intentions represent informal objectives, which guide the activities of each actor. The more informal the context of the actor concerned, the more relevant these intentions. Subjectively important changes are far more essential than formally fixed goals.

Therefore, each actor has, consciously or unconsciously, her/his own monitoring to manage her/his

activities. In self-help promotion, the people's expectations and fears concerning the project are often concealed. In cultures where informal communication is the norm it is not easy to articulate oneself on a formal communication level.

More formalized organizations, like NGO, other development organizations and funding agencies, also have their informal side. Often, many of the personnel's objectives, and possibly also those of the organization, are not clear. The famous iceberg illustrates that only 1/7 of the organization is visible, while 6/7 is invisible.

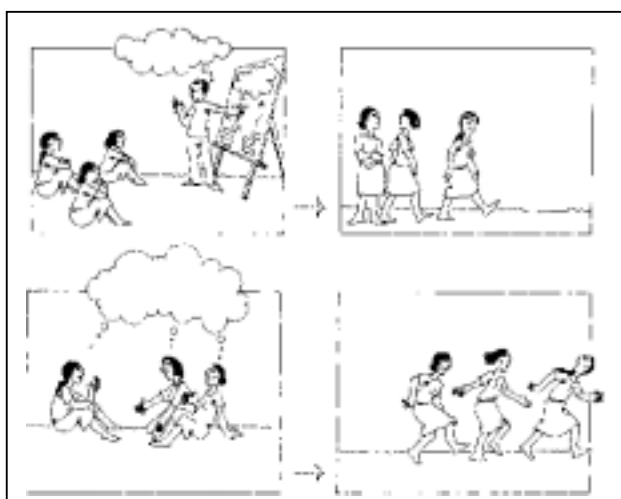
At one workshop we asked: "What do you feel important to observe?" Here are some answers of different actors which we received: self-help group_ tangible results technical learning respect for own needs respect for autonomy personal respect

NGO / development organizations planned results availability of resources relation to counterparts all kinds of difficulties grassroots' participation funding organizations planned results correct use of funds grassroots' participation self-help processes

Monitoring is often seen as an unpopular, time-consuming activity requested by the funding agency. Planning matrices, highly abstract goals and objectives do not directly equate with the felt needs and expectations of the people concerned. Relating to the objectives which are important to them increases the motivation for action, for active management and for monitoring.

We suggest that impact monitoring should focus on subjectively important changes. When introducing an impact monitoring system, when defining "What to observe or to 'monitor'?" each group of actors should ask: "Which changes are or will be important to us?"

The answer to this question generally takes us a lot further than the formal planning documentation, because precisely these subjective aspects are relevant to people's actions. If the formal plans are good, all these expectations are already laid down in the planning documents. Normally, however, a formal plan is an agreement between various actors, a compromise which cannot fully reflect what each partner wants. In many cases, housewives, villagers, craftsmen, workers etc. are not used to speaking out at planning meetings, simply because they normally express themselves in culture-specific ways which are completely different from planning codes. This is the reason why project planning generally fails to overcome the handicap of intercultural misunderstandings. However, new participatory methods for situation analysis and planning are helpful in giving people a voice.



Objectives based on planning documents; Subjectively important objectives
One more distinction should be made:

- Technical and economic impact covers all physical, technical, economic and financial changes; the technical and economic impact is relatively easy to observe and measure.
- Socio-cultural impact covers learning processes and changes in behaviour and attitudes; the socio-cultural impact is relatively difficult to observe and measure.

Most conventional monitoring systems focus on technical and economic impacts (outputs, results). However, the essential change self-help projects aim for is an increase in the group's capability to act autonomously.

It is impossible to distinguish impacts methodologically; they are interlinked. Often, technical and economic indicators represent socio-cultural changes. But the purpose of monitoring is important: we should try to observe learning processes, changes in behaviour and attitudes.

This is why we suggest that impact monitoring should focus mainly on socio-cultural impacts.

What does this imply for an NGO?

Project proposals usually emphasize the technical and economic results aimed for. The socio-cultural impacts, although the main purpose, are often left out because they cannot be planned, and, moreover, are too difficult to measure or describe. But what happens if the project fails technically because the internal decision-making within the self-help groups (or within the NGO!) necessitated time-consuming and painful learning processes? Was the project then really a failure if all the individuals and organizations involved learned from it?

If the learning processes are unknown, the contribution that self-help groups and NGO staffs make to the evolution of a project is underrated. Monitoring of socio-cultural impacts will not only bring recognition and esteem from outside, but also increase the self-esteem of the actors involved, both in the self-help groups and in the NGOs.

The PIM field phase has shown that the learning processes have not only been made visible by monitoring - monitoring itself is a learning process! For this reason in particular, it is not necessary to start with a complicated monitoring system: start small, develop it by doing!

Implications for impact monitoring

don't use "impact" in a restrictive sense

all subjectively important changes may be impacts

different actors will observe different important changes

plans focus on technical and economic impacts

PIM focuses on socio-cultural impacts which are more relevant in the long term.

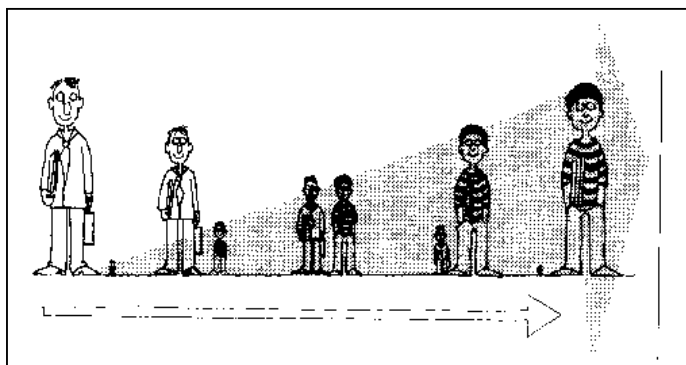
1.4 Participatory monitoring

Participation

This is a wonderful-sounding term which is notoriously likely to be misunderstood, and is frequently no more than a cliché. In Part 1.1 we said that although the various categories of actors each have "their" projects, the main actors should be the people themselves.

Moreover, no management tool can be participatory in itself. Participation requires special attitudes and these participatory attitudes can be learned! Also, participatory monitoring is not participatory per se. The utilization of a tool is an art, and the tools have to be adapted to the conditions of the users. This will require appropriate methods.

In the context of self-help promotion, the word "participation" does not mean "to take part in a joint activity". It means more: there should be a continuous empowerment of people's groups, going hand in hand with a continuous relinquishment of power by NGO and funding agencies. Participation also implies an empowerment of the NGO vis-à-vis the funding agencies.



Continuous empowerment

Participation is thus an ongoing process where one side learns to act increasingly autonomously, and the other side learns to hand over responsibilities and power.

Participation is an ongoing process of capacity-building which requires ongoing changes.

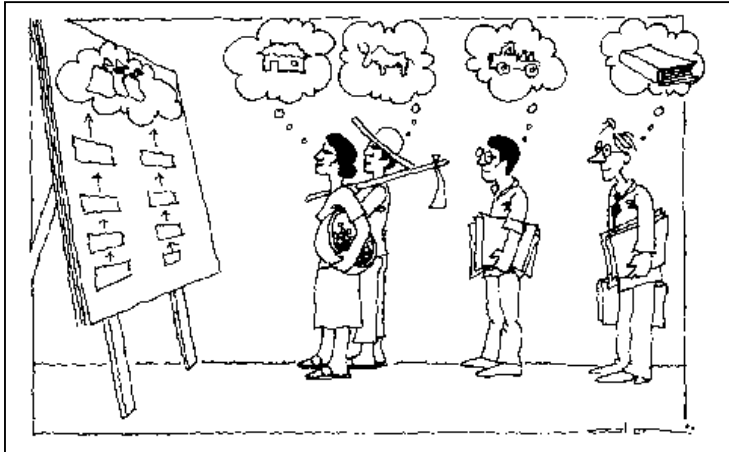
Therefore, a participatory management concept serves to develop management tools which can be applied to increase people's independence of NGO and funding agencies, and NGO' independence of funding agencies.

Participation and monitoring

We have already stated that monitoring and evaluation aims to enhance people's ability to reflect and to learn. Participatory monitoring should help those involved to draw conclusions for decision-making out of this trial-and-error process, and to guide their activities according to "lessons learned".

Coming back now to our three types of organizations - the actors -, what do the organizations involved feel it is important to observe? If we let them answer freely, we see that there are many expectations and fears beyond the planning framework

- there are subjective interpretations
- there are all kinds of "hidden" expectations, and
- each actor also wants to observe the other actors.



Actors

Whether consciously or unconsciously, each actor and each group of actors has his, her or its own priorities. Consequently, there are different autonomous monitoring and evaluation systems. They are usually not systematic or formalized.

These autonomous M+E systems of each actor must be preserved: they cover special aspects of the project process, and interlinked they will give a more complex view of reality than a single M+E system. To a certain extent, there should be information exchange and joint reflection - and this is the basis of participatory monitoring.

Accordingly, for participatory monitoring, participation means safeguarding and strengthening autonomy and establishing a dialogue between the actors as equals regarding their joint project.

Implications for participatory monitoring

- participation means a process of empowerment and increasing autonomy for previously disadvantaged groups

- each organization should have autonomy over its own monitoring'

- mutual support and assistance among the actors is everybody's interest

- the findings should be periodically compared and sometimes reflected on jointly: this gives a more complete picture.

2. NGO-based impact monitoring

2.1 Advantages and obstacles

At the beginning of this booklet, we listed some conditions which should be fulfilled for PIM to be applied successfully. We then described the basic ideas underlying PIM. As we have seen above, there are advantages in theory, but perhaps obstacles in practice.

PIM holds out the promise of being useful - but certain conditions must be fulfilled:

PIM is an appropriate tool for managing a self-help project but do you really want to try a new monitoring concept? PIM may take more time but do your staff members want to spend more time on joint decisions?

PIM is intended to empower people who have no voice but will the people in power at the moment accept a loss of influence?

PIM makes the project and the organization more transparent - but is this transparency really desired?

PIM may cause some conflicts if there are divergencies between attitudes, expectations and objectives. Are you ready to confront them?

Is your organization strong enough to tackle this new task? Are the leaders and members willing to face the hurdles mentioned above? If so, it is very likely that you will be rewarded with fruitful improvements of your activities!

There are several other good reasons why an NGO should adopt PIM:

- In an NGO there is a lot of knowledge concerning socio-cultural impact lying fallow. The staff have a large body of experience with learning processes in similar groups or projects. Field workers continuously observe the changes in their clients' environment. In order to improve project management, NGO-based impact monitoring could mobilize and systematize this knowledge.
- In some organizations, the results of the field staff's and social workers' endeavours are not perceived or appreciated, especially when they are "invisible" rather than technical or economic. NGO-based impact monitoring could contribute to personnel guidance and team development by demonstrating the value of field work.
- Non-profit organizations do not have economic, but intangible objectives. Their performance is measured not by economic indicators (like profit or turnover) but primarily by social, cultural or other qualitative criteria. NGO-based impact monitoring can also be important in managing the development of an entire organization.

If there are conflicts, open or hidden, PIM helps to bring them to the surface. Misunderstandings can then be resolved if the actors are ready for open dialogue.

While NGO-based PIM is equivalent to group-based PIM, it is not merely a copy of it with different actors. The purpose of NGO-based PIM is to accompany group-based PIM and, to some extent, to complement it.

NGO-based impact monitoring consists of three elements:

A. Monitoring of socio-cultural impacts is similar to group-based PIM (see booklet 1). The differences are:

- the field workers are the main actors, they select and specify indicators, observe, document and analyze the changes, and make (or prepare) decisions;
- monitoring focusses even more on socio-cultural impacts, i.e. learning processes, capacity building, changes in behaviour.

B. Joint Reflection Workshops are regular joint meetings of the NGO and the group. Results of group-based impact monitoring are compared with NGO-based monitoring of socio-cultural impacts.

C. Facilitation of the PIM process and ongoing accompaniment of the group by the development organization or NGO are necessary for the introduction and functioning of PIM.

Introducing PIM to NGO field staff

Before introducing PIM in a self-help group, it is crucial that an in-depth introduction to the PIM concept be given to the NGO staff involved, as they will be part and parcel of the implementation. This introduction to PIM, however, should be initiated carefully, starting with the field workers' practical experience.

Therefore, the introduction to PIM should not start with a theoretical explanation of monitoring or impact. The field staff should be encouraged to bring in their own experience and ideas. It must be made clear that their experience is valued highly - so start with questions:

- What important changes for the people has your work induced?
- Which changes are normally reported on? Which changes are often ignored?
- What has changed in people's behaviour? What have they learned?
- Have other groups learned from these experiences?
- Is it possible to find simple indicators for these changes?
- How far were these indicators observed by the group members?

PIM is introduced through workshops. Three sessions will probably be necessary to sensitize the staff and explain the concept. Methodologically, the introduction could contain the following:

- 1) field staff's observations, ideas and experience on monitoring, impact, participation
- 2) short introductory speech
- 3) short handouts using visualization, pictures, examples
- 4) detailed discussions on advantages and risks of PIM to field staff and group
- 5) adaptation of the proposed concept to the actual work of the field staff

Only after the field workers' concrete examples of socio-cultural impact have been collected and analyzed should a more theoretical introduction to PIM be given. It will be very important to listen to and respect the field staff's comments concerning

- the viability of the concept,
- the additional workload, and
- the usefulness of impact monitoring.

PIM does not ask for scientific definitions, but for subjectively important changes. The various actors have different views which need not be contradictory, but which are interlinked and have to be compared.

2.2 Steps in introducing and carrying out NGO-based monitoring of socio-cultural impacts

Preliminary Step: What do we know about the context?

Step by Step Step 1: What should be watched?

Step 2: How can it be watched?

Step 3: Who should watch?

Step 4: How can the results be documented?

Which information and for whom? When and how?

Steps 5 to 7: What did we observe?

Why? What should be done?

As mentioned above, the procedure for NGO-based monitoring of socio-cultural impacts is similar to that of group-based impact monitoring, which was described in Booklet 1. The following description is therefore merely a brief outline.

Preliminary Step: What do we know about the context?

Certain essential information about the situational context should be available before PIM is introduced. It is then easier to adapt PIM to specific needs and integrate it in a given context.

Apart from this, if possible, you should as a rule try to use participatory methods for situation analysis which also serve for planning, monitoring and evaluation, such as

- PRA: Participatory Rapid Appraisal
- PAR: Participatory Action Research
- SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- PALM: Participatory Learning Methods
- GRAAP: See, Reflect, Act (with the help of pictures)

These methods are based on ideas similar to PIM. You should make use of these to permit a realistic assessment of how people see their situation, their problems and needs.

STEP BY STEP

Steps in introducing PIM

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. What should be watched? | expectations and fears of the staff members with regard to socio-cultural changes |
| 2. How can it be watched? | concrete examples of how these changes can be observed (indicators) |
| 3. Who should watch? | elected staff members who are directly involved in the respective project |
| 4. How can the results be documented? | records, tables, graphs, descriptions charts, be documented? |
| Steps in carrying out PIM | |
| 5. What did we observe? | reports at the beginning of staff meetings |
| 6. Why do we have these results? | assessment and analysis by the staff results? |
| 7. What should we do? | immediate decision (or preparation for a decision) at the meeting (= adjustment of plan) |

Step 1: What should be watched?



Expectations and fears

The project team like the self-help group should make a note of some of the expectations and fears concerning the self-help project. As far as possible, these should relate to the socio-cultural impacts: skills and learning processes in the group. In this context the following questions are helpful:

- Based on your experience, what socio-cultural changes do you expect or fear from this project?
- What socio-cultural impacts resulted from similar projects?
- Which impacts were barely registered by conventional monitoring instruments?
- On the basis of which factors were they clearly recognizable?
- Which socio-cultural indicators should we be aware of in order to manage this project?

In this way, some of the hypotheses on the future development will be identified. It makes sense to discuss these hypotheses and indicators with selected resource persons from the group.

This procedure may lead to a result which is identical to the objectives of the NGO, or to the overall goal, project goal and expected results of the project. If they are fully congruent, so much the better. Whereas in conventional monitoring we rely on the formal information of the planning documents, PIM relies more on an informal assessment by the field workers and NGO staff.

In the case of the store of the Housewives' Committees in Caracoles, Bolivia, staff members had a number of expectations and fears. The prioritized aspects included the following:

EXPECTATIONS

- that prices would be lowered and better quality offered than in other shops
- that the Housewives' Committees would take over responsibilities
- that a higher level of integration of the three Caracoles cooperatives would be achieved
- that an opportunity would be created for women to participate in the cooperatives

FEARS /DOUBTS

Should they sell for cash only or give credit?
that they would not be able to recover the credits
that the cooperatives might not pay the store
that the women might not be able to administer the store themselves

Step 2: How can it be watched?

"Monitoring" and "indicators" are often quite abstract terms. Those responsible for keeping a watch should be encouraged to report very simply, on the basis of their experience, how they can tell that people have learned and changed. The procedure for mobilizing the practitioners experience should be similar to group-based impact monitoring. Concrete examples of how the social environment changes can be presented by each team member.

The reasons for these changes can then be analyzed and the most vivid examples chosen for illustrative purposes. In accordance with what was said concerning group-based monitoring, there is no fixed procedure for deriving indicators from these examples. It is not a problem if no measurable or scalable indicators can be found, because in NGO-based impact monitoring descriptive examples can be observed and documented as well.

The expectations and fears to be observed may be chosen in Step 1, or definitively decided upon here in Step 2.



In view of the work burdens project teams are faced with, it is not necessary initially to introduce more than three to five indicators for a project. The necessary number of indicators, however, will depend on the complexity of the organization and its activities and hence its monitoring system.

PIM is easy to link to a conventional monitoring system. If the NGO has one, it must determine how far the socio-cultural indicators should be integrated into it.

In Caracoles, the NGO staff selected the following indicators for observation:

EXPECTATIONS/FEARS

that prices would be lowered and better quality offered
than in other shops that they would not be able to recover the credits
Should they sell for cash only or give credit?
that the cooperatives might not pay the store
that a higher level of integration of the three Caracoles cooperatives would be achieved
that the Housewives' Committees would take over responsibilities

INDICATORS

the prices of 20 staples in the shop are below prices in other shops nearby
credits given each month do not exceed the cash payments received
the cooperative leaders held monthly meetings to analyze results
the committees were able to check the discount efficiently

INDICATORS

(derived from expectations or fears)
the prices of 20 staples in the shop are below prices in other shops nearby
credits given each month do not exceed the cash payments received
the cooperative leaders held monthly meetings to analyze results
the committees were able to check the discount efficiently

OBSERVATION METHODS

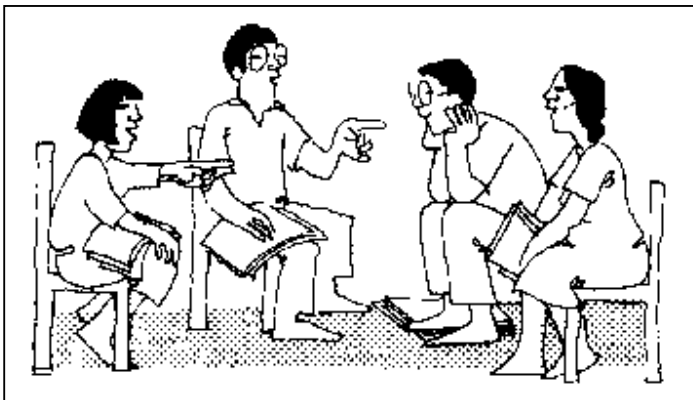
list the prices of each staple monthly for the shop and for 5 other shops nearby separately;
reply YES or NO and note down what was observed and what comments were made.
list credits granted and payments received; reply YES or NO and note down what was
observed and what comments were made
reply YES or NO and note down what was observed and what comments were made
price lists and prices charged are checked monthly by the committees; reply YES or NO
and note down what was observed and what comments were made

Step 3: Who should watch?

The socio-cultural impacts chosen as indicators are frequently those which have already been observed by the NGO personnel. It is therefore best for the field workers and other NGO staff members to observe the selected changes themselves. One or two people should be chosen to be responsible for observation.

However, it is also useful to confirm one's own views by cooperating with other people or organizations who know the project environment: a teacher, a priest, or staff members of other NGOs, or any insider concerning the group's internal structures. Whether this is appropriate will depend very much on the specific conditions.

While it is not the purpose of NGO-based PIM to employ members of self-help groups as observers, they need not be excluded. It is first and foremost the field staffs' view which is of interest here. The views of the self-help group and NGO will be compared later in the joint reflection workshops this is part of the learning process!

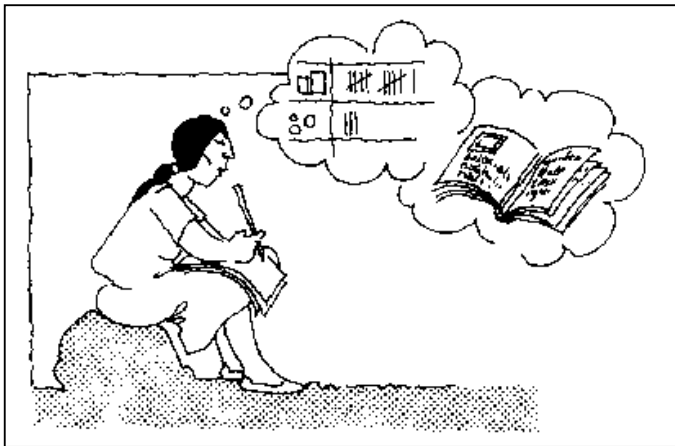


Step 4: How can the results be documented?

As explained for group-based impact monitoring, a record must be kept of the impact observed. If it is done in the same way as for conventional monitoring, it will be recorded in a kind of logbook.

In the Caracoles project, monitoring forms were developed for noting down the prices observed in the various shops each month. For other indicators, there are questions which have to be answered with yes or no, with a blank space for remarks and comments.

Graphs and charts are also helpful for visualizing quantitative indicators. Indicator no. 2, about credits granted and payments received, was drawn as a bar chart.



Which information and for whom? When and how?

The NGO has to set priorities in information flow in accordance with the decision-making structures. This means that not all information has to flow to the NGO director or even to the funding agency, only summaries from time to time, or to report outstanding successes or conspicuous failures.

These rules for information flow should be worked out jointly by the entire NGO team. They should also decide what kind of monitoring information is regarded as sensitive or confidential, and establish clear rules as to how it should be handled: who must be excluded from the information flow?

In addition, a decision must be taken on how information should be fed back to the group. In Caracoles, the women were informed monthly. A minimum would be reports at the joint reflection workshop.



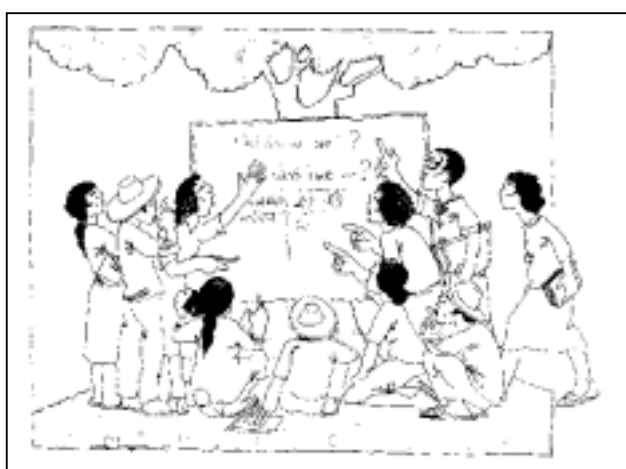
Important: All those involved must accept that although each organization wants to know what the others are doing behind the scenes, every actor is entitled to confidential treatment of his inside information. Not everything has to be analyzed: some secrets are best left under wraps!

Steps 5 to 7: What did we observe? Why? What should we do?

The steps to answer these questions are now basically similar to the steps described in Booklet I (Group-based Impact Monitoring).

Also, an NGO might already have a (conventional) monitoring system. Socio-cultural impacts might be monitored in a similar way. PIM is compatible with general management rules.

As mentioned in Section 1.2, the depths and periodicities of reflection and decision-making are different in every organization: you should match your PIM rules to your project and organization structure.



2.3 Joint reflection workshops

Formulation of guiding questions

Workshop Step 1: What has changed?

Workshop Step 2: What have people learned?

Workshop Step 3: What action must be taken?

Workshop Step 4: How can we improve our impact monitoring?

Post-Workshop Step (5): What conclusions can we draw for our work?

Concluding remarks

PIM comprises different autonomous monitoring schemes of various actors (self-help group, NGO, FA or other organizations/groups) in a single project. The individual actors observe the area that interests them most.

Advantages:

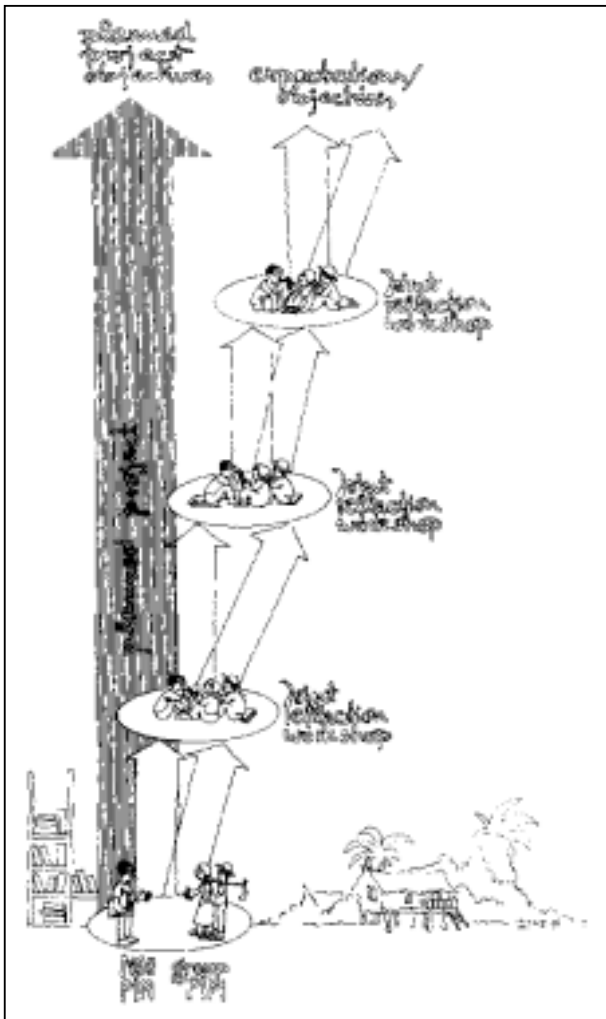
- it is not necessary for everyone to gather all the data, and the amount of data stays manageable for each actor;
- the facts are seen from different perspectives;
- more information is available for joint decision-making.

These different perspectives complement each other, and can portray the project reality more completely and realistically than a single actor could. To this end, the observations of those involved must be communicated and discussed regularly. The Joint Reflection Workshops fulfil this important need.

They provide a forum for exchanging and evaluating information. The various actors also hold a mirror up to each other, enabling them to compare the way they see themselves with the way others see them.

The Joint Reflection Workshops are held regularly together with the self-help groups. They will be organized by the NGO to reflect on the progress of the project, though not so much in the sense of the planned "project outputs" as in the sense of impact assessment. These workshops should be arranged in a manner and an environment that the self-help group is familiar with. The participants are the parties involved (for ex.):

- self-help group
- NGO field staff
- NGO office staff



Planned project

Procedure at the joint reflection workshop (4 guiding questions):

Step 1: Compare observations: "What has changed?" Step 2: Analyze socio-cultural impacts: "What have people learned?" Step 3: Take decisions: "What action must be taken?" Step 4: Improve monitoring (if necessary): "How can we improve our impact monitoring?"

After the workshop:

Step 5: Evaluate internally: "What conclusions can we draw for our work?" If necessary take decisions on changes.

The frequency will depend on the degree of familiarity between the NGO and the group, and on the importance of the project. At first it might be every three months, in the long run at least once a year.

Reflection should not be limited to these rare workshops; it is also customary, of course, in routine project work and at meetings. But as described in the introduction, it is useful to have different opportunities for reflection, with different depths and frequencies.

Normally, the day-to-day problems of a project tend to dominate meetings between field workers and the self-help group. However, at these monitoring workshops the participants should explicitly try to look back to the start of their activities, comparing it with where they stand now. In a process involving prolonged activity this is an opportunity to stop for a moment for profound reflection.

It is advisable to have an independent facilitator who has the confidence of all sides.
Formulation of guiding questions

The field staff and the group will have to discuss four guiding questions. These questions must be discussed with the group by adequate methods (i.e. not simple questions and answers).

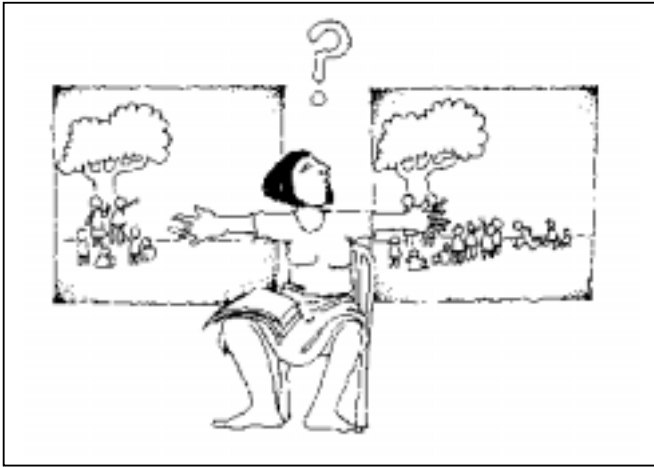
The results obtained by asking these guiding questions will lead to an analysis of the project context. Emphasis should be given to socio-cultural impacts. The discussion may induce decisions concerning the project's activities, or at least pave the way for decisions which have to be taken by superiors. If necessary, the monitoring system will be revised.

The questions must be open; the NGO should not influence the replies. Although NGO staff and field workers might have their answers to the questions, it is still important that they should first ask the group, by appropriate methods, and only afterwards encourage discussion by introducing their own observations (if necessary).

Workshop Step 1: What has changed?

The monitoring workshops start with (Step 1) the general guiding question "What has changed?".

This is to compare the results of the group-based monitoring system with the the results of the NGO-based monitoring system.



Comparison of observations

The general question "What has changed?" leads to some deeper questions. Some questions refer to change:

What/Who has changed?

(This question is meant to introduce the report on the group's findings, which are a result of the group-based monitoring system.)

What has caused the change?

(the individual members, the NGO, or other factors?)

How has it changed?

How has this change affected you?

What other change(s) has/have occurred as a result?

Clearly, these questions cannot be limited to socio-cultural impact; they include everything that is important to the group. The discussion should nevertheless focus on socio-cultural impact.

Workshop Step 2: What have people learned?

When analyzing the socio-cultural impact, the NGO personnel not only have to refer to the indicators formulated in their monitoring system. They should try to grasp the various learning processes as a whole, and this is perhaps more feasible by asking open questions than by a strict comparison of isolated indicators. NGO members should be aware of the discussion needs of the group and use the opportunity of the joint reflection workshop for an open dialogue with the group.

What have people learned?

- Have the members of the group taken on new responsibilities?
- How far have the group's internal and external relationships changed?
- How far has the internal structure of the group changed?
- What new activities have been started by the group (or by members of the group)?
- What similar activities have other groups (or individuals) started?



Workshop Step 3: What action must be taken?

The next step is decision-making. The analysis of the findings will be aimed at achieving unequivocal results here. In keeping with the importance and frequency of the Joint Reflection Workshop, the decisions taken here tend to be of a strategic nature. That is to say, they indicate the basic direction and provide a framework for the solution. Operational decisions should be taken subsequently, at other meetings.

What action must be taken?

- What should the members of the group do?
- What should the project team do?
- What should the other people involved do?
- Who else should be brought in?

Workshop Step 4: How can we improve our impact monitoring?

The last step in the workshop is fairly general: if important issues have previously been neglected the monitoring system must be revised. In such cases it is useful for all those involved to agree at the workshop that these issues should be included in the monitoring system. Alternatively, each organization may take a decision at its own evaluation meeting after the workshop.

Potential improvements in PIM

- Which criteria and indicators should be improved?
- Which criteria and indicators are no longer necessary?
- How could the observation and assessment system be improved?
- How did you feel in our reflection workshop?

The case studies from the PIM field phase showed that many expectations/fears and their indicators which had been identified in the first meetings tended to be of short-term interest. By revising the monitoring system periodically, aspects which are of long-term interest are automatically sifted - and thus relevant indicators for the sustainability of the project come to the fore.

Post-Workshop Step 5: What conclusions can we draw for our work?



After the monitoring workshop, the NGO should internally evaluate the results of the NGO-based impact monitoring. This reflection should go beyond the management of the actual project: instead, it should refer to more fundamental questions which often relate to the development of your own organization. If changes are necessary, decisions should be taken immediately.

The following questions should be discussed in the NGO after the workshop:

With regard to project management:

- What have we achieved? How have we achieved it? Who has assisted us? What has helped us to achieve this?
- What conclusions can we draw from the comparison between the group's observations and our own?
- Does anything need to be changed in our activities?

With regard to PIM:

- Which socio-cultural indicators need to be taken into account in our own regular monitoring and evaluation?
- How well did the original proposal work?
- Has it been modified by the beneficiaries' opinions?
- Should a questionnaire be circulated at regular intervals to document the specific activities of the projects, beneficiary groups and the context?

With regard to your own NGO:

What can we learn from this project that should also be considered in other projects?

- Should we introduce new internal rules to improve our cooperation?

Concluding remarks

For the field staff, it will be important to learn about people's perception of their work. The participation of an external facilitator will further reinforce this. The feedback is useful for the field worker's self-assessment. Joint analysis of observed changes by the people's group and the field staff will increase the appreciation of successes which were previously concealed or rated as "merely subjective" impressions.

2.4 Facilitating the PIM process

Generally, PIM will be introduced in a group or people's organization on the initiative of the NGO. To a certain extent, therefore, the promoters are responsible for ensuring that group-based impact monitoring works.

For the NGO staff, it should again be emphasized that all of the group-based PIM and most of the impact analysis at the Joint Reflection Workshop is done by the group. The facilitator acts as catalyst. S/he does not tell people how to interpret the results of observation, but if necessary s/he will guide the group by asking questions. For group-based impact monitoring, it is crucially important that the community (not the NGO's field staff) identifies with the analysis.

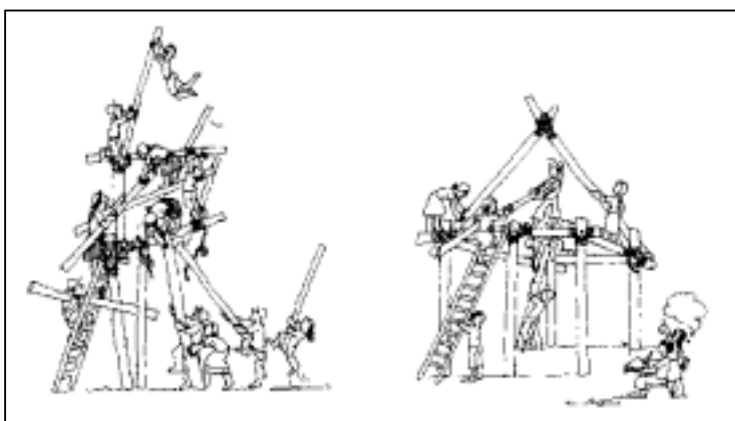
You should not risk nipping group-based impact monitoring in the bud due to disagreements. If the group's and the NGO's observations differ, other opportunities should be provided or created for analyzing the content and the causes (e.g., the post-workshop step). If the staff member cannot cope with the conflict of roles, i.e. acting both as facilitator and as NGO representative, other facilitators must be found.

How can PIM be introduced into the self-help group?

Especially at the beginning, it is uncertain whether the idea has been well explained and understood. How do you carry on after the expectations and fears have been identified? To find out what is important, to find observable indicators, to find good observers, to observe, to feed back the results to group meetings - all this is easily said but not so easily done.

The NGO staff involved in PIM will probably have to stay in the village or with the group for several days when introducing the basic steps for the first time. During the first few weeks after setting up the first "draft" of group-based impact monitoring, the observers will need support. Presentation of the findings at group meetings should be facilitated by NGO personnel for the first year at least. How this is done is shown in examples from the field phase given in Booklet 3.

This may seem to be a lot of additional work; but if PIM is introduced when a new project is implemented, when we assume that frequent visits will be needed in any case, extra visits specifically for PIM will probably be unnecessary. And don't forget: PIM will definitely also help save time because



Action without reflection is a waste of time!

We need the cooperation of other practitioners and thinkers to test and to improve PIM. If you are implementing and testing PIM in your project area we would be very interested to hear from you. Write and tell us about your experience with PIM.

We are planning to organize more regular and more efficient exchanges, if a substantial number of practitioners continue with the development and adaptation of PIM.

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Thank You