Fitting Feelings into Frameworks: 
An examination of the involvement of 
primary stakeholders 
in the design and use of outcome indicators 
and evaluation use 
for development interventions 

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree 
of Master of International Development 

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the involvement of primary stakeholders in the design and use of outcome indicators, and evaluation use for development interventions. It seeks to understand the characteristics of indicators developed by or with primary stakeholders, the dynamics of such involvement, and what is achieved in such practice.

The experiences and achievements recorded in eight international case examples and one local case study provide insights into the practical considerations for using participatory approaches to design outcome indicators. Although there is a traceable body of literature that provides theoretical guidance on participatory indicator design, there is very little in the way of instruction based on practice.

Primary stakeholder participation was identified as important across four phases: planning, indicator design and use, data collation, and evaluation use. It was found that primary stakeholders may be involved in the indicator design and use phase; but are not routinely included in the planning, data collation and evaluation use phases. Findings from the eight case examples pointed to positive impacts on indicator design including the use of culturally appropriate and contextually relevant indicators, as well as participant empowerment and engagement in evaluation practice. Other findings highlighted that lack of skilled facilitators, the interplay of power dynamics and the length of time participatory evaluation practice takes may have negative impact on the engagement of primary stakeholders in the evaluative processes.

The practice of participatory indicator design is seemingly not widespread in the field of international development. While there is literature to be found that can provide some guidance on participatory evaluation practice, including design of outcome indicators, it seems that individual organisations reinvent processes for engagement on a case by case basis. The proposal is mooted that systematic capability building across the NGO sector that includes exploration on how the four phases of participatory evaluation practice can be built into organisational processes is required.
Acknowledgments

Oh my gosh! It’s done. There are so many people who have supported me to get to the point of completion – thank you all.

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Gerard, my friend. I apologise for not getting the word 'moist' into this thesis. Do a PhD and get it into yours. I did manage posit and reflexivity so hope that counts for something. You came into my life at a time when I was getting into my thesis – and I lost momentum – thanks honey. I love you and I’m thankful for the practical support you’ve given.

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for not withholding any information that was useful for this study. To the clients of Organisation X, thank you for the honest conversations we had. You allowed me into your lives and inspired me by your strength and courage to want more for yourselves. The words of one woman particularly continue to inspire me and enhance my interest and enthusiasm for participatory evaluation practice. Your words, said during an interview, and unedited are presented on the next page in the form of a poem.
Measure

How do you measure anything
if you’re not a part of it?
If you’re not getting right in there amongst it
and
actually knowing as much as you possibly can
to evaluate anything?
You’ve got to be in it!
You’ve got to understand it!
You’ve got to look at it from every aspect!
Pull it apart as many times as you might need to
otherwise you fall into assumption,
and what you believe,
and not what’s really best for the thing that you’re pulling apart!

And I guess too
that when there’s consumers involved
everyone has a different take
because
everyone leads a different life
and everyone has a different purpose.
So the importance of having the consumer involved
is huge
and I know that’s often lacking
in terms of evaluation and research.
They’ll bring that at the very end of it,
instead
of at the very beginning.

And I think it would change the whole result.
A lot of the consumers fill out the evaluation
and sign it
because that is what they are told to do.

When you begin any process,
and you’re at the start,
and you’re in the middle
and you come through the end,
you have a different value to it.
So it’s different.
So knowing me I would be involved with everything.

Local case study participant
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Introduction

Case examples reviewed

Phases of involvement in participatory evaluation practice

Phase 2 - Indicator design and use

Phase 3 - Data handling

Phase 4 - Evaluation use

Characteristics of indicators

Linked to goals

Negotiated

Nature of indicators

Quality of indicators

Dynamics of involvement and lessons learned

Facilitation

Culture

Participation

Length of time

Cost

Achievements

Empowerment

Appropriate plans and indicators

Chapter summary

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Glossary

Hapu   Clan
Iwi   Tribe
Mana   Honour, authority
Mana whenua   Traditional authority exercised by iwi or hapu in an identified area.
NGO   Non-governmental organisation
Outcome indicators: This thesis uses the term ‘outcome indicators’ to cover both outcomes and impacts. A working definition used for the purpose of this thesis, based on the premise that development interventions seek to bring about positive change, is: outcome indicators are qualitative and/or quantitative measures of intended positive change brought about as a result of an intervention.
Primary Stakeholders: The people at whom a development intervention is targeted. For instance the primary stakeholders for literacy and numeracy classes will be men and women who attend. This does not take into account members of staff of the organisation who deliver these programmes.
RBA   Results-Based Accountability
SMART   Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SPICED   Subjective, Participatory, Interpreted and communicable, Cross-checked and compared, Empowering, Diverse and disaggregated.
Taha hinekaro   Emotional wellbeing
Taha tinana   Physical wellbeing
Taha wairua   Spiritual wellbeing
Taha whanau   Social wellbeing
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme

Waïora  Wellbeing

Whanau  Family or families