

Capacity for M&E: moving beyond results-based management

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Measuring the results and outcomes of our work is part and parcel of the work we do. One reason is that we have to report to our directors and our donors what it is we actually achieve. If a project or programme is based on results-based management (RBM), the methodology allows us to do a results-based evaluation. In other words, we use the results as the starting point for the evaluation, and then determine to what extent the programme has achieved them.

There are a lot of cynics who ask 'whose results are they anyway?? So we do not just blindly determine how well progress has been made towards the results, or whether they have been achieved, but also in what context they have been established, whether they are still valid after the programme has run for several years, or whether 'adaptive management' principles have been followed, and so on.

Many will argue that such a results-based approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a good thing. For one thing, because receiving countries have struggled with accountability ? and many donors added to their difficulties by simply throwing money at the poor without demanding accountability for what they produced. All we had to prove was that we 'did things?'. Focusing on results forces us to ensure that we achieve what we set out to do and, if not, we should be able to provide good reasons to explain why not. Evaluation helps us achieve that and build that kind of culture. Results do matter. This is why many of us welcome RBM ? but only if the results are in fact 'country-owned? or 'programme-owned?', and only if the question of why those results were achieved (or not) is explicitly addressed. Those who commission evaluations should always build these aspects into their terms of reference.

However, if you put your ear to the ground, there are practitioners out there who complain about the reductionist nature of such externally oriented M&E exercises. Some feel that this form of monitoring and evaluating our work does not really tell us whether any capacity development of our partners and clients in the field has actually taken place. That such an external process does not contribute to capacity building. Or they might say that it does not provide us with information that can be used to measure or assess changes in capacity over time.

This issue of Capacity.org offers an overview of the different methods and techniques that add new dimensions to results-based M&E. Some allow, for example, the observation of changes over a longer period of time, and offer ways to make such changes more tangible. Other

innovative forms of M&E can themselves contribute to capacity building. In this issue, practitioners who have developed such methods describe and explain how they have used them. So that perhaps you too can apply them if you want. Let us know how it goes.