DC 132
Handout 1

EVALUATION

Evaluation research -the systematic use of research methods and techniques to make decisions or judgments about a program.

Examples:
- informal spot checks to ensure that the quality of a radio announcement is clear and audible
- detailed surveys to determine whether the goals of a mass media campaign to promote condom use, are actually being achieved, to locate the barriers to the achievement, and to discover the consequences of program actions.

Why Evaluate?

Evaluation research is conducted for many purposes:

1. legitimation role - by helping a program gain recognition

2. advocacy role - by building policy makers' support for a particular program or strategy, once its effectiveness is demonstrated.

3. motivational - by showing program achievement, it may be used to boost the motivation of program staff.

4. funding request - it may serve to justify further funding of a program.

5. decision-making - to help program staff make informed decisions that will result in communication programs that reach more people with information they want and can use, in well-implemented programs that change in response to new information, and in development communication policies that make a difference.

When to Evaluate?

To be useful, evaluation should provide information that is:

- timely
- relevant
- credible
- readable

Evaluation can be done at the beginning, middle and end of a project. Each serves a different purpose, explores different questions, and is likely to be used by different people.

Who Should Evaluate?

- Process evaluation - best conducted by program implementors rather than outsiders because they are the ones who will use the information to reorient their programs.

- Summative evaluation - often serves political functions and can provide information for keeping a project alive; best conducted by an evaluator who is independent of the program and is therefore perceived to be more credible.

What to Evaluate?

It makes sense to collect information on those aspects of the program which most often explain program success or failure:

- exposure to information and comprehension of messages
  early stages
  - existence of specific channels of information
  - proportion of the audience that has access to them
  - audience preferences for information sources
  - which languages are understood
  - levels of written or visual literacy
  implementation stage
  - whether communication channels are being used as planned
  - have the radio or TV messages been aired?
  - how many and how often?
  - have the posters or pamphlets been distributed?
  - how many and where?
  - have training workshops been organized?
  project end
  - who or what proportion of the target audience was exposed
  - to what specific messages
  - through which channels
  - how often?

Types of Evaluation

1. Formative Evaluation

When Conducted
At the initiation or planning stage of a project

Purpose
To gather information for shaping the project strategies

Typical Questions
For example, in a communication campaign designed to promote the use of - environmental protection, no early spraying of insecticides, oral rehydration therapy, etc.

- What are the existing attitudes and beliefs about _____?
- What are the major barriers to adopting _____? Which ones can be addressed through communication?

- Which channels of communication, mass media as well as interpersonal, are likely to reach the target group?

2. Process Evaluation

When Conducted
During project implementation

Purpose
To determine whether activities are proceeding according to plan

Typical Questions

- Were radio messages about the _____ broadcast?
- Were health staff trained in _____ procedures and communication techniques?
- Was communication coordinated with the distribution of _____ (inputs and supplies)?

3. Impact Evaluation

When Conducted
At project end

Purpose
To determine whether the program has achieved its objectives and to demonstrate its effectiveness

Typical Questions

- Do mothers understand how to prepare and administer ORT? Do farmers understand why early spraying of insecticides on the rice crop is unnecessary and when do rice farmers apply their first spray?
- Have attitudes about treatment of diarrhea or early season spraying of insecticides changed?
- Have child deaths due to dehydration decreased?
- Were health staff trained in _____ procedures and communication techniques?
- Was communication coordinated with the distribution of _____ (inputs and supplies)?

Evaluation-speak

Bias - the degree to which a subgroup of the population is disproportionately represented in a project or in an evaluation, relative to the entire target group.

Control group - the segment of the target population not receiving services or intervention being evaluated, against which the effect of providing services to an experimental group is compared.

Experimental group - a segment of the target population that receives project services. The impact of the intervention on this group is measured and compared with that of the control group.

Indicators - a measure that yields information or evidence about a problem or condition.

Inputs - the material resources, skills, effort and other ingredients that go into a program to achieve the objectives.

Needs assessment - a type of evaluation used to appraise the fundamental concerns of a group or constituency, in order to guide program priorities, topics or strategies.

Outcome - the effects of a project, both intended and unintended, in terms of materials produced, knowledge gained, attitudes changed, and actions taken.

Response rate - the proportion of persons who respond to a request for information compared with the total solicited.

Reliability - the consistency of information received from respondents and investigators. Reliability would be low, if for example, the same question elicited two different responses from individuals with essentially similar experiences. Reliability can be increased by pilot testing the research instruments.

Triangulation - using different sources of data to confirm a report or single source of evidence.

Validity - the degree to which the proposed evaluation methods will do what they intend to do. Validity is high if the conclusions reached can defensibly be made on the basis of the approach taken.

(Source: Development Communication Report, No. 72, 1991)