

Aboriginal Empowerment through Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Sarah Parsons, University of Northern BC and Stevie Anatole, Tl'azt'en Nation

What is Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation?

Participatory monitoring and evaluation are critical parts of the participatory planning process. They enable active involvement for those with a stake in a program. While this technique has been best developed by people involved in education, social work, health care, and international and community development, there is great potential for its use in community and Aboriginal forestry. While participatory processes are challenging, they facilitate empowerment of those most affected by program outcomes, and can provide tools for dealing with issues of heterogeneity in community values.



The Role of Outside Support

The roles and responsibilities of outside people in participatory evaluation will depend upon the resources and expertise available in the community, as well as the scope of the project itself. Some communities will lead the entire evaluation from start to finish, while others will need to work closely with people from outside the community to ensure their views are reflected in the evaluation system.

Core Steps in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

(sharing of responsibilities to be established between partners)

1. Define goals, objectives and priorities for monitoring and evaluation
2. Identify who should and who wants to be involved based on the goals, objectives and priorities. Once identified, these persons will be the evaluation team members
3. Establish roles and responsibilities for identified evaluation participants. Clarify participants' expectations of the process, and in what way each person or group wants to contribute. Organize and train evaluation team members
4. Develop framework for the evaluation, agree on the methods, responsibilities and timing of information collected
5. Develop a set of evaluation questions and data collection instruments
6. Collect information - Conduct interviews, surveys, focus groups etc.
7. Analyze information/data collected and summarize the findings
8. Discuss evaluation findings and agree on how findings are to be used
9. Formulate and summarize lessons learned from the evaluation process and outcomes
10. Write evaluation report and distribute results via multiple media (presentations, newsletters, web sites, meetings)

Adapted from Gujt (2000) and Gilliam et al (2002)

Why Participatory Evaluation?

Participatory evaluation:

- ❖ Promotes participants' learning about the program and its performance
- ❖ Enhances their understanding of other stakeholders' points of view
- ❖ Improves participants' evaluation skills
- ❖ Mobilizes stakeholders
- ❖ Enhances teamwork
- ❖ Build shared commitment to act on evaluation recommendations
- ❖ Increases the likelihood that evaluation information will be used to improve performance

From Binnendijk (1996)

Considerations

- ❖ Is a participatory approach appropriate for the community and community partners?
- ❖ Are there sufficient time and resources available? Be aware of the time implications and scope of responsibilities.
- ❖ Are all partners open to an adaptive process? Flexibility is needed in monitoring and evaluation design as skills improve and people move on, gain, or lose interest.

From Gujt (1999)

Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation of Forest Co-management using Criteria & Indicators

At the national level, Criteria and Indicators (C&I) are used to monitor progress towards sustainable forest management. Increasingly, C&I are being applied to forest management at smaller scales through processes such as certification for forest companies. While some attempts have been made to include local forest actors, these processes had limited success in engaging participants in a meaningful way, reflecting a diversity of values, and particularly in including Aboriginal communities.

Participatory Evaluation: Tl'azt'en Nation/University of Northern BC

Our work is developing a participatory process for creating local-level C&I for the partners' co-managed forest. To date, UNBC and Tl'azt'en researchers have used grounded theory to transform information gained from interviews with locally-identified experts into a forest values framework: C&I. The current work will apply and test a method of participatory evaluation for one set of values identified.

Participatory Evaluation of C&I

The project uses a combination of interviews and focus groups with previously selected Tl'azt'en experts to determine how identified forest management values should be assessed. These brief interviews inquire into how Tl'azt'en community members measure success in meeting the various components of values relating to Cultural Revitalization through forest co-management.

Participants will be brought together in small focus groups to identify, refine and prioritize measures, considering ideas shared in interviews, as well as ideas from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal evaluation frameworks. A critical final step will be a participant evaluation of the process itself, to determine how the process could be improved for developing measures of the remaining values.

Improving the Process

- ❖ The process should be structured to capture the interests of all different groups within a community
- ❖ The process must be easy to facilitate (because local people are often inexperienced in participatory techniques)
 - ❖ The process should not be overly time consuming
- ❖ All discussions should take place using the local language to encourage all members to participate
- ❖ Non-literate members should be encouraged to participate by using visual and oral forms of communication

From Hamilton et al. (2000) and Alzate (2000)

References

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