

16

Tips for trainers: exploring evaluation through drawing

Françoise Coupal

• **Purpose**

- to share and exchange participants' experiences with evaluation;
- to illuminate through drawings participants' experiences in the area of evaluation; and,
- to form the basis of a larger discussion of some of the differences between participatory and traditional evaluations.

• **Materials and time required**

- one large piece of flipchart paper per small group;
- coloured markers; and,
- 35 minutes for discussion, 15 minutes for the drawing, 30 minutes for the plenary.

• **Instructions**

1. Place the flipchart paper in the middle of the group along with some coloured markers.
2. Organise participants in small groups of 5-6 persons.
3. Place instructions on flipchart paper so that participants can refer to them during the exercise.
4. Ask each group to discuss their experiences of evaluation (about 35 minutes). For example, what has it been like to be the object of an evaluation, to be a donor funding an evaluation or to participate in one. For the plenary, inform participants that each group will be asked to present a drawing which represents their collective experience of evaluation. This

may be one or two images placed on the flipchart paper. Few words, if any, should be used.

5. As participants discuss their relative experiences, some images will begin to emerge. These should be placed on paper. This may take up to 15 minutes.
6. Once each group has completed their drawing ask the participants to present their drawing (5 minutes per group).
7. The plenary should shed light on the varied experiences with evaluation and the different outcomes of different evaluation approaches. This can help participants to explore what type of evaluation they would foresee and its implications in terms of participation, resources and materials.

Special notes for the facilitator

Participants may need prodding to realise their drawing as they are often timid or hesitant at first. Talking is easy, but translating the image into a drawing may require encouragement by the facilitator.

• **Application**

This exercise was undertaken with 35 Haitian NGOs in April of 1997 as part of the planning phase of a larger participatory evaluation of a Canada-Haiti Humanitarian Alliance Fund to rebuild Haitian civil society¹. As the fund was coming to an end, the donor was interested in funding a participatory evaluation that could go beyond traditional evaluations and build capacity among Canadian and Haitian NGOs

¹ It was supported by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC).

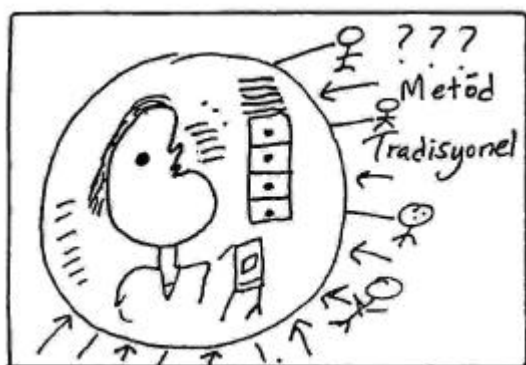
by training participants in participatory evaluation methods and approaches.

Two missions were undertaken to Haiti. The first mission consisted of a planning mission to gauge stakeholder interest in participating in a participatory evaluation and to develop an appropriate evaluation strategy and timetable with project stakeholders. The second phase involved training 30 project stakeholders in participatory evaluation methods and approaches and subsequently evaluating 15 projects.

This article focuses particularly on the results of an exercise undertaken during the preparatory phase and the final phase of the project. In small groups of six, NGO representatives and community leaders were asked to discuss their experiences with evaluation. Based on their experiences, each group was asked to crystallise their thoughts and experiences in the form of a drawing. It is important to note that no mention was made to either traditional or participatory evaluations.

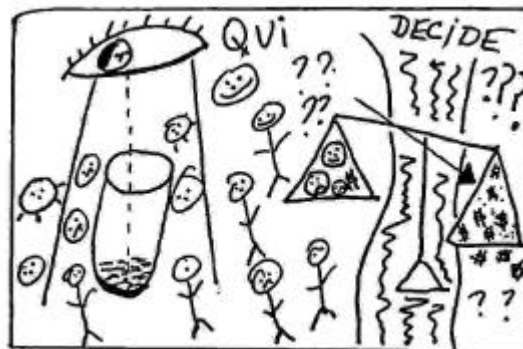
As can be seen, the drawings are revealing. Figure 1 shows an evaluator living in a bubble behind his desk surrounded by reports. Project participants surround the evaluator. The information is one way, however, from the project participants to the evaluator. Question marks loom to the side.

Figure 1



In another drawing, entitled “Who Decides?”, the eye of the donor looks from afar. Underneath the eye rests a bag of money. Off to the right side one can observe a scale that is unevenly tipped with the weight heaviest on the side of the donor, who holds the purse strings, rather than on the side of the project stakeholders (Figure 2).

Figure 2



In contrast, drawings of participatory evaluations revealed different characteristics. In Figure 3, all project stakeholders are sitting around the table to first discuss the project: community members, program officers, the NGOs staff and the facilitator. However, all these stakeholders all go out into the community to meet with project beneficiaries individually or in small groups. As one of the author's explained: in a participatory evaluation “there is an exchange of ideas, experiences and a group discussion of problems and solutions. The results of the evaluation are shared with all of the project stakeholders”.

Figure 3

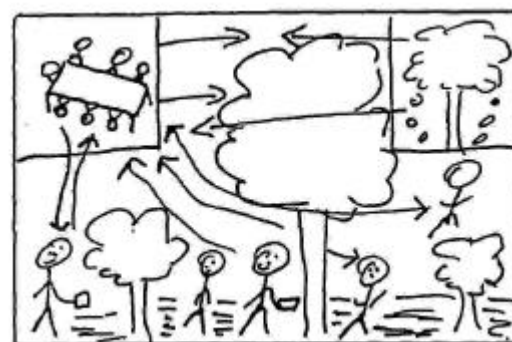
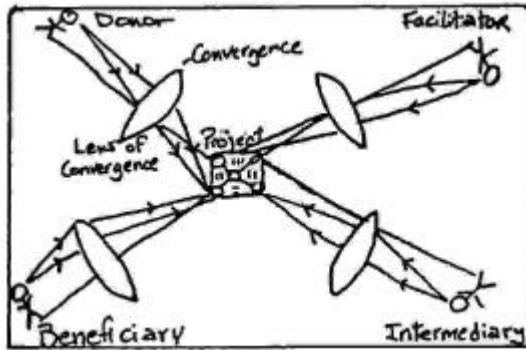


Figure 4 was drawn at the end of the participatory evaluation process. It represents the four key stakeholders: the facilitator, the intermediary (NGO), the project beneficiaries and the donor. As noted one author “a project is the convergence of different stakeholder visions”. A sense of equity, balance and convergence is seen as part of the participatory evaluation process.

Figure 4



• Reflections

The drawings provided for a rich discussion and debate about the type of evaluations the NGOs wanted and some of the weaknesses of traditional evaluations. Some of the following points were made by NGO representatives and community leaders with regard to traditional evaluations:

- “There is no dialogue or flexibility”
- “Traditional evaluations do not take into account the reality in the field”
- “Evaluation tools are not adapted to the context”
- “Ignorance by evaluators of the project realities and challenges”
- “Determines the financial future of the project”
- “Predominance of institutional interests versus the field”
- “Lack of follow-up”.

Based on the drawings and discussion, the NGOs decided they wanted a more participatory evaluation. This led to the design of a participatory evaluation process involving NGO representatives in the evaluation process as participatory evaluation facilitators.

The drawings are powerful and illuminating testimony of the experience of project stakeholders. This exercise has been repeated a number of times with similar features being recounted. Traditional evaluations are seen as an extractive exercise with the community providing the information, but receiving little in exchange. The traditional evaluator is usually an outsider that knows little of the “real” dynamics of the community and is the one person that presents the report card of the project. In contrast, in the participatory

evaluation undertaken in Haiti, the participatory evaluation facilitators were drawn from the Haitian NGO community funded through the programme. Trained in PRA methods, the participatory evaluation facilitators lived in the community and worked with the project stakeholders to reflect on the project’s impact.

This drawing exercise can help project stakeholders determine the type of evaluation they would like and their level of participation and commitment. In particular, drawings can help project stakeholders to think through the advantages and disadvantages of different evaluation approaches and to design an evaluation framework that responds to participant’s experiences and needs.

• **Françoise Coupal**, Mosaic.net International, Inc. 705 Roosevelt Ave. Ottawa, K2A 2A8, Canada. Email: coupal@mosaic-net-intl.ca

NOTES

Françoise Coupal co-authored a UNDP publication entitled: “Who are the Question-makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook”. Copies of the Haiti evaluation report can be requested at the above address or by downloading it from the following web site: <http://www.mosaic-net-intl.ca>