

The *IDEAS* Guide Methods Cards

How to use the methods cards

To make the cards, fold on the middle line. Methods cards include ratings to indicate approximate time and resources needed, and the difficulty or skill level need. Ratings for time and resources use a clock icon. Ratings for difficulty use the following symbols¹:



There is a colour code for the different kinds of methods:

Qualitative: Methods that will lead to data based on words and stories.

Quantitative: Methods that will lead to data based on numbers.

Visual: Methods that will lead to data in the visual materials, like photographs, maps, video, models.

Participatory: Working with the people involved in your projects to collect and analyse the data, working with them to identify patterns and what is important for them in the project.

Sometimes methods can be used in different ways or collect different kinds of information at the same time.

Short Questionnaire Survey



A quick way of getting responses from a larger group. It involves creating a series of multiple choice: (quantitative, based on numbers) or short-answer questions: (qualitative, based on words and stories) and asking groups of people to fill them out.

Examples of using Short Questionnaire Surveys in evaluation include:

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Ask training participants to fill in a questionnaire directly after training to evaluate the quality of training. Follow up with a questionnaire to participants some time (usually months) after the capacity building activity (training, mentoring, etc) to find out how they have used their skills.

CONTENT

Ask audience members/users to fill in a questionnaire before and after viewing or using the content to find out whether audiences have gained new knowledge or changed their attitudes.



Photograph from the Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea report, 2012. Copyright of ABC International Development.

Strengths

- Questionnaires can provide some simple and quick answers to some questions from a group of people.
- They can provide a quantitative overview (e.g. you can find interesting patterns across a larger number of people).
- Can be used to see if something you have found with your smaller group of participants is more widespread across the community.

Considerations

- Large surveys are very time consuming and often require careful sampling. Unless you have the skills and resources in your team already, surveys should be limited to short questionnaire surveys.
- Depends on very clear questions. Doing some pre-tests or 'pilots' is recommended.
- Does not provide in-depth information.

Guides

Short questionnaire-based surveys in the EAR Toolbox: <http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/5-0.html>

Questionnaires (and surveys) on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/survey>

Photovoice



Using participatory photography as a tool for evaluation-based storytelling. Participants use cameras to capture images as a response to topics or questions, then discuss them in a group. Photovoice stories can be made as posters, sticking images to a piece of card with explanations and stories under the photographs. You can also create multimedia stories, which can be embedded in your own website, YouTube or other publishing sites, or sent to the funder and other audiences as a private link. Music, text and narratives to accompany the photograph can be added.

Examples of using Photovoice in evaluation include:

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ask people in the network to take and share photos of how the new information and communication flows have changed their practice.

DIALOGUE

Ask people involved in dialogue activities to take and share photos of the process and changes since the dialogue activity.



Screenshot retrieved from <http://placestories.com/story/14542> (2016).

Strengths

- An accessible, participatory technique that elicits rich data.
- Can be empowering for participants to be able to participate in evaluations.
- A good way to capture stories and ideas that are hard to write in text.

Considerations

- Purpose and topic or questions need to be clear so that the photographs are helpful for the evaluation.
- Requires a skilled facilitator.
- Depends on access to cameras (and, if you want it to be multimedia, editing software).

Guides

Photovoice description on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/photovoice>

Detailed photovoice manual: http://www.photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PV_Manual.pdf

Practical guide: <http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/files/doc/D5/CLW%20pp%20164%20Photovoices.pdf>

Overview video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyXnnOlvqOM>

Interviews



Asking a series of questions to a participant that are then documented through notes, audio and video recording.

Examples of using Interviews in evaluation include:

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Interview trainers, mentors, participants, and managers, or employers of participants about changes in skills and capacity.

CONTENT

Interview content producers to find out about the process of production. Interview audiences about their responses to the content you've created.

DIALOGUE

Interview participants and have a discussion about their experiences.



Photograph from the Citizen Access to Information in Papua New Guinea report, 2012. Copyright of ABC International Development.

Strengths

- Can be used to get personal and in-depth information.
- Can lead to surprising and unexpected insights.
- Opinions and differences that may not be shared in group discussions may be shared in individual interviews.

Considerations

- Transcribing interviews can be very time consuming.
- Analysing large amounts of interview data requires some skills in qualitative analysis.

Guides

Interviews in the EAR Toolbox: <http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/3-1.html>

Interviews overview on Better Evaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/interviews>

Group Interviews/Focus Groups



Explore attitudes and generate discussion among interviewees on a certain topic, with more than one interviewee (often about 6-10).

Examples of using Group Interviews/Focus Groups in evaluation include:

CONTENT

Interview different groups (for example, women, young people, elders separately) to find out how different kinds of audience members respond to the content.

DIALOGUE

Interview different groups (for example, women, young people, elders) separately to find out how they were involved in the dialogue/discussions responded and engaged in discussions.



Focus group discussion. Photo courtesy of ABC International Development.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Interview groups of practitioners to find out if they are aware of or use new policies and legislation.

Strengths

- Discussion among participants can show areas of similarities and differences.
- Issues can sometimes emerge through group discussion that might not arise individually.

Considerations

- It is common to separate people by gender, age, and social status to get deeper discussions.
- Requires a strong facilitator to ask open-ended questions and manage group dynamics.
- People sometimes say what they think that others want to hear.
- People sometimes may not feel comfortable disagreeing with others in this setting.

Guides

Focus groups on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/FocusGroups>

Group interviews in the EAR Toolbox: <http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/3-2.html>

Critical Listening/Viewing and Feedback Sessions



To get quick feedback on content so that it can be improved. It involves gathering a group (perhaps the producers or representatives from the target audience), listening or watching the content and thinking about strengths and areas for improvement. This is often followed by a group discussion.

Examples of using Critical Listening/Viewing and Feedback Sessions in evaluation include:

CONTENT

Hear reflections from a range of people involved in making the content (producers) on its effectiveness and how it could be improved.

Receive suggestions from groups of audiences on the relevance of the content and how it could be improved.



Film screening in a Haus Piksa (village cinema) in Goroka, Papua New Guinea.
Photo by Mark Eby.

Strengths

- Useful for identifying the relevance and quality of the content as judged by producers, peers or target audiences.
- Useful for reflecting on and improving content.

Considerations

- Using this method on its own won't tell you much about changes as a result of the content, or how many people are accessing the content.

Guides

Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit (developed here for radio content, but can be used for other content types): http://bettevaluation.org/sites/default/files/EA_PM%26E_toolkit_module_4_CLFS_for_publication.pdf

Observation

Gathering information by observing people, places and/ or processes and documenting through notes or video.

Examples of using Observation in evaluation include:

INFRASTRUCTURE

Returning to a site regularly (such as once per month or once per week) to observe how many people are using the new network, or equipment, when they are using it, how long they are using it for, and what they are using it for.

DIALOGUE

Observe and take notes of dialogue activities to find out what kind of group dynamic was created during the activity.



Photograph by Marion Muliamalesi'i (2015).

Strengths

- Sometimes it's hard to get a full understanding of what is happening unless you go and see it for yourself.
- Sometimes people don't tell you the whole story in interviews, so observation can help fill in the gaps.
- Observation can be done independently and easily incorporated into your other project activities.

Considerations

- People might behave differently when they know you are there.
- You need to spend some time preparing forms and other tools for documenting the observation.
- You need to decide when, where and why you're observing.

Guides

Participant observation in the EAR Toolbox: <http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/2-0.html>

Non-participant observation on BetterEvaluation:
<http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/nonparticipantobservation>

Participant observation on BetterEvaluation:
<http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/participantobservation>

Documentation using Photography & Video



Observing changes that have taken place in the environment or activities of a community through the use of images taken over a period of time.

Examples of using Documentation using Photography & Video in evaluation include:

CONTENT

Take photographs showing the number of people at screenings.

Take photographs of people accessing services or implementing practices encouraged through the content 'before and after' your project activities to capture visible changes.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Take photographs or video of the new equipment being used 'before and after' the project.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Take before and after videos or photographs of practitioners in their workplace to show changes.

DIALOGUE

Video record a discussion during the event. Video record interviews with people after the event.



Photo courtesy of PACMAS.

Strengths

- Visual evidence of change is very powerful.
- Where this is used for interviews, it enables interviewees to provide compelling narratives in their own words.
- It is useful where you are hoping that noticeable visual changes will occur as a result of your program.

Considerations

- It depends on access to equipment (cameras, may use phone cameras).
- Some editing skills and resources may be required for video.
- Still photos are less effective when trying to capture changes that you can't see. Consider using participatory video or photo voice, where participants can take photos to represent changes they believe are important.

Guides

Guide on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/photographyvideorecording>

Diaries and Journals



Monitoring tool to keep accurate records and documentation of activities. Diaries and journals can be kept individually by project team members, collectively by the project team, or by participants.

Examples of using Diaries and Journals in evaluation include:

CONTENT

Track and observe the process of the content production.

DIALOGUE

Track and observe the instances of dialogue and outcomes emerging.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Reflections on the use of new training and skills.



Making notes. Photo by Jennifer Anayo.

Strengths

- Relatively cheap and simple way to keep track of events, activities, observations, questions, changes stories and problems.
- Helpful when it comes time to reflect upon new programs or changes.
- Can capture unexpected events.

Considerations

- Can sometimes lead to a lot of data that can be challenging to manage and analyse.

Guides

Diaries, feedback and self evaluation in the EAR Toolbox: <http://ear.findingavoice.org/toolbox/6-0.html>

Logs and diaries on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/logsanddiaries>

Sketch Mapping



Creating visual representations ('map') of a geographically based or defined issue. Sketch Mapping can be repeated to gauge changes over time.

Examples of using Sketch Mapping in evaluation include:

INFRASTRUCTURE

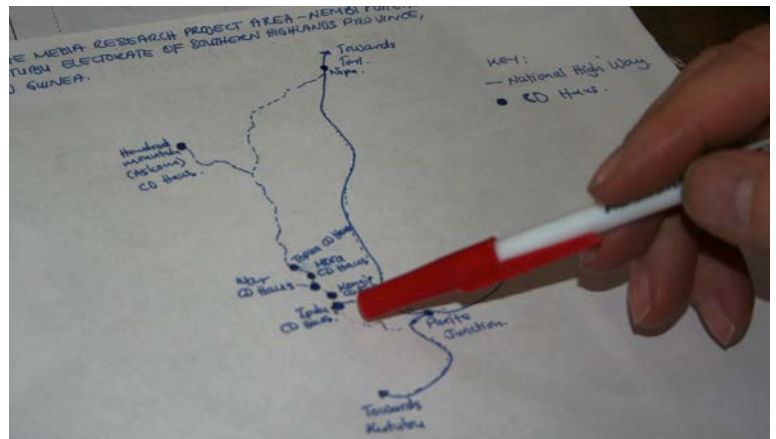
Ask small groups or communities to map the information sources and infrastructure. For example, where are the wifi hotspots? where are the village cinemas? where do people in the community go to get information on health?

CONTENT

Ask small groups or communities to map where the content been distributed. This is useful if this is local knowledge.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Ask groups of practitioners to map the location of people with high capacity/low capacity, and how they are connected. Repeat the mapping to find out how this changes over time.



Sketch mapping in the Aliko and Ambai project. Photograph by Kingsford Napai.

Strengths

- Participatory technique to capture local knowledge
- Useful for informing projects and understanding needs
- Can collect physical information and social information (ownership, gender)

Considerations

- Mainly useful when geography and locations are important
- Depends on have a skilled facilitator

Guides

Sketch mapping on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/sketchmapping>

Resource mapping: http://www.iapad.org/resource_mapping.htm
http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexd/Annex_D-3DEF.pdf

Ideas Rating

Collecting ideas and finding out the level of agreement with the ideas among a large number of people.

Examples of using Ideas Rating in evaluation include:

DIALOGUE

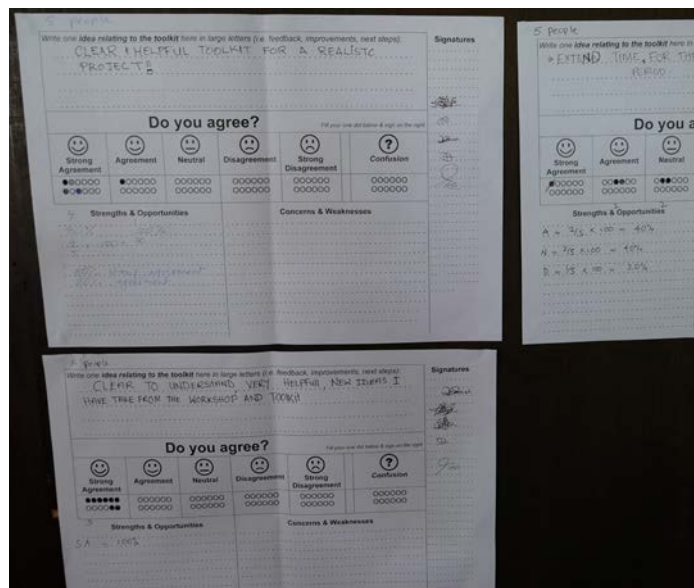
Ask a group of people to write the most significant part of the discussion on an ideas rating sheet, then ask the group members to indicate the degree to which they agree.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Ask a group of people to write the most valuable skill or outcome they have gained on ideas sheets, then ask group members to indicate the degree to which they agree.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ask a group of people to write the useful improvements to the system on ideas sheets, then ask the group members to indicate the degree to which they agree.



Ideas ranking at the Mobilising Media workshop in Vanuatu. Mobilising Media Project (2015).

Strengths

- Generates quantitative data (numbers) from participatory processes.
- Identifies ideas and preferences among a large group, building consensus.
- Can be used to get answers to evaluation questions such as 'how can this be improved' or 'what were the highlights'.
- It could be used as a group analysis tool in conjunction with story-based methods.

Considerations

- It requires a good facilitator.
- Because it's based on consensus, it doesn't necessarily show areas of disagreement or difference.
- It doesn't necessarily give evidence for change, only a group consensus on particular questions.

Guides

Ideas rating sheets: <http://www.ideaatingsheets.org/>

Downloadable and printable ideas rating sheets: <http://www.ideaatingsheets.org/download>

Dotmocracy on BetterEvaluation: <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/Dotmocracy>

Proportional Piling

Generates estimates of proportions from participants in a visual and accessible way. Participants use groups of seeds, stones, or other local materials (usually 50 or 100 objects in total) to show proportions.

Examples of using Proportional Piling in evaluation include:

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ask individuals to separate the seeds into piles that represent the proportion of time or money used to achieve a certain outcome. Do this before and after the infrastructure initiative to see if there are changes.

CONTENT

Ask small groups to separate the seeds into piles that represent the proportion of the community who accessed the content.



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Strengths

- Draws on local knowledge.
- Does not depend on literacy of participants.
- Generates quantitative data which is often preferred by funders.
- Can be repeated with many people to generate very trustworthy data.

Considerations

- The questions must be very clear.
- It might be necessary to combine this method with interviews or other qualitative method to get more details.

Guides

Proportional piling used in the context of Participatory Rural Appraisal: http://www.sswm.info/sites/default/files/reference_attachments/ADEBO%202000%20Training%20Manual%20on%20Participatory%20Rural%20Appraisal.pdf (page 26)

Content Analysis



Collecting, archiving and analysing newspapers, radio and other news outlets for coverage and treatment of specific topics.

Examples of using Content Analysis in evaluation include:

CAPACITY-BUILDING

Undertake an analysis the stories produced by participants according to a specific criteria. This may include accuracy and depth of coverage on a specific topic before a capacity building activity, and again afterwards to find out if there has been improvement.

You can carry out content analysis before and after your project using criteria relevant to the capacity building goals (such as diversity of sources, comprehensiveness) to find out if the content producers' skills have improved during the project.



Image courtesy of PACMAS.

CONTENT

Use ongoing quantitative content analysis to find out if there has been an increase in the number of stories, prominence of stories (first page, second page) or length of stories (1 minute, 10 lines) about a specific topic (e.g., health, climate change) during a campaign.

Strengths

- It's a way of collecting information that does not involve other people or changing the media that you are studying.
- Can be quantitative (number of articles, number of lines/minutes per story, number of sources, prominence), or qualitative (depth, accuracy, message, quality).
- Can be made to be quite systematic through choosing specific criteria (such as times of day for radio or TV, specific weeks or number of editions per week).

Considerations

- To make before and after comparisons you need access to a sample before the activity started.
- Can be quite time consuming if the criteria is very broad.
- Can require some skills in identifying 'codes' for analysis.

Guides

Content analysis on BetterEvaluation: http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/content_analysis

Methods for evaluating media interventions in conflict countries: <http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/fileLibrary/PDFs/taylorcaux2.pdf> (page 3-4)