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Module 8: Reporting and Utilization

Outline

A. Ways evaluation is useful
B. Reasons evaluations are underutilized
C. Deciding what to say
D. Deciding how to communicate the message
E. Writing reports
F. Using graphics
G. Oral presentations

A. Ways evaluation is useful

1. When evaluation complements other sources of information and advice
2. Provides "political cover" (through objective evidence) for difficult decisions
3. When credibility or perceived independence of evaluators is critical
4. Identifies "winners" and "losers" and how to reduce negative effects
5. Provides a "big picture" to help decision-makers understand issues
6. Helps managers understand how political and other pressures can limit project access to certain groups
7. Provides new knowledge or understanding (learning)
8. Brings people together and forces action (catalytic function)

Adapted from Bamberger, 2006

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B. Reasons evaluations are underutilized

1. Lack of ownership
   - Key stakeholders are insufficiently consulted
   - Outside "experts," donors, or others develop evaluation focus or design with little client input
   - Evaluation seen as a threat
2. Timing
   - Findings presented too late to be useful, or too soon for policymakers or program managers to focus on evaluation's findings
3. Poor communication between evaluator and client
   - Insufficient or ineffective communications
   - Language or conceptual problems
   - Objectivity paradigm limits evaluator-client communication

Adapted from Bamberger, 2006

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Reasons evaluations are underutilized (continued)

4. Lack of flexibility and responsiveness to client needs
   - For example, national evaluation systems sometimes introduce top-down, uniform evaluation/reporting systems that do not reflect the realities or constraints of different agencies
5. Resource constraints
   - Budget
   - Limited local expertise
6. Time constraints
   - Too many demands on client and stakeholders' time
   - Insufficient time for evaluators to carry out evaluation planning, implementation, reporting, dissemination

Reasons evaluations are underutilized (continued)

7. Relevance
   - Evaluation does not address priority information needs of clients
   - Some information considered not useful
   - Analysis or presentation style inadequate – too technical, too detailed, too general
8. External factors
   - Problems with monitoring or evaluation systems
   - Dissemination mechanisms
   - Political ethics (attitudes to transparency)
   - Client's lack of long-term vision
   - Government's perception of evaluation

C. Deciding what to say

1. Data analysis strategies for identifying the key messages

a. Noting patterns and themes
- looking at frequency of association and avoiding generalizing from one or two cases

b. Seeing plausibility
- Do the patterns and potential effects seem plausible? (requires further verification)

c. Clustering
- scanning/exploring
- ordering/reviewing
- selecting

Source: Adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994. Chapter 10 "Tactics for generating meaning" 7

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Identifying the key messages…continued

d. Making metaphors
- Achieving integration among diverse pieces of data
- Everyone uses metaphors-important to understand this and examine how they structure thinking about an issue

e. Counting
- Seeing what you have
- Verifying a hypothesis
- Keeping yourself analytically honest

f. Making contrasts and comparisons
- Make sure you are using the right comparisons and that they make sense
- Ask yourself:
  - "How big must a difference be before it is important?"
  - "How do I think I know that?"
  - "What else do I know about the persons, groups or cases being compared?"

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Identifying the key messages…continued

g. Partitioning variables
   - Check whether variables need to be unbundled into separate categories

h. Subsuming particulars into general
   - Reduce complexity by combining things that “go together”

i. Factoring
   - Themes or patterns cutting across different kinds of data that contribute to our understanding of the underlying dynamics

j. Noting relations between variables
   - Variables that move together [in the same or opposite directions]
   - Useful in testing causality

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Identifying the key messages…continued

k. Finding intervening variables
   - Helps explain why the relationship between two variables that ought to go together is weak
   - Helps explain why two variables that do not seem related actually go together

l. Building a logical chain of evidence
   - Creating an events chain to explain all of the linkages and interactions
   - Link to program theory models and logical models

m. Making conceptual/theoretical coherence
   - Moving from metaphors to constructs and theories

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2. Making claims about evaluation findings

Assess both the **importance of the claims** and the **strength of the evidence**

		Importance of claims	
		Major	Minor
Rigor of claims (strength of evidence)	Strong		
	Weak		

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Characteristics of claims of major importance

- Involves having an impact
- Deals with important social problem
- Affects large numbers of people
- Saves money and or/time
- Enhances quality
- Shows something can really be done about a problem
- Involves model or approach that could be replicated

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Characteristics of strong evidence

- Valid, believable evidence
- Data covers a long period of time
- Claim is about clear intervention with solid documentation
- Clearly specified outcomes and impacts
- Includes comparisons to program goals, over time, with other groups, with general trends or norms
- Evidence stronger when it comes from more than one source
  - more than one site
  - more than one staff member obtains outcomes
  - same results from different cohort groups
  - different programs obtained comparable results using the approach
- Based on more than one kind of evidence
- Clear, logical linkages between intervention and claimed outcomes
- Independence and objectivity of evaluators

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D. How to communicate the message
1. Guiding principles

- Strive for clarity and simple language
- Use numbers sparingly
- Communicate reasoning as well as main findings (bottom line)
- Elucidate, don't advocate
- Identify group who will benefit ("winners") and groups who will be worse off ("losers")
- Don't overlook unintended consequences
- Be intentional and purposeful about reporting
- Focus reports on primary intended users
- Have continuous communication throughout the evaluation and avoid surprising stakeholders
- Think positive about negatives
- Distinguish dissemination from use

Adapted from Vaughan and Buss, 1998, Chapter 8; Patton (1997): 330-337

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2. Communication style and dissemination

- Reporting style and dissemination considerations
  - Short versus long reports
  - Combining oral and written presentations
  - Informal versus formal style
  - Using the right language
    - make sure the written report is available in stakeholder languages
  - Project visits
  - Working with the media
  - Spending sufficient resources (budget, time, etc.) on dissemination efforts

3. Quantitative and Qualitative communication styles

Tables versus text

Types of evidence

- Quantitative
  - Statistical analysis
  - Charts
  - Quantitative secondary data
- Qualitative
  - Case studies
  - Stories
  - Photos and videos
  - Site visits
  - Testimonials

4. The client's preferred communication style

- Written and/or oral
- Quantitative/qualitative
- Multiple presentations to different audiences

Role
ministry heads, chief executives, governing boards, directors, funders / donors
program directors, managers, program officers, funders / donors
program officers, staff members

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4. The client's preferred communication style (continued)

- Consider your presentation from your audience's needs
  - Consider preparing separate reports for different audiences (e.g., National Assembly, ministry heads, donor community, project staff, beneficiaries, etc.)
- Examples of different decision makers' report preferences
  - High intellectual: capable of absorbing complexities, technical information, details
  - Short personal stories and anecdotes: desires summary information with stories
  - Action-oriented, pragmatic: desires information about alternative options (strengths and challenges) for policy or other decisions

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E. Writing Reports

- Simple and clear
- Place technical information in an appendix
- State limitations of study
- Report findings: simple, easy to follow
- Organize around research questions or themes
- Place major points at top
- Never make recommendations without support
- Present the most important material
- Leave time for editing and multiple revisions
  - Have a ‘cold reader’ (someone uninvolved with the study or project) review the draft
  - Have a knowledgeable reader review the draft

Typical Sections in a Report

Executive summary
- Highlights major findings, referring readers to the report body and appendix for details

Introduction
- Purpose, background

Methodology-describes how study was conducted and to highlight any limitations in data and analysis
- Brief in body of report
- Details can go in appendix

Findings - body of report
- Present data so audience can understand
- Present data selectively: what’s your point?

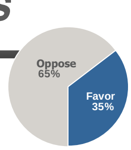
Conclusions
- Tie back to your research questions

Recommendations
- Make sure you have presented the evidence to support the recommendations
- Present options related to costs, feasibility of implementation, likely effect on program performance, likely side effects

Executive Summary

- Essential for busy readers
  - limit the number of pages (for example 1-10 pages)
- Bottom line focused: major findings and recommendations
  - present in bullet format
- Refer readers to the full report or appendix for more details
- Executive summary format
  - Brief overview: background and purpose of the study
  - Brief description of major questions, issues
  - Brief description of research methods
  - Major findings
  - Major conclusions
  - Major recommendations

F. Using Graphics: Charts and Tables



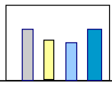
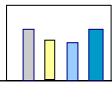
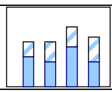
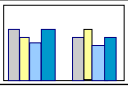
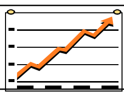
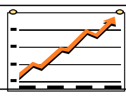
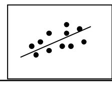
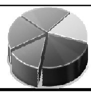
Charts: Better for presenting the message

Tables: Better for presenting data

Questions	Mean	N
5. Satisfaction with amount of water	4.41	1,438
6. Satisfaction with quality of water	4.06	1,457

- Benefits
  - Impact
  - Audience acceptance
  - Memory retention
  - Show the big picture, message
  - Visually interesting
  - One picture is worth a thousand words
- Charts and Tables should
  - Present data simply and accurately
  - Make data coherent
  - Engage the audience
  - Serve multiple purposes (describe, explore, tabulate, compare)

Chart Options

	Frequency	Parts of a whole	Comparison	Trends / Time Series	Relationships
Single Bar					
Stacked Bar					
Cluster Bar					
Line					
Scatter					
Pie					

Effective Charts

- Easy to read
  - use upper and lower cases (avoid all capital letters)
  - only use a few type faces (fonts)
  - make charts appropriate for the delivery
- Avoid busy patterns
- Use white space
- Keep the chart simple
- Keep scales honest
- Use title to convey message
- Provide sufficient data with the chart so the message is clear
- Identify source of data
- Put supporting data in an appendix

Effective Tables

- Simple and accurate
- Clearly label rows and columns
  - avoid abbreviations
- Show percents
  - round to nearest whole numbers
- Show total numbers (N=_)
- Identify the source of the data

G. Oral Presentations

- Prepare:
  - Who is your audience?
  - What do you want them to remember?
  - How much time will you have?
  - What delivery resources are available?
  - Are handouts needed (not too many)
  - Rehearse, get feedback
  - Simple, clear, and audience focused
- Avoid complex language, detailed data
- Organize
  - tell them what the presentation will cover
  - tell them the findings
  - tell them what you told them
- If possible, make interactive
- Be prepared for questions