

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO



Photography and video can be used as data collection methods. They can also be used to help analyse or communicate information. Photography and video can be used as monitoring and evaluation tools on their own, or in combination with other methodologies. They can both be applied as participatory techniques that seek to empower communities.

Photographs and videos show still or moving images. Photography and video can be used as data collection methods, and can also be used to help analyse or communicate information. Photographs can be used on their own, but are more often accompanied by written captions, providing additional information. Videos are often accompanied by a commentary.

Photography and video can both be used as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools on their own. They can also be used to triangulate information generated through other methods of data collection such as interviews and surveys. In addition, photography and video are often used as part of wider M&E methodologies such as the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, process tracing and outcome harvesting.

The use of photographs and videos within M&E has become increasingly common in recent years. This is partly because of improvements in mobile phone technology, which has enabled people to produce high quality photographs and videos cheaply.

Photography

Photographs can provide an objective picture of activities or changes at any level from outputs through to impact. Photographs are most often used to show physical changes. For example, photographs taken at the same site before, during and after the construction of a school can show clearly the development of a school-building programme.

However, photographs may also be used to show other kinds of change. For example, photographs taken before and after an inclusive education project could show children segregated within a classroom before a project and mixed afterwards. Or photographs of women attending community meetings could indicate how relationships between men and women have changed over time.

Photographs may be used to show any kind of change; expected or unexpected, positive or negative. Photographs may also be used as part of a baseline exercise to show the situation at, or near to, the start of a project or programme with the intention of demonstrating predicted change later on.

Photography can be used systematically to show change over the course of a project or programme. The same

objects or events can be photographed at regular intervals or at strategic times during a project or programme. For example, photographs could be taken of seed cultivation prior to seeding, during seeding, prior to harvesting and after the harvest over the course of two or three years to show progress within an agricultural extension project.

As well as being used for data collection and analysis, photographs are used extensively in marketing and communications. Most monitoring reports and evaluation reports now contain photographs that are intended to make the reports more interesting, and bring any changes observed to life.

Video

Videos have the additional advantage that they can capture moving images, accompanied by sound. Therefore, videos are better able to show processes and relationships, such as how teachers interact with children in a classroom, how local communities interact with government officials during meetings, or how a non-governmental organisation (NGO) conducts regular team meetings.

As with photographs, videos can be used to show predicted change by using 'before and after' images. They can also be used to show unexpected and/or negative changes, as well as changes in the external environment, such as changing weather patterns or changing landscapes.

Videos can communicate much more information than photographs, and are therefore capable of representing more complex pictures of change. However, it is harder to produce a video than a photograph, and there may be disagreements about the message a video is seeking to communicate.

Participatory photography and video

Both photographs and videos can be used to acquire information from an outsider's point of view. But photography and video can also be used as participatory techniques.

In the case of photographs, this is done by providing cameras to participants in a project or programme (if they don't have them already) and asking them to take

photographs of the things they feel are important. This enables change to be seen through participants' own eyes. Later on, different photographs can be discussed by participants and project or programme staff to help analyse changing situations or take decisions going forward.

Over recent years there has been increasing interest in the use of video as a participatory analysis technique. There are two main ways in which this can be done. The first is to get an external film-maker to record events, objects and interviews with project or programme stakeholders, and then to develop this into a video. The case study below shows an example of this, taken from a WaterAid project in Tanzania in 2004.

Case study: WaterAid in Tanzania

In 2004, WaterAid Tanzania produced a participatory video about the small-scale privatisation of village water schemes. This video was used to stimulate debate, and was shown on a local TV channel. The participatory research had two principal objectives. Firstly, WaterAid used the lessons learned from the management of water supplies at village level to inform decision-makers at different levels. For example, the video was shown to Ministry officials, including the Director of Rural Water Supply, as a basis for discussion about the management and regulation of small-scale schemes and private operators.

Secondly, the participation of villagers was intended to lead to greater empowerment, as it was designed to improve their access to information on how water supplies were being managed. Indeed, after the video had been shown at one of the participating villages an immediate decision was taken to restrict the future activities of the private contractor responsible for maintaining the water supply in the village. As a negative side-effect, the contractor became fearful for his own safety and abandoned the village for a while.

The second method is to give a video camera to participants to let them develop their own films. This kind of participatory video started in the 1990s and has become increasingly common over the past twenty years (see Mountain 2014). Participatory video is different from conventional video-making in that the production of the video is solely the responsibility of a group or community.

Rather than trying to produce a high-quality video to professional standards, the aim of the participatory video technique is to encourage a process of empowerment in which participants can better understand their own situation and communicate this to outsiders.

Strengths and weaknesses of video as an M&E methodology

Whether used in a participatory way or not, videos have many strengths as an M&E methodology. Firstly, the views of project stakeholders can be brought directly to the attention of outsiders, without the use of intermediaries. Secondly, many participants are able to clearly understand and engage with a video even if they are unable to read or understand complex reports. Thirdly, videos can show deeply moving, touching or upsetting images that can connect with audiences on an emotional level. Fourthly, if used as a genuinely participatory exercise, videos can help empower communities to understand their own situations and act accordingly (ibid).

However, there are a few factors that need to be considered when deciding whether or not to develop a video as part of an M&E exercise.

- Videos can take a lot of time to produce, edit and finalise. If external expertise is needed then the making of a video can be a costly exercise.
- Videos cannot be summarised as easily as written reports. If anticipated audiences (such as senior government officials) do not have much time to spend, then a one-page written summary may be more likely to get attention than a 20-minute video.
- The act of making a video can lead to conflict within communities (see earlier case study). In some cases participants have used videos as an opportunity to publicly criticise stakeholders or make allegations about other members within a community.
- Video information cannot be treated as confidential. This means that sensitive or confidential information is not usually included. Alternatively, some information may come to light when it shouldn't.

Further reading and resources

Other relevant papers in this section of the M&E Universe deal with direct measurement, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and observation. To access these papers directly, click on the relevant links below.



Direct measurement



Interviews



Focus group discussions



Observation

Participatory video has become a specialist area in monitoring and evaluation, and there is a wealth of advice and information now available on the internet. There is a section on using participatory video in the Save the Children publication, *Toolkits: A practical guide to planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment* by Louisa Gosling with Mike Edwards, 2nd edition. Save the Children, London, 2003. This book is available through the Save the Children UK website.

Photography as a technique is also covered on page 28 of the IFAD Guide to M&E, Annex D, *A Guide for Project M&E*, by Irene Guijt and Jim Woodhill, produced by the International Fund for Agricultural Development. This is available freely from different places on the internet.

There are many articles and examples on the use of photography and video on the Better Evaluation website at <http://betterevaluation.org>.

References

- Mountain, A (2014). *Photography/Video Recording*, Better Evaluation. Retrieved September 2016 from <http://betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/photographyvideorecording>

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