AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON EVALUATION PRACTICES IN BHUTAN

EVALYOUTH BHUTAN

2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The exploratory study on evaluation practices in Bhutan is carried out to ascertain the existence of evaluation practices across government agencies, non-governmental organizations and Civil Society organizations. It also looked at how evaluation approaches and methods are contextualized to align with Bhutan's overarching development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and its context concerning the needs and issues of gender.

There is no literature on evaluation practices in Bhutan, let alone its context to Gross National Happiness and gender. This preliminary study is intended to aid in determining the extent of evaluation practices and ascertain its context to development policies and gender in Bhutan.

The study employed key informant interviews, which were self-administered online to evaluators, evaluation officers, evaluation commissioners, and evaluation policymakers from NGOs, CSOs, Development partners, government agencies, and private consultancy firms, among others.

The study found that evaluation is fairly a new practice across agencies in Bhutan. The evaluation practice is limited to donor-funded projects, although monitoring is widely done across sectors. There is a need to create awareness and educate relevant officials and organizations on the importance of evaluation, more so for a resource scarce country like Bhutan.

Evaluation plays a crucial role in aligning development practices with its goals by highlighting what works and what does not. For this reason, it is important to recognize evaluation as part of the policy formulation and implementation process.

There is a consensus that gender inclusivity should be implemented when conducting evaluation with some organizations already finding ways to implement gendered tools and approaches. On the other hand, concerns are being raised on how forcing gender inclusivity may drive the focus away from men and bring all the focus to only women.

Based on the findings, the study recommends following broad actions by relevant agencies:

- More awareness and advocacy on the importance of evaluation must be conducted;
- Capacity development programs on M&E should to be strengthened;
- Trainings on gender-inclusive evaluation approaches and methods (engendering evaluation) must be provided for evaluators; and,
- Relevant agencies (EAB, Strategic Evaluation Division, Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies) must explore contextualizing some evaluation approaches to align with our overarching development philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

Limitations

The study was carried out through a self-administered online interview with a response rate of only 41%. The questionnaires were designed around three broad themes to understand initial views of evaluation practices in Bhutan, thus the study does not address any specific questions. Despite the low response rate, the quality of responses are assured as all respondents are a select group of qualified evaluators and evaluation officers, experienced evaluation commissioners, and relevant officials from agencies responsible for evaluation-related policies in the country. More than 54.4% of the respondents have over five years of experience in monitoring and evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Evaluation Association of Bhutan and EvalYouth Bhutan would like to thank UNICEF Bhutan for supporting us with financial resources to carry out this exploratory study. We would also like to acknowledge and thank all our respondents for actively taking part in this study. EvalYouth Bhutan's Advisor and Chair of the Evaluation Association of Bhutan, Dr. Phuntsho Choden has reviewed the study design, questionnaires and the final report, for which we would like to acknowledge and thank her for the guidance.

EVALYOUTH BHUTAN CORE WORKING TEAM

The Evaluation Association of Bhutan has given the opportunity to carry out this study to EvalYouth Bhutan. For this assignment, Mr. Tashi Dendup, who is one of the founding Co-Leaders of EvalYouth Bhutan led the core working team. The following members volunteered to carry out this study:

1. Mr. Tashi Dendup, Co-Leader, EvalYouth Bhutan (Team Leader)
2. Ms. Sonam Choden, Co-Leader, EvalYouth Bhutan
3. Ms. Ugyen Lhamo, Core Member, EvalYouth Bhutan
4. Ms. Tandin Pelden, Program Officer, Evaluation Association of Bhutan

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is fairly new in Bhutan as it is not widely practiced and used. Although there are good numbers of evaluation reports carried out by national and international evaluators they are confined mostly to donor-funded projects in Bhutan. In the absence of the National Evaluation Policy, which would form the basis for a minimum system of evaluation across government agencies and others to review the performance of their plans and programs, no consistent evaluation framework is being followed across the different organizations.

Prior to the Situation Analysis Study of Evaluation Association of Bhutan, there was not even a single empirical research that assesses the status and perception on evaluation in Bhutan. The Situation Analysis Study found that evaluation is being practiced among varied agencies. This finding necessitated stakeholders such as EAB and EvalYouth Bhutan to initiate such studies for deeper understanding of the status and perception of evaluation practices in Bhutan.

This study attempts to explore the practices of evaluation, evaluation in the context of its development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, and contextualizing evaluation approaches and methods that are gender inclusive. The evaluation consultants, evaluation commissioners, and evaluation officers of government, non-government, Civil society organizations and international NGOs were involved in the interview.

The study was based on the following three broad themes:

- Evaluation practices in Bhutan;
- Evaluation in the context of Gross National Happiness; and,
- Engendering evaluation approaches and tools.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to initiate a discourse on evaluation practices, contextualization of its practices to our national development policies and the needs and issues of gender. This study intends to help the Evaluation Association of Bhutan and other stakeholders to come up with appropriate interventions, such as training on culturally responsive evaluation and engendering evaluation approaches and methods.

METHODOLOGY

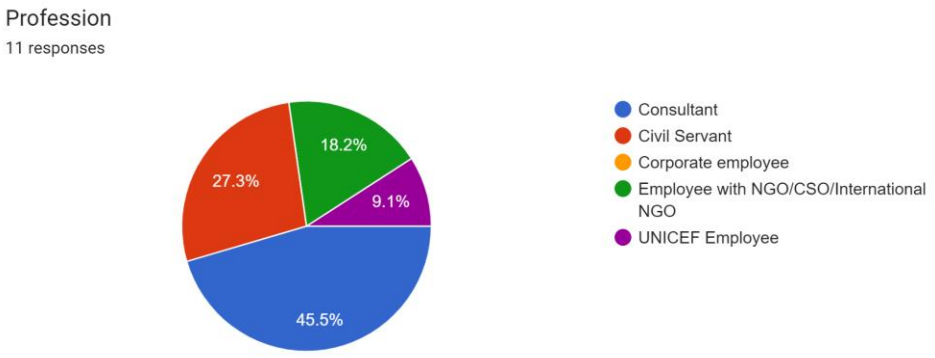
To understand the evaluation practices in Bhutan, the qualitative method was used through open-ended key informant interviews designed around three broad themes. The qualitative method was found appropriate for this exploratory study that intends to lay a groundwork that will lead to future studies on specific themes. The open-ended interview questionnaires were developed by the core working team around three broad themes: evaluation practices, evaluation in the context of GNH and gender-inclusive evaluation.

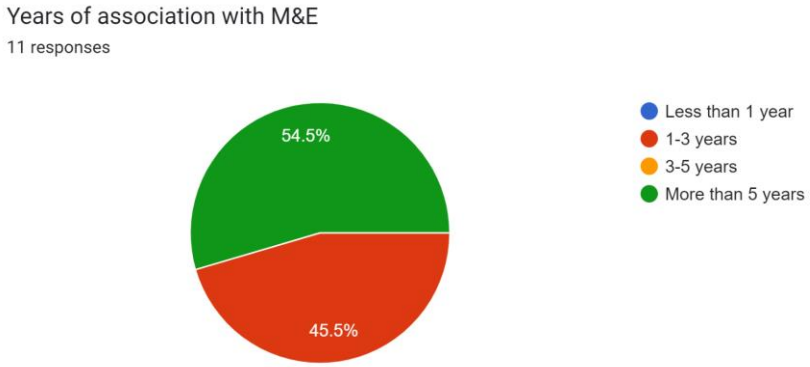
As this is an exploratory study, it is necessary to have the views of relevant stakeholders in the field of evaluation, thus, a purposive sampling method is used to select respondents. A total of 27 respondents from NGOs, CSOs, Government agencies, Development partners, and individual consultants were selected for the interview, but only 11 of them responded to the online interview questionnaires, which is a response rate of 41%. Thematic and content analysis was done to analyze the responses received from 11 participants. A simple data analysis from the google form is used to present the demographic information of the respondents.

FINDINGS

Description of Respondents

The study targeted participants from government agencies, NGOs, CSOs, Development partners, private firms and individual consultants for the interview. Questionnaires were shared using Google forms through email among 27 participants, however, only 11 participants responded to the online interview questionnaires despite several rounds of follow-up emails and calls. There were four female, six male and one indicated as others. As shown in the figure below, 45.5% (5) of the respondents were private consultants, 27.3% (3) were civil servants, 18.2% (2) from International NGO, and the rest from a Civil Society Organization. In terms of professional experience in the monitoring and evaluation field, 54.5% of the respondents indicated that they have more than five years of experience and the rest 45.5% have between 1-5 years of experience.





Theme One: Evaluation Practices in Bhutan

Monitoring and evaluation are regarded as a very important part of the development process. A strong and robust M&E system would not only help track the progress of the developmental works, but also its efficiency and effectiveness. The evaluators of Bhutan are of the view that the monitoring system has been in place for quite a long time, but the evaluation practices are new. One of them said, *"M&E is an important aspect of overall project implementation to track the progress and achievements. This will help in timely identification of the issues and challenges for adaptive project management".*

The Evaluators and Development professionals in Bhutan are of the view that the monitoring system has been there since the introduction of Result-Based Management in 2005. Particularly, civil servants have become comfortable using indicators to measure performance and to determine the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of programs. When it comes to evaluation, it is still at a nascent stage and evaluation practices are not so popular among civil service agencies.

One of the experienced evaluators stresses on reasons for the limited practice of evaluation in Bhutan, where she said, *"Monitoring is practiced widely but the practice of evaluation is still at a nascent stage. The practice of different forms of monitoring including financial and performance audits, APA and other types of assessments do exist in the system. Lack of appropriate knowledge on evaluation and its use, limited capacity to produce credible and quality evaluation and also limited resources allocated for evaluation could be some reasons for limited practice of evaluation".*

The respondents cite a lack of awareness, capacity building and budget as common reasons for poor monitoring and evaluation practices in Bhutan. Except for some donor-funded programs and projects, evaluation practices are almost non-existent across government and non-government organizations in Bhutan. One of the evaluator respondents stated, *"In Bhutan, M&E is mostly applied in project activities as part of donor requirements. Most government projects are completed without proper monitoring, let alone evaluation. M&E which mainly includes field monitoring, stakeholder communication and process and impact evaluation incurs huge costs and hence unless mandated and budgeted in the project documents, this aspect is often overlooked".*

Monitoring and evaluation are very important, especially for a resource-constrained country like Bhutan. A robust M&E system tracks and evaluates the proper utilization of limited resources for an intended purpose. Bhutan being dependent on foreign aid and development partners should uphold transparency and accountability, for which evaluation is critical.

Evaluation helps in assessing the relevancy and success of the project which determines the future course of action. For a resource-constrained country, the evaluation also provides insights and learnings from the implementation of programs. This is very important to channel the resources into appropriate areas of intervention and optimize its utilization.

The following responses underscore the importance of M&E in Bhutan:

"Being heavily dependent on foreign aid and development partners (not to mention the limited internal revenue), prioritization of activities and investment in activities with the best returns is very important. We are also investing in a lot of heavy capital activities (where quality is often questionable), as well as in softer components (training, etc.), and constant monitoring is very important. Evaluation is also necessary to determine the relevancy of programs (some of which have been the same for several plans) and will provide a basis to either continue or to evolve certain programs/activities".

".....the M&E process is also useful for learning and improving the existing standards and procedures. This aspect is also crucial for responsibility, accountability and transparency in any project management. Further, timely evaluation is critical to understand the performance of a project and assess if adaptive management is required".

Evaluation is also seen as an important aspect of the development process to ensure transparency in the overall system of governance. When asked how evaluation helps in promoting a transparent working system in the development process, one of the respondents stated, *"Evaluation is the process that assesses what initiatives worked and what did not, and it answers to a certain extent why and makes people learn and improve the future initiatives. This process to be successful*

requires every stakeholder to be part of the discussions and open and be transparent without fear of holding one responsible for any wrongdoing for a failure. Everyone must be able to take ownership and correct the failure. Only through such a process can learnings happen and improvement for future initiatives can be developed. Evaluation, in this way, promotes a transparent working system".

The evaluation process involves open communication and deep listening to understand the process and impacts brought about by the project/program. This, according to one of the evaluators, promotes transparency in the system, *".....evaluation can help track the performance and accordingly make people accountable for the work. It is important to listen and communicate with all partners engaged for transparency".*

The respondents felt that all relevant stakeholders should be involved in the evaluation processes to have a comprehensive picture of the program. Among others, project beneficiaries are seen as the most important stakeholder to be included in the evaluation process. More than assessing the achievement of planned activities, the inclusion of the beneficiaries will help in understanding the real impacts of the project/program on the ground.

One of them goes on to say, *"If possible, all the stakeholders should be evaluated. If resources are limited, then at least implementing agencies and the beneficiaries should be evaluated".* This underscores the importance of including project beneficiaries in the evaluation process.

Theme Two: Evaluation in the context of Gross National Happiness (GNH)

The phrase 'Gross National Happiness' was first coined by the fourth King of Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1972 when he declared, *"Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product".* The concept implies that sustainable development should take a holistic approach towards notions of progress and give equal importance to non-economic aspects of wellbeing. As an Evaluator/Evaluation commissioner/Evaluand, some of our respondents have expressed how they contextualize evaluation principles/approaches/methods to fit into our overarching development goal of GNH.

Many of the respondents agree that the overall principle of the evaluation is in line with the national principle of GNH (especially, good governance and sustainable and equitable socio-economic development). It should be carried out as per the criteria such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Evaluation should be carried out without bias if done internally.

One of the respondents stated that "*There are no 'One-size-Fits All' methods in M&E. Different M&E needs different approaches depending on the objectives and the goals of the program or project implemented*" which complemented another respondent who stated, "*GNH is broad, but it has been translated into nine domains. Each of these is employed into evaluation principles/approaches/methods where applicable, in part or whole depending on the type of evaluation at different phases".*

For most of the projects and activities in Bhutan, the inclusion of GNH principles is already taken into account while preparing the project proposals. In terms of evaluation, it could be assessed through the criteria of relevance and sustainability. However, since evaluation is an emerging concept used in Bhutan, some of the respondents stated that all important projects and programs need M&E and the principles/approaches/methods may have to be contextualized depending on the nature and type of projects/programs/plans.

Many of our respondents also agreed that evaluation relates and links to the concept of GNH. There are plenty of times when evaluation is related to GNH. For example, the evaluation of any social project (e.g. water supply scheme, youth engagement program, women empowerment program, etc.) all relate to the GNH concept.

According to one of the evaluators, "*Evaluation is a process which can be conducted on processes like decision making, judgments, organizational development, ultimately trying to solve social issues to contribute towards social values, which is closely in line with GNH principles.*"

One of them goes on to say, *"Development evaluation is beautifully linked to every sphere of the development cycle and there is no need to complicate evaluation vis-a-vis GNH".*

Theme Three: Engendering evaluation approaches and tools

Gender transformative approaches are interventions that help in identifying the different needs, priorities and opportunities of both men and women. This approach should be integrated at every level of project/activities to determine how project interventions may impact different gender. However, the respondents believe that it should not be used only when discussing men and women, but should include projects that deal with vulnerable groups of people such as LGBTQ+. The gender transformative approach should be included wherever relevant or necessary depending on the nature.

One respondent said, *"I think it is always important to view any evaluation approach through a gender lens. A gender transformative approach would show how women's (and children's) empowerment are critical to successful interventions".* However, one respondent was of the view that not all projects or programs need gender transformation. Forcefully including gender components in programs they believe could create biases in the objectives and results of the program as a whole.

The respondents also defined what they believe is engendering evaluation approaches and tools and how they make it gender-inclusive. It varied from just including women beneficiaries and representatives to having all those in the spectrum of the LGBTQ+ in important forums of the evaluation processes. Some even include other minorities outside of genders such as persons with disabilities, old people, and representatives for children in the evaluation of national policies and guidelines.

One respondent said that their organization is using gender analysis as a critical social research tool and are looking at ways to transform gender norms, and reduce gender gaps. This could be because the respondents believe that evaluation is a multidisciplinary application that cuts across all spheres and it is important to ask who is missing and if all the vulnerable groups are included. It is important to see how everyone views gender inclusivity and how some organizations are already looking at ways to improve the monitoring and evaluation processes as cited below: *''We*

are in the process of reviewing M&E, so that we can make sure gender and other cross-cutting issues are captured and accordingly implemented to achieve SDG goals".

As it is with most projects and programs, most often evaluations/ evaluators face budget constraints and lack of time to adopt gender-inclusive and culturally responsive approaches. Most argue that the challenge they face across the board is a lack of disaggregated data, acceptance from community and lack of awareness. *".....need more advocacy and representation and participation from the minority groups".*

The other issue that was mentioned was the lack of capacity to implement the gender-inclusive approaches because there is a hesitance from the women to involve themselves in the projects. However, there is a view that forcing gender inclusivity from women could affect the overall process of the evaluation or that forcing such inclusivity may drive the focus away from men and bring all the focus to only women. *"Difficult to encourage women to speak and to understand if women really need the push or they are just not interested. There are also chances of neglecting the needs of men with too much focus on bringing women to par with women."*

"Evaluation is all about learning what policies or initiatives worked and what did not, and informing the future policies and initiatives". Evaluation is a learning process and evaluators learn from past successes and failures, the results of such programs provide various learning experiences. The experiences of the respondents could help evaluation practices be more gender inclusive, which could make significant differences to not only individual lives, but to whole communities as well. Since evaluation tracks the progress of a development subject, it allows evaluators to see the need for designing and implementing more gender inclusive policies. Evaluation allows evaluators to identify the gaps in existing plans and programs and will allow for interventions if required.

One respondent stated that women needed to be involved and engaged in the process of evaluation starting from planning, designing and implementing. *"It will help to address the unmet needs of women, children, transgender, and other vulnerable groups, and help us to design and implement more inclusive policies and programs. It will also ensure that resources are diverted to such critical areas".* The respondents believe that evaluation processes create a common platform for

everyone irrespective of gender to raise their concerns and have an understanding of the situation. One respondent highlighted the importance of upskilling the confidence of women to participate and implement such programs and projects.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The exploratory study on evaluation practices in Bhutan is carried out to ascertain the existence of evaluation practices across government agencies, non-governmental organizations and Civil Society organizations. It also looked at how evaluation approaches and methods are contextualized to align with Bhutan's overarching development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and its context concerning the needs and issues of gender.

The study found that evaluation is fairly a new practice across agencies in Bhutan. The evaluation practice is limited to donor-funded projects, although monitoring is widely done across sectors. There is a need to create awareness and educate relevant officials and organizations on the importance of evaluation, more so for a resource scarce country like Bhutan.

Evaluation plays a crucial role in aligning development practices with its goals by highlighting what works and what does not. For this reason, it is important to recognize evaluation as part of the policy formulation and implementation process.

There is a consensus that gender inclusivity should be implemented when conducting evaluation with some organizations already finding ways to implement gendered tools and approaches. On the other hand, concerns are being raised on how forcing gender inclusivity may drive the focus away from men and bring all the focus to only women. This underscores the need to build capacities of our evaluators on gender inclusive/sensitive evaluation approaches.

Based on the findings, the study recommends following broad actions by relevant agencies:

- More awareness and advocacy on the importance of evaluation must be conducted;
- Capacity development programs on M&E should to be strengthened;
- Trainings on gender-sensitive evaluation approaches and methods (engendering evaluation) must be provided for evaluators; and,
- Relevant agencies (EAB, Strategic Evaluation Division, Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies) must explore contextualizing some evaluation approaches to align with our overarching development philosophy of Gross National Happiness.

ANNEXURE ONE

Qualitative Questionnaires

Evaluation Association of Bhutan (EAB) as a Voluntary Organization for Professionalization of Evaluation (VOPE) is mandated to carry out activities to support the professionalization of evaluation in Bhutan. In 2021, EAB/EvalYouth Bhutan in collaboration with Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) organized a webinar titled, 'Roles of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in achieving Gross National Happiness and Sustainable Development Goals".

For 2022, EvalYouth Bhutan and EAB will be interviewing M&E fraternities of Bhutan to gather and assimilate experiences, practices, and perceptions on the following three themes:

1. Evaluation practices in Bhutan;
2. Evaluation in the context of Gross National Happiness; and,
3. Engendering evaluation approaches and tools.

Demographic information

1. Name
2. Organization
3. Profession
4. Years of association with M&E

Theme One: Evaluation Practices in Bhutan

1. Could you share your perspectives on M&E?
2. Do you think that M&E is widely practiced in Bhutan? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think M&E is important, particularly in Bhutan's context?
4. How important is evaluation in the development of a transparent working system in Bhutan?
5. In your perspective, who needs to be involved in the evaluation process?

Theme Two: Evaluation in the context of Gross National Happiness

1. As an Evaluator/Evaluation commissioner/Evaluand, how do you contextualize evaluation principles/approaches/methods to fit in our overarching development goal of GNH?
2. Has there been a time that you thought evaluation relates/links to GNH?

Theme Three: Engendering evaluation approaches and tools

1. When should gender transformative approaches be used?
2. As an evaluator, how do you engender evaluation approaches and tools to make it gender-inclusive?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities that people see in adopting gender-inclusive approaches or tools?
4. How can evaluation help enhance the benefits of policies/programs/projects, particularly for women?

Organization

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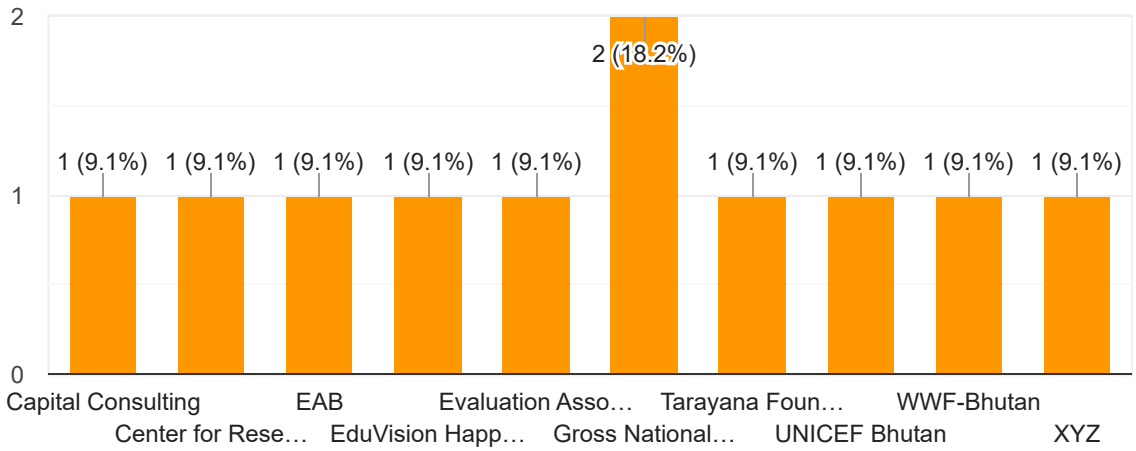
11 responses



Profession

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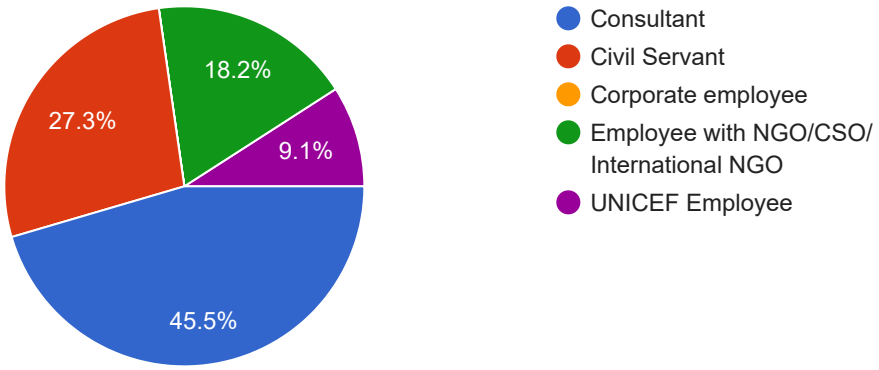
11 responses



Years of association with M&E

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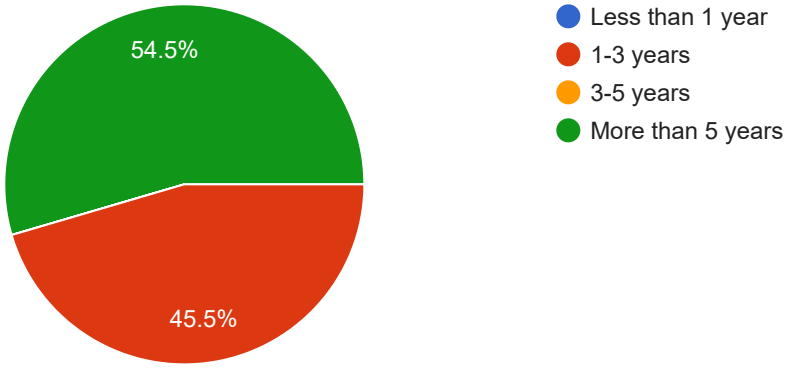
11 responses



Theme One: Evaluation Practices in Bhutan

1. Could you share your perspectives on M&E ?

11 responses

M&E is a critical tool for ensuring an initiative is a good fit for the people

M&E is very important in every organization. M&E plan determines the success or failure of a project.

Crucial for effective and efficient implementation of plans and programs.

Monitoring area is at the advanced stage while evaluation practice is still at an infant stage

M&E has become a critical part of the development process and planning system in Bhutan. It has helped to strengthen accountability and transparency in government systems, and is the only way to measure the success of our programmes and to assess the results we have achieved.

M&E plays crucial part of development. Monitoring has been in practice for long, however, evaluation is very new and not in practice in Bhutan.

M&E is an emerging field in Bhutan. The work we do is important for society for we try to measure how well the project and program is progressing. And what impact it has brought.

M&E is important aspect of overall project implementation to track the progress and achievements. This will help in timely identifying of the issues and challenges for adaptive project management.

It is good but need to create awareness and importance.

M&E is not used by all. But where used it is understood and taken up properly

M&E is an integral part of any program or project which helps us to determine the success and failure of any program or project.

2. Do you think that M&E is widely practiced in Bhutan? Why or why not?

11 responses

Monitoring is practiced widely but practice of evaluation is still at nascent stage. Practice of different forms of monitoring including financial and performance audit, APA and others types of assessments do exist in the system. Lack of appropriate knowledge on evaluation and its use, limited capacity to produce credible and quality evaluation and also limited recourses allocated for evaluation could be some reasons for limited practice of evaluation.

M&E isn't popular amongst most of the Bhutanese people.

Yes, but very wek and limited. There shortage of M&E expertise both within and outside bhutan. We need to invest in building capacities in M&E

Yes. Howevr, evaluation practice need to gain traction

I think the monitoring part is widely practiced (with varying degrees of efficiency). With the introduction of RBM in 2005/2006, monitoring for results and using results framework has become commonplace. More and more civil servants (and others) have become comfortable using results and indicators to measure performance and to determine the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of programmes. However, Evaluation is still at a nascent stage and we need to garner more support around it.

It is not widely practiced in Bhutan because there is no institutional capacity and the concept very new to many.

Not widely practiced.

In Bhutan, M&E is mostly applied in project activities as part of donor requirements. Most of the government are completed without proper monitoring, let alone evaluation. M&E which mainly includes field monitoring, stakeholder communication and process and impact evaluation incurs huge costs and hence, unless mandated and budgeted in the project documents, this aspect is often overlooked.

No because many agencies are not aware of the importance.

no. govt agencies do not seem to use them. But they use other assessment methods. donor projects and NGOs practice them. I mostly work with UN agencies' M&E and its there for all projects.

No. not all projects or program use M&E in Bhutan, may be because if lack of knowledge about M&E.

3. Why do you think M&E is important, particularly in Bhutan's context?

11 responses

M&E is very important for all not just Bhutan. For Bhutan it is important for people including decision makers and evaluators to understand the need to have a context relevant evaluation approach as Bhutan's development is guided by GNH, which is an alternative development approach.

Being a developing country , one should properly monitor every project implementation so that resources are not wasted. Evaluation is an important aspect when it comes to measuring the deliverables of a project.

For country like Bhutan with limited resources, we need proper M&E for efficient and effective use of resources adn to achieve the intended results. Further M&E is also required for ensuring quality work and activities which is lacking currently.

Ita an integral part of overall development policies, plan and projects

Being heavily dependent on foreign aid and development partners (not to mention the limited internal revenue), prioritization of activities and investment in activities with the best returns is very important. We are also investing in a lot of heavy capital activities (were quality is often questionable), as well as in softer components (training etc), and constant monitoring is very important. Evaluation is also necessary to determine the relevancy of programmes (some of which have been the same for several plans) and will provide a basis to either continue or to evolve certain programmes/activities.

M&E can bring about a transparent and accountable governance and optimize utilization of limited resources.

For developing countries with limited resources m&E become important to measure success and performance of teh project. To see how resources are being utilised.

M&E, in Bhutan context like any other country, is important to ensure that activities are on track and resources are used efficiently. The data and evidences collected and analyzed from M&E is used for effective decision-making. The M&E process is also useful for learning and improving the existing standards and procedures.This aspect is also crucial for responsibility, accountability and transparency for any project management. Further, timely evaluation is critical to understand the performance of a project and assess if adaptive management is required.

It is important to improve transparency and create check and balance.

For assessment of projects' objectives and do corrective measures.

M&E helps to determine the success or failure of a project or program. Bhutan being a small and resource constraint country, understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of any development activities is important and M&E helps with that.

4. How important is evaluation in the development of a transparent working system in Bhutan?

11 responses

Evaluation is the process that assess what initiatives worked and what do not, and it answers to certain extent why, and make people to learn and improve the future initiatives. This process to be successful requires every stakeholder to be part of the discussions and open and be transparent without a fear for holding one responsible of any wrong doing for a failure. Every one must be able to take the ownership and correct the failure. Only through such process learnings can happen and improvement for future initiatives can be developed. Evaluation, in this way promotes a transparent working system.

Evaluation is critical in order to track the project and know how resources are utilized and to provide findings and recommendations for the future improvements in the project implementation.

It is critical for fixing accountability, curbing corruption and inefficiencies, etc

Very integral part any transparent working system in Bhutan

Evaluation is very important and necessary in order to understand and determine the needs of the people, for designing more effective and efficient future plans and programmes, and for increased learning.

Evaluation can improve efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery which will contribute to a transparent and accountable government system.

Very important.

To have a transparent working system, it is important to be open, consistent and be able to hold people responsible for their actions. Evaluation can help track the performance and accordingly make people accountable for the works. It is important to listen and communicate with all partners engaged for transparency.

It is very important and need to implement across different sector and agencies.

hard to say. M&E to be frank, does not look into those issues. We use what we are given . I believe that will be more of auditing work.

It is very important, and M&E should be given a priority in Bhutan.

5. In your perspective, who needs to be involved in the evaluation process?

11 responses

Everyone who are part of the initiaive

Since evaluations are usually carried out by an external evaluator, I think it is important to include at least a person from every stakeholder in the evaluation process so that everyone involved in the project remains on the same page.

Experts and relevant stakeholders.

Planners, Policy makers, Project managers and evaluators

Everyone, including CSOs, international organizations, governments (particulary GNHC and PMO to lead the process)

Senior leaders and managers, planners, program and project officials

Implementing agency and external agency

All the major stakeholders including the beneficiaries should be part of the evaluation process. It will help to understand the actual impacts on the ground and not just on the completion of the planned activities.

Mixure of private, public and ngos.

all stakeholders from funding agency to implementing agency to beneficiaries.

If possible, all the stakeholders should be evaluated. If resource is limited, then at least implementing agencies and the beneficiaries should be evaluated.

Theme Two: Evaluation in the context of Gross National Happiness

1. As an Evaluator/Evaluation commissioner/Evaluand, how do you contextualize evaluation principles/approaches/methods to fit in our overarching development goal of GNH?

11 responses

Being culturally responsive and developing inclusive and context relevant evaluation approaches

Evaluation should be carried out as per the criteria such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Evaluation should be carried out without bias if done internally

I am not in position to answer this as I have very limited knowledge on the evaluation. Nevertheless, in my opinion, expertise on evaluation is built over years of hands-on practise and experiences, principles/approaches/methods may have to contextualized depending on the nature and type of projects/programs/plans.

GNH is a flexible development philosophy and importent component like evaluation will be natural fit into such overaching development goal of GNH

I think the overall principles of evaluation (for eg. transparency) are very much in line with the national principle of GNH (especially good governance and sustainable and equitable socio-economic development)

GNH is broad, but it has been translated into understandable nine domains. Each of these are employed into evaluation principles/approaches/methods where applicable, in part or whole depending on type of evaluation at different phases.

All important projects and program need m&E

For most of the projects and activities in Bhutan, inclusion of GNH principles are already taken into account while preparing the project proposals. In terms of evaluation, it could be assessed through the criteria of relevance and sustainability.

Evaluation may be focussed on on output and outcome level on allocation and utilisation of limited public resources.

Not really!

There is no "One-size-Fits All" methods in M&E. Difference M&E needs different approaches depending on the objectives and the goals of the program or project implemented.

2. Has there been a time that you thought evaluation relates/links to GNH?

11 responses

I am yet to see this

Evaluation is a process which can be conducted on processes like decision making, judgements, organizational development, ultimately trying to solve social issues to contribute towards social values , which is closely inline with GNH principles

GNH principle is based on the premise of developing conducive envrionment/conditions that are necessary for a person/people to lead a happy life. All the plans and programs are of the government are geared towards building such conditions (socio-economic development)

No doubt. Those are not stand alone concepts but inextricably linked to eachother. Infact development evaluation is beautifully linked to every sphere of development cycle and there is no need to complicate evaluation vis a vis GNH.

Yes

Yes. For example evaluation of implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities projects in Bhutan was based on inclusive development.

Yes,

Yes mostly in terms of sustainability of works.

I have not been involved so could not give opinion.

yes

There are plenty of time when evaluation related to GNH. For example, evaluation of any social project (e.g., water supply scheme, youth engagement program, women empowerment program, etc.) all relates to the GNH cncept.

Theme Three: Engendering evaluation approaches and tools

1. When should gender transformative approaches be used?

11 responses

For all forms of evaluation of development initiatives

It should be used when it comes to projects dealing with vulnerable group of people such as LGBTQIA+

Everytime, everywhere relevant/necessary.

Any cycle of gender transformative approaches

I think it is always important to view any evaluation approach through a gender lens. A gender transformative approach would show how women's (and children's) empowerment are critical to successful interventions.

GNHC as a nodal agency is mandated to provide oversight on the cross-cutting issues such as environment, climate change, gender, etc. We make sure that these are incorporated into plans, policies, programs and projects. So there is no issue of gender inclusion in evaluations.

Depending on the nature of the project.

Gender transformative approaches are interventions that helps in identifying the different needs, priorities and opportunities of both men and women. This approach should be integrated at every level of project/activities to determine how project interventions may impact different gender.

Wherever relevant.

from design to evaluation- all throughout

In practice, not all projects or program need gender transformative. Forcefully including the gender component in all programs might biases the objectives and results of the program. If the programs/projects are well structure with proper plan and clear objectives, I believe that gender component will be taken care.

2. As an evaluator, how do you engender evaluation approaches and tools to make it gender-inclusive?

11 responses

Being culturally responsive and inclusive such as letting every stakeholder including beneficiaries to participate in the processes of evaluation.

As a social research tool, gender analyses are critical to making determinations on the different impacts of program interventions on men and women, especially in transforming gender norms, reducing gender gaps, and creating a more just world.

Include gender inclusiveness and as well as other minorities like persons with disabilities, old people in the national evaluation manual/guideline/policy etc.

evaluation do not have domain sepcific applications as it cuts across all sphere

While my understanding of the subject may be limited, i think the first step is to look at the target data and see who is missing. Are all vulnerable groups included? Are women, children equally represented in the data and the approaches? making sure data and stakeholders are inclusive.

We are in the process of reviewing M&E so that we can make sure gender and other cross-cutting issues are captured and accordingly implemented to achieve SDG goals.

Need to look for Gender sensitive lens. Hi

Include women beneficiaries and representatives and carry out focus group discussions to ensure women feel comfortable to speak and share their views.

By having more women participation

we talk with female stakeholders. Ensure that gender components are evaluated properly

As mentioned above, all program and projects need to have a clear objectives and inclusive target. If the program is designed to benefit the vulnerable group, disadvantage society, poor communities, and targeted group, it will be a gender inclusive program/project.

3. What are the challenges and opportunities that people see in adopting gender-inclusive approaches or tools?

11 responses

Most often evaluations are underfunded and allocated limited time while adopting gender-inclusive and culturally responsive approaches demand more fund and take longer time.

Lack of gender-disaggregated data makes it difficult while implementing gender -inclusive projects.And moreover it is difficult to get the acceptance from the community

lack of awarness, need more advocacy and representation and participation from the minority groups.

Question to be repharsed as evaluation is cross cutting

Challenge are limited data, lack of disaggregated data, limited capacity to implement. Opportunities are to address any systemic inequities, to challenge gender stereotypes.

No issues.

N/a

Difficult to encourage women to speak and to understand if women really need the push or they are just not interested. There are also chances of neglecting the needs of men with too much focus on bringing women at par with women.
Gender inclusive approaches help women realize that they are also key players in decision making processes and how their non-involvement is likely to impact them more than men. It also creates an awareness of the gender roles and responsibilities and how these norms are playing out in terms of resource access and uses.

There is advantage.

inclusion of gender in indicators- such as % of women participation/ no trained etc. specifically helps achieve the goals.

one of the most challenges is that the evaluator tries to forcefully include gender component, which biased the result. if properly planned and balance the gender responsiveness in evaluation, then all evaluation will be gender balance.

4. How can evaluation help enhance the benefits of policies/programs/projects, particularly for women?

11 responses

Evaluation is all about learning what policies or initiatives worked and what do not, and informing the future policies and initiatives. Learning form the past successes and failures and making the course correction will enhance the benefits to beneficiaries.

Throughout the process of evaluation , the results of the Programmes would be significant and evidence the difference a gender equality approach can make, not only to individual lives but to whole communities.

Evaluation can help build more gender inclusive programs/projects/plans.

Evaluation tracks the progress, sustainability, relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of any development subject.

It will help to address unmet needs of women, children, transgender and other vulnerable groups, and help us to design and implement more inclusive policies and programmes. it will also ensure that resources are diverted to such critical areas.

Engagement and involvement of women in planning, designing and implementing evaluations.

By guiding process, learning from mistakes, and by promoting evidence based decision making

Evaluation can help to identify the gender gaps in the existing plans, policies and programs. With gap assessment, it can be useful to develop real time interventions that are actually beneficial to both gender.

With more participation of women.

it will help their concerns be heard and also ensure a complete understanding of the situation

Advertisement, advocacy and enhance the literacy rate of women. Alos, it is important to upskill women's self confidence in participating and implementing the program/project.

Consent