



The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation Thursday Talks

“Local Ownership in Evaluation: Who, When, and How”

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Part I: Overview

On Thursday, September 17, 2015, DME for Peace was pleased to host Laia Griñó, Senior Manager of Transparency, Accountability, and Results at InterAction who discussed local ownership in evaluation and how practitioners and evaluators can apply this in their own work.

Many conversations about international assistance today emphasize the importance of local ownership in ensuring relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. Just as local ownership has implications for the way programs are designed and implemented, it also suggests that we need to rethink the way we conduct evaluations. Earlier this year, InterAction published a briefing paper on [Local Ownership in Evaluation](#). In this webinar, Laia Griñó explained what this means and then answered key questions related to adopting a local ownership approach to evaluation: What does it take to put this approach into practice? Who should be involved and when? And how is it most important for them to be involved?

About the Speaker:

Laia Griñó is Senior Manager of Transparency, Accountability and Results at InterAction. For the past five years, she has managed InterAction’s Evaluation and Program Effectiveness Working Group (EPEWG), which seeks to both improve the capacity of InterAction members to measure and demonstrate their effectiveness and to inform donors’ evaluation policies and practices. In this capacity, Laia has overseen the development of practitioner-oriented resources on a variety of topics, including impact evaluation, evaluative thinking, and local ownership in evaluation.

Part II: Presenter Remarks

Laia’s presentation was structured to include:

1. What is local ownership in evaluation?
2. Targeting the Ultra Poor: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia
3. Feasible? Ethical? Appropriate?
4. Three Dimensions of Local Ownership in Evaluation: Who, When, How



- 5. Examples
- 6. Final Thoughts

1. What is Local Ownership in Evaluation?

Simply put, local ownership in evaluation means that program participants are involved in evaluation decision-making. Like evaluation commissioners and managers, participants are involved in key decision moments such as determining purpose and creating questions. Evaluation won't only reflect our funders' values and interests, but those of program participants as well. Evaluations will meet the needs of the communities and people served, and participants will have a say in what is considered success or failure.

2. Targeting the Ultra Poor: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia

To highlight why this approach matters, let's take a look at a field experiment in Indonesia on how to improve targeting for Indonesia's cash transfer program. The experiment tested the effectiveness of three different targeting methodologies: 1) proxy means testing (status quo), 2) community based targeting in which community or part of community selects which households benefit, and 3) self-targeting in which interested households have to visit the registration site to apply. The effectiveness of the methods was assessed in 3 different ways: 1) accuracy based on consumption levels, 2) satisfaction based on 10 different dimensions, 3) cost.

The results from the experiment, ranking from best to worst are as follows:

Accuracy of Targeting

- 1. Self targeting
- 2. Proxy means testing
- 3. Community targeting

Satisfaction

- 1. Community targeting
- 2. Proxy means testing
- 3. Self targeting

Least Cost (overall)

- 1. Community targeting
- 2. Self targeting
- 3. Proxy means testing

Least Cost (to households)

- 1. Proxy means testing
- 2. Community targeting
- 3. Self targeting

It is evident that proxy is not the best option, but it is not as clear of which of the two alternatives should replace it, since it involves trade offs like valuing community satisfaction over accuracy in targeting for example. In a local ownership approach, we ask the question of whose values and inputs are being considered when making decisions like these.



3. Feasible? Ethical? Appropriate?

The steps to deciding whether it is feasible, ethical, and appropriate to use a local ownership approach are:

- 1) *Will participants' input influence decision-making?* Do not ask if you are not willing/able to listen; you may risk disillusionment with other future participatory processes.
- 2) *Will participants gain something from being involved?*
- 3) *Do participants want to be involved?* You do not want to force participation.
- 4) *Can participants be involved?*
- 5) *Does the evaluation team have skills to facilitate participation in the evaluation decision-making process?*
- 6) *Will participants be put at risk?*
- 7) *Will involving participants in evaluation decision making raise expectations that cannot be met?*

Once a local ownership in evaluation approach is decided upon, three things to think about are:

- 1) *Who is involved in an evaluation?*
- 2) *At which stages will they be involved?*
- 3) *How or to what extent will people be involved in the evaluation?* Will people be informed, consulted or decision-makers? Ladder of participation with different rings of involvement; you want it to be at 4 or higher.

There is a difference between local ownership and participatory evaluation, which means that participants are co-evaluators and are involved in all aspects of evaluation.

4. Three Dimensions of Local Ownership in Evaluation: Who, When, How

Who: Selecting Participants

Unless it is a very small program it is unlikely that you will be able to include all participants in the decision-making process. You will need to determine which should be involved.

- Make sure that your selection process is transparent and viewed as fair by participants.
- Be cognizant of power dynamics so that you do not enforce any negative power dynamics.
- Ensure that participants in decision-making are representative of the larger population of participants.
- Try to make sure that those selected are considered legitimate representatives by participants.
- Be aware of biases, everyone has them.
- Try to balance them by involving people with different perspectives.
- Differentiating roles: decision makers vs. informants vs. both.
- It may take some time to build participants' confidence in the process and to feel that their input will actually be used.



When: Expanding Participants' Involvement

- Developing theory of change
- Identifying/ prioritizing evaluation questions
- Identifying outcomes/impacts
- Selecting indicators
- Deciding on evaluation methods
- Assisting with data collection
- Providing data
- Shaping evaluation findings
- Providing feedback on evaluation findings
- Developing evaluation recommendations
- Hearing evaluation results
- Assisting with dissemination
- Participating in decision making around evaluation results

The local ownership approach is trying to push back against the reduction of participant involvement in providing data. It is especially important to involve participants early in the process in determining the theory of change and prioritizing evaluation questions.

How: Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation

*Please view attached PowerPoint presentation for a more detailed explanation.

It is best to think about how participants are going to be involved by looking in conjunction with which stage of the evaluation process you are at. Keep in mind that you may not necessarily have everyone involved at the same level throughout the entire evaluation.

5. Examples

- Community/partner participation in baselines
- "Transparency Boards"
- Funding for post- evaluation community engagement/feedback sessions
- Conduct an assessment of current practice
- Set a "minimum standard" (see DFID report: [Beneficiary Feedback in Evaluation](#))

6. Final Thoughts

- Local ownership in evaluation should not be considered "advanced" practice or a worthwhile "extra"
- Don't feel you have to do everything at once
- Local ownership does not mean that participants have to do everything themselves
- Use of participatory methods alone does not guarantee ownership
- Can you do use a local ownership approach if a project hasn't been participatory?
- Isn't evaluation too late to be participatory? Shouldn't we be talking more about monitoring?



Part III: Questions & Discussion

Melanie (Alliance for Peacebuilding): If there was one piece of advice you could give to people as they consider the power dynamics, what would it be? And what may be some warning signs to people that they may be treading on sensitive ground?

Laia: These are issues that should be apparent during program implementation. One issue that comes up with this approach is, can you really use a local ownership approach in evaluation if the project itself has not been participatory? People wonder if it will be feasible, if people will participate, if you will raise unrealistic expectations; that understanding of power dynamics should come out during implementation. An example is; working with youth in Kenya to prevent post-election violence, where they had first gone to youth who were traditionally thought of as youth leaders and found that those youth were not seen as legitimate representatives of youth and decided to step back and have an election of youth so that leaders would be elected by peers. It is about being in touch with the community and having the kind of relationship with the community where you will pick up on those factors.

Sarah (Independent Consultant): Can you expand a little bit more on how the use of participatory methods alone does not guarantee ownership?

Laia: There is a lot of concern that evaluation has become or is often a largely extractive process where we are just taking data out of communities and not giving anything, and when we ask for examples of organizations taking a local ownership approach often what we get back that we are organizations who had taken a participatory approach to data collection, the question you have to ask yourself is did the community have a say in what data is important to measure? That is where initiatives like the every day peace indicators and work that CARE did is interesting because it is about giving a little bit of power back to the community from us as experts.

Melanie (Alliance for Peacebuilding): Are you finding that donors are receptive to adding on what some people might consider extra costs?

Laia: One concern that often comes up when we talk about this approach is that it will not cost more and it will not take too much time. We tried to see how the cost in terms of resources and time of evaluations like this compared to typical evaluations, and found a very wide variety. It would be useful to have more research into this; at times we are willing to invest really significant resources into things like impact evaluation. It is a matter of what do we value.

There is an assumption that donors will not be on board with this approach, sometimes you just have to ask -if you include an evaluation like this in a proposal you might be surprised, it may be more common among foundation donors rather than funded by donors like USAID or other bilateral donors but that may be changing as well. If we as a community emphasize that this is important we can engage donors.



Steve (Open Government Metrics): Is there a checklist to show whether an evaluation process was participatory or not?

Laia: If you take a look at the briefing paper and the how-to guidance which are available online on InterAction's website, there are bulleted or numbered lists of things to take into consideration. Assessing where you currently are in terms of how people are engaged in evaluation is really important because it is hard to say what you need to do to improve if you do not know what the current practice is in your organization.

Q: In what particular circumstances or types of evaluations would be useful or appropriate to have participants be involved? Are there times where participant involvement actually muddles the process and does not have much value?

Laia: There will not be a hard and fast rule like in these types of programs this approach is valuable. I have seen this approach applied to all sorts of programs and in terms of types of evaluations. I do not think it is going to be the types of programs that dictate whether this approach is valuable; rather the specific circumstances of your program will indicate that.

If you know that the evaluation essentially is just being viewed as a requirement, for example, and it is highly unlikely for whatever reason that the results of the evaluation will be used. Question whether it will be valuable to include participants, not just because it could be disillusioning for other participatory programs/evaluations down the line but also because you are taking up people's valuable time and again if that time that they are putting into it is not going to be worthwhile then they probably should not be involved.

Q: Do you have any thoughts or numbers or percentages of cost increases over non-participatory evaluations?

Laia: Some people said it has higher costs but some people said it was much cheaper; you should not feel that you have to do everything at once, if you are going from a situation in which your organization does not involve participants at all it is highly unlikely that you are going to immediately be in a position to involve them as co-decision makers, so there are small steps you can take that does not necessarily cost a lot of money, there are cost effective ways that you can incrementally increase the meaningfulness of people's involvement in evaluation.

Laia: Highlight issue of trust. You're going to have a hard time getting people engaged if they don't trust your motives, that their input will be used, evaluators do need to take some time to build a relationship and trust with the field staff, local partners; how you relate to people is important, not standing in front of the room, not using a lot of jargon, trying to create a dynamic where you're trying to help the community or partners get the information they need to make their lives and their work better two notes to check out: Encompass and World Vision.



If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.