

Case-Based Gender Process Monitoring



The challenge of institutionalising gender monitoring

Institutionalising gender elements in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is plagued by numerous problems. First, gender analysis frameworks are yet to be fully integrated into project planning. Often, gender indicators are not defined at the beginning of the project, and the government stakeholders and other project partners are resistant to add gender objectives once implementation has started. Also, sometimes, project staff do not have the adequate capacity to develop the indicators.

Second, taking measurements is problematic. Gender relations are extremely difficult to quantify, and changes in gender relations take a long time (sometimes generations) to become visible. More sensitive indicators are needed to capture subtle potentials for change. It is especially difficult to quantify such subtle changes, and the figures might not show changes in gender relations within the life of the project.

The only way to capture these subtle impacts is through qualitative descriptions, which unfortunately are often not gathered because it is difficult to assess their measurements.

The third problem is related to the capacity of the project staff. They need to be skilled in gender analysis, understanding gender relations and how gender differences affect and impact project results. It is also important that they have good facilitation skills to encourage women to express their voices. Hence, institutionalisation of gender monitoring needs to have a strong capacity building component to foster gender analysis skills.

The fourth problem is that important gender issues might lie outside a project's framework. Women's needs might not be easily detectable in the initial stage of the project. Monitoring must have a wide scope in order to capture needs that might have been overlooked.

The case-based gender process monitoring scheme is a way to overcome some of the difficulties in highlighting gender aspects in project monitoring. It relies on collection and discussion of stories from the field, aimed at both monitoring gender-based impact and improving the gender analysis capacity of the project staff. The case-based gender process monitoring scheme builds on Mosse's (2001) process monitoring and the 'most significant change' technique of Davies and Dart (2005). This article is based on the article 'Case-based Gender Process Monitoring', published in 'Reflecting on Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation', UN-Women, 2012.

Integration with the M&E system

Case-based gender monitoring complements established standard M&E process. The reports of case-based monitoring can be used as a 'means of verification' in the project logframe. This tool can be included in M&E plan to collect information on the progress of gender mainstreaming in the project. Gender issues can be included during the project review or midterm evaluation in order to introduce necessary revisions into the project framework.

The process of case-based gender process monitoring



Figure 1. Steps in the case-based monitoring process.

Step 1: Selection of key domains of change

The process of case-based gender process monitoring starts with the selection of related key domains of change that will be measured. Looking at too many domains makes it difficult to collect stories, so it is better to initially select and focus on three to five domains.

Step 2: District level meetings at the to discuss key domains of change

Before field-level staff and/or community focal points collect these stories, the staff attend a meeting where they are introduced to the methodology, covering the process of case-based monitoring, the method of collecting cases and the advantages of this technique. By involving the field-level staff and the community-level participants as story collectors, the rapport of core project staff with the local community is strengthened, enabling the institutionalisation of memories.



Step 3: Collection of stories

One 'happy' story and one 'sad' story for each of the key domains of change are collected each month per district. The definition of 'happy' and 'sad' is left to the story collectors. The happy/sad distinction does not have to be connected to the project intervention; any positive or negative changes in the women's lives need to be recorded in order to capture a holistic picture of the women's situation in the community and household.

Step 4: Sharing of stories

The stories are brought together at the district level for sharing and discussion. Selected stories are verbally told by the story collectors, followed by a group discussion:

- What is 'happy' (or 'sad') about this story? And why do we feel that this story is 'happy' (or 'sad')?
- Why did it happen like this?
- Have you seen similar stories in your area?
- What are the desired changes?
- How can we bring about that change? Can the project play a role in changing the situation? How?

The role of facilitator is very important at this meeting. The facilitator will pose the questions and lead the participants/story collectors in an exploratory analysis of the stories from a gender perspective. Therefore, district-level facilitators need to be well trained in gender analysis and facilitation. The story collection and the discussion/reflection are not only an information collection tool but also a capacity-building opportunity.

Step 5: Reporting

The district project coordinator reports monthly to the provincial department of agriculture. The report comprises the following documents:

- Output indicators of project achievements during the past month, in light of the plan of activities for that month.
- List of stories that have been collected during the month, including a brief summary of each case.
- Minutes of the monthly meeting, outlining the result of discussion among the field staff from the commune and district levels.
- Issues of concern for implementation of the project during the past month.
- Recommendations/suggestions for adjusting or strengthening the approach.

Piloting case-based monitoring

The case-based gender process monitoring was piloted in an IFAD-supported Rural Livelihood Improvement Project (RuLIP) in Cambodia in 2012.



Selecting key domains of change

First, a review of the logframe was conducted to introduce appropriate gender impact indicators. Key domains were selected in a participatory way involving project staff and women and men beneficiaries from the communities. RuLIP is implemented in three provinces, and each province selected different domains of change.

Discussing key domains of change

The selected key domains of change were then discussed with the project staff from both district and commune levels.

Assigning story collectors and story-collecting schedule

The story collectors are the project staff at the commune level (CEW and CWCFP). They received a one-day introduction on domains of change and how to observe gender-based issues in the community.

They did not receive extensive training on interviewing skills or case writing because they will not write case reports but will only describe the cases verbally at the district meeting.

Key domains of change in Preah Vihear Province

- Changes in gender division of labour
- Domestic violence
- Children's access to school (boys and girls)
- Women's decisionmaking
- Women's participation in village meetings and sharing of ideas
- Women's confidence level
- Women's access to agricultural knowledge
- Women's network and mutual help
- Women's access to resources
- Women's participation in extension services

The story collector was instructed to seek out stories where:

- One of the key domains of change is present.
- It is clearly either a 'happy' case or a 'sad' case. The 'happy case' is an example of a gender-based improvement in the household. The sad case does not necessarily have to be a tragedy; rather, it is a case where there is some room for improvement.
- The cases should be collected among not only project beneficiaries but also among non-beneficiary households to show some relevant stories for gender relations in the community.



Sharing stories

The purpose of the discussion is for all the participants to reflect on the gender domains in the project area, thus improving their understanding in identifying gender issues and how desired changes can be brought in those domains. During the monthly meeting at the district level, the story collectors verbally present the cases. The stories and the discussion are recorded by a note taker. The process follows the following structure:

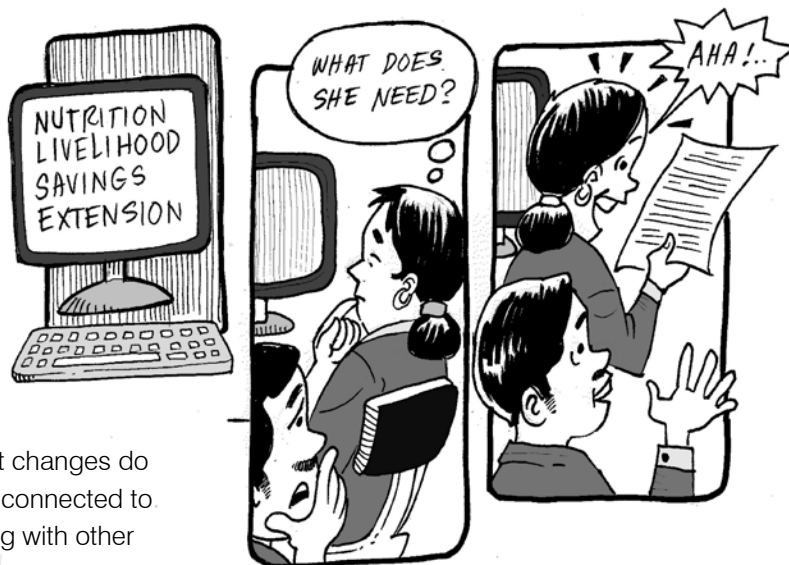
- First, the story collector tells the story.
- Then other participants ask questions to clarify details about the case. The participants are the project staff at the district and commune levels: commune extension workers, district agronomy officer, district extension officer, district gender focal point, commune women and children focal point, and commune council, etc. The discussion is oriented around the following points:

Discussion for 'happy' story:

- ♦ What is the domain of change for the story?
- ♦ Why is this story happy? What were the observed positive changes?
- ♦ How did this change happen? (both project-and non-project-related factors)
- ♦ How did the project help? (Which factors are connected to the project's support?)

Discussion for 'sad' story:

- ♦ What is the domain of change for the story?
- ♦ Why is this story sad? Is there no perceived change or is the situation getting worse?
- ♦ Why is there no change or why is it getting worse? (both project-and non-project-related factors)
- ♦ What can the project do? (What changes do you want to see? How are they connected to project activities—e.g., partnering with other organisations?)



- In order to validate the findings of the case observation, other participants are also asked to contribute if they know of similar stories from their areas. If such stories are shared, a broader discussion among the team is initiated on the reasons behind the observed state of affairs.

Example of a ‘sad’ case story

A 43-year-old woman lives with her husband (48 years old) and eight children. It is a very poor household; family members—including most of the children—work as day laborers to “put food on the table.” She joined the project-run livelihood improvement group (LIG) in 2010 and borrowed funds from the group to invest in chicken rearing. However, she never repaid the loan because the chickens got sick shortly thereafter and died. She has stopped going to meetings and trainings provided by the project; she often has to miss them to either work all day or look for work. Her husband consumes a lot of alcohol, which drains the family budget. Also, when inebriated, he is often verbally and physically abusive towards his wife. The authorities have intervened twice to restrain him from being physically abusive, but he has not changed his ways. Becoming a LIG member did not change her life significantly. The family is still very poor, and none of the children go to school. Her husband currently has a new girlfriend and is gone from the house most of the time.

Analysis of case

- **Domains of change:** Access to knowledge; domestic violence; women’s participation; gender division of labour; reproductive health
- **Why is this a sad case?** Domestic violence did not cease, persistent poverty, debts
- **Why did it not change?**
 - a. Domestic violence: The husband still consumes alcohol; he is not aware of the impact of his behavior; poverty
 - b. Access to knowledge: The woman did not benefit from the training; she only attended a few because she works far away from home; her husband does not allow her to attend
 - c. Gender division of labour: Husband does not help in household chores and is absent from home with new girlfriend
 - d. Reproductive health: They do not practice family planning and have many small children
- **What can the project do?**
 - a. Advocate about domestic violence law through CEW and commune authorities
 - b. Mobilise elders in the community to raise awareness on domestic violence
 - c. Support the children to stay at the pagoda while the mother is at work
 - d. Organise trainings on reproductive health
 - e. Think of inventive ways to re-finance the debt

Reporting

Case-based monitoring has been deployed in RuLIP only recently. Since May 2012, the three provinces had collected 58 cases (19 sad cases). Through additional project actions, the situation was improved in 8 of these 19 cases. Even in only a few months of application of the new M&E tool, there were visible reporting improvements and feedback impacts on the well-being of the beneficiaries. The reporting schedule is as follows:

Monthly report from district office to provincial office

The case-based monitoring stories are to be included in the monthly report from the district. One case will be discussed at each district each month.

Quarterly report from province office to central office

A summary of the cases will be made and included in the quarterly report. The full notes from the presentation and discussion of one case (most probably a happy case) will be attached to the quarterly report to illustrate the specific changes and to highlight the impact of project activities.

Semi-annual and annual report (from PSU at national level to IFAD)

The aggregate result in the quarterly report will be used to explain the reasons for the reported state of the indicators according to the logframe. The suggestions from the quarterly report would be discussed in the annual planning session and will be reflected in the plan of activities' for the following year.

Table 1. Quarterly report on happy stories.

Domains of Change	Achievements	Factors contributing to achievements	Project interventions	No. of Cases
1. Women's access to knowledge	Women have improved agriculture production knowledge	New trainings to increase knowledge and skills of women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project provided technical training. ▪ The project provided agricultural inputs (grants and loans). 	7
2. Domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced violence in the Families ▪ Happy family relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ She was persistent and creative in convincing her husband to quit. ▪ She got good support from people around her – her mother-in-law, CEW and neighbors. ▪ Her husband also attended training ▪ Non-project: Public awareness raising campaign against domestic violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project provided gender-awareness training ▪ Providing support through CEW 	10

Domains of Change	Achievements	Factors contributing to achievements	Project interventions	No. of Cases
3. Changes in gender division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Husband sharing in household responsibilities ▪ New life in the Village ▪ Happy family relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Husband attended gender awareness training ▪ Husband participated in gender awareness and children education campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project provided economic and training support ▪ The project provided gender-awareness training 	5
4. Men's self confidence	Men's confidence has improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Men discuss issues with family members rather than being violent ▪ Men's economic opportunities improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The project provided gender-awareness training ▪ Project provided economic and training support 	6

Refresher workshop

A refresher workshop is planned to be held once a year, in order to review and revise the domains of change. It will be used as an opportunity to improve discussions with new questions and analysis at the district meetings.



Conclusion

Gender process monitoring serves a dual purpose. First, it complements the annual outcome surveys (AOS) by providing vital qualitative information that covers issues and nuances that cannot be captured by the format of the mid-term project review. Especially by collecting both happy and sad cases, it is possible to have a broader overview of the potential risks. The dialogue format of the monitoring allows for reflection on achievements and introduces important perspectives when analysing the annual outcome assessment reports. It brings a deeper level of quality to the reflection and learning, which feeds into the planning for the following years of the action as well as into new project development.

The other purpose is to strengthen the capacity of gender analysis at the field level. It can lead to a better appreciation of the interventions introduced to promote gender equality. A crucial issue is how to integrate this exercise as part of the staff's routine field visits. Gender-based case collections can support the creation of a 'listening culture' among the field level staff, which is crucial for effective implementation of participatory development projects. This monitoring requires field workers to spend more time talking and listening to women stakeholders (especially vulnerable and marginalised women, the 'sad' cases) and to carefully note their experiences and grievances.

References

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
AOS	annual outcome surveys
CGPM	case-based gender process monitoring
CEW	commune extension worker
CWCFP	commune women and children focal point
DST	district support team

FGD	focus group discussion
KM	knowledge management
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PSU	project support unit
RuLIP	Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project
UN	United Nations

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