

Enterprise Impact News

EDIAIS Products and Services

The Enterprise Development Impact Assessment Information Service is jointly managed on behalf of DFID by the Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester and Women in Sustainable Enterprise (WISE) Development Ltd.

The EDIAIS web site at www.enterprise-impact.org.uk includes Applications Guidance - on undertaking impact assessments in specific types of enterprise, Toolbox items - impact assessment methods and tools, Case Studies - demonstrating impact assessments carried out across a range of projects, the EDIAIS Bibliographic Database.

The EDIAIS enquiry service welcomes your questions and comments.

Enterprise Impact News is also available by e-mail in Word or pdf formats.

The EDIAIS e-mail discussion list can be joined at <http://lists.man.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo/enterprise-impact>

The web site (as of March 2004) is available on CD.

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It's not goodbye

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This is not the last issue of Enterprise Impact News – but it is the last one that will be produced in hard copy. To keep abreast of future developments you must ensure your name is added to our email distribution list. Email us at info@enterprise-impact.org.uk and make sure you don't miss out on Enterprise Impact News by email.

The EDIAIS project is moving into a new phase and becoming an even more virtual information resource than it already is. What does this mean? Well firstly my very corporeal self and office will no longer be around to answer your emails, faxes and phone calls.

Enquiries and web site

EDIAIS however, like all great institutions, is more than the sum of its parts and can survive the loss of any of its components. Your enquiries continue to be welcome and will as ever be promptly dealt with – our web manager, Shirley Giggey (Gigs) will ensure they are handled by an appropriate member of the EDIAIS team. And our email address remains unchanged at info@enterprise-impact.org.uk. Gigs will also continue to maintain our web site and ensure there is no interruption in your access to the wealth of materials on impact assessment which we have produced.

Enterprise Impact News

Enterprise Impact News will continue as an electronic newsletter providing thought-provoking pieces on impact assessment and bringing you news of publications, web sites and events. Available in both pdf and Word format, the former offers the familiar attractive hard copy layout while the latter is a much smaller file, plain and simple to suit poor connectivity and small mailboxes and with working hypertext links.

Email discussion list

If you have not already joined our email discussion list now is the time to do so. Over the last two years the list has matured and now has 240 members, all with a real interest in impact assessment, who offer many different perspectives and an enormous range of experience. Traffic on the list is reasonably low – you need not fear your in-tray being bombarded with messages as on some of the extremely (tiresomely?) active lists.

Many list members have successfully used the list to gather information about topics of particular interest to them and it is proving a valuable resource for information exchange on a wide variety of impact assessment and appraisal related topics. Events, training, new publications and consultancy opportunities have also all been announced on the list. To join go to <http://lists.man.ac.uk/mailman/listinfo/enterprise-impact> and fill in the simple form.

Site on CD

The third and latest edition of the EDIAIS CD contains pdf versions of everything that was on the web site as of March 2004. Removing all the Word versions of documents has allowed us to include nearly 50 original papers first presented at the New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development conference in November 2003. These include theoretical and practical pieces from practitioners in many areas of impact assessment from strategic level to grassroots learning. ■



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Party numbers: quantification through participation

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This is a summary of the new paper, [Reversing the Paradigm: Quantification and Participatory Methods](#), recently added to the Tool Box section of the EDIAIS web site.

It is often assumed that participatory methods are suitable for gathering qualitative information but that when hard, reliable, numerical data are required we must turn instead to surveys and questionnaires with their pre-determined categories and neat tick boxes. In fact this is a myth, albeit one sustained by some with vested interests in maintaining their "expert" status and privileges.

There are now many examples of rigorous quantitative data being obtained using participatory methods. Indeed, when used well, these usually generate more accurate numbers than conventional approaches. They are also much more cost-effective and can provide a sound basis for targeting more expensive investigations if they are still needed. They also elicit realities and priorities of poor people which would otherwise be overlooked. However the use of participatory approaches to generate numbers faces professional and institutional inertia and even vested interests.

The desire for quantification

Impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation have become part of mainstream development practice. Historically the push for more systematic quantification of impacts came from donor agencies and international funding NGOs, influenced both by a desire to avoid past mistakes and to be

accountable to governments and taxpayers. The demand for quantification has also increased due to the growing interest in using macro-level strategic impact assessment to inform policy decisions. And the recognition of poverty's multi-dimensional nature has raised questions as to whether social and political dimensions such as decision-making, power relations and political participation might be quantified.

Problems for conventional methods

When planning the collection of numerical data, it is often assumed that structured questionnaires, pre-specified indicators, random samples of respondents and statistical analysis are inevitably superior to both qualitative and participatory methods in terms of rigour and credibility. In practice, such methods generally fail to meet the needs of modern, high quality impact assessment.

There are inherent difficulties in using

statistical analysis to address areas which involve value judgements. Practical conclusions are often based at best on information outside the quantitative study which has not been collected systematically. At worst, conclusions are based on the preconceptions of the investigators and their *a priori* decisions about indicators and how the various statistical correlations should be interpreted in terms of causal relations.

Even very sophisticated surveys have serious shortcomings when used in isolation from qualitative analysis and clear specification of hypotheses. For example many surveys have found a lack of correlation between household income and consumption data. This may reflect a failure to take into account intra-household inequalities when designing questionnaires.

Many attempts to collect "complete information" on various economic measures of poverty lead to lengthy questionnaires which still fail to capture important non-market dimensions such as subsistence and foraging activities and unpaid domestic services. Both positive and negative impacts of programmes, essential to people's well-being, are then obscured.

Furthermore, in most programme-level impact assessments, the sample size is too small to reliably draw statistical inferences. It is the availability of resources which tends to determine sample size and composition rather than the requirements of statistical theory or the acceptable margin of error.

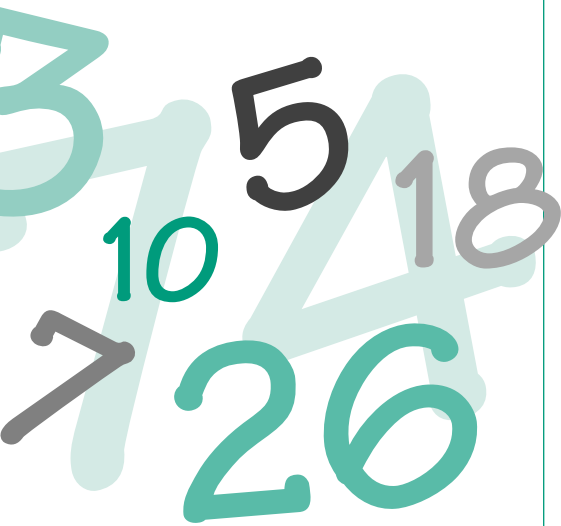
Participatory approaches

Participatory methods typically entail processes which involve more than one respondent and use diagrammatic tools and techniques to collect and record information. They can generate numerical data on many topics similar to outputs from questionnaires. Since the early 1990s a quiet tide of innovation has developed ways, often visible and tangible, by which local people generate numbers (known as participatory or "party" numbers). The information gathered is available to everyone present in a form which illiterates and outsiders who do not speak the local language can understand. Its reliability is enhanced by individual responses being subjected to immediate examination and cross-verification by others in the group.

A range of easy methods can be used in group meetings to obtain numerical data and, where necessary, overcome the sensitivity of revealing information to other members of the group. These include voting by show of hands or by

secret ballot, people plotting their position on a flip chart diagram turned away from the eyes of the group or physically grouping themselves by particular characteristics of interest. Numerous diagram methods, devised in many different parts of the world, can be used for participatory measuring, counting, estimating, valuing, ranking and scoring.

Participatory methods have well-known potential pitfalls. Some participants may dominate group discussion and hence bias the outcomes. Systematic sampling is often difficult since the process depends on people's willingness to turn up and join in. An in depth understanding of context and who is and is not present is necessary. Diagrams may need explaining to outsiders and people who did not take part may not have confidence in the numbers produced.



Carefully trained facilitators are needed to ensure the process is balanced and equitable. Open-ended questioning, the use of pauses and probes and knowing when and how to move into new topic areas are not skills which untrained interviewers can reasonably be expected to possess.

Scaling up participatory quantification

There have now been many examples where numerical information from group exercises has been aggregated over a wider area. These include:

- Perhaps the earliest – ActionAid's use, in 1992, of mapping and counting methods in over 130 villages in Nepal to analyse the utilisation of services. The whole population of the villages was covered (35,414 people) and 13 tables of data were generated.
- A community census using participatory mapping in 54 villages in Malawi credibly suggested that the

official 8.5 million census count of the rural population should have been 11.5 million.

- An SCF (UK) study in 20 districts in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe used pile sorting and other participatory methods for a retrospective study on how individual poor farmers coped with the 1992 drought.
- Focus groups in Jamaica, Guatemala and Colombia identified different types of urban violence, their level of seriousness and the significance (positive and negative) of various institutions using Venn diagramming methods.
- In Malawi, in each of 30 villages, 3 focus groups of farmers analysed the relative importance of 15 indicators of sustainability, using pairwise ranking.
- 24 focus groups in Western Kenya used participatory techniques to evaluate agroforestry dissemination practices. Pile sorting was used to evaluate, for example, the usefulness of seven external information providers and ten different media. The results were combined in a table of mean values across villages by region.

Participatory spatial analysis has been used to develop accurate descriptions of land use patterns. In the Philippines and Vietnam local people have been enabled to combine their knowledge with digital contour data to make detailed coloured 3-D models which are considered highly accurate.

Reversing the paradigm

When handled with skill there is no doubt that participatory methods can provide access to sensitive or surprising information that would have been difficult to obtain through questionnaires. Examples range from the castwise breakdown of families with alcoholics in India, to the high incidence of economic (as opposed to political) violence in Colombia, to the fact that official satellite-based data grossly underestimated the percentage of the area under farmland in the Mount Pulag National Park in the Philippines. Given that participatory methods can produce more accurate figures (sometimes spectacularly so), to what extent should they replace more expensive conventional quantitative methods?

Given the time and resource constraints of most impact assessment work, particularly at programme level, conventional quantitative methods will often fail to meet the data requirements for meaningful impact assessment and policy improvement. Rather than struggling for inevitably unattainable

"complete information" and statistical elegance we should ask:

- For which impacts is quantification needed and how accurate must it be?
- To draw practical conclusions how many people do we need information on or from? Which people are most important to us or likely to be most reliable?
- What are the various stakeholders' main priorities for change?
- How feasible are the proposed options? What more information do we need to make this decision?
- Who needs the quantitative data and in what form to convince the relevant stakeholders to make changes in behaviour and policy?

What we need is a more reliable and rigorous selection of indicators, better targeting of key stakeholders, participatory analysis of the findings and identification of practical implications and conclusions. This means reversing the mindset with participatory approaches, not questionnaires, becoming the first option considered when numbers are needed. Surveys are then reserved for testing particularly important hypotheses and findings of the participatory research.

Empowerment

Participatory methods do not necessarily empower participants – they are time-consuming, may raise (and then disappoint) expectations and can lead to the inadvertent exposure of damaging information. The data may be removed for external analysis rather than remaining as a community resource.

Nevertheless there are encouraging indications that participatory numbers can support local empowerment. In the Philippines grassroots health workers made their own classification and disease maps, conducted their own analyses and produced figures which contradicted official statistics but became accepted by officials. The priority actions they identified led, within months, to a sharp decrease in mortality.

The questions for participatory numbers are who is empowered, who owns the data, how can it be shared and whether local analysts can substantially gain from the process. The main challenge for the wider adoption of participatory quantitative analysis remains institutional prejudice and inertia. This hinders the development and spread of participatory approaches for generating numbers which could enable poor people to have more influence on decisions, policies and practices which affect them. ■

Web sites - participatory quantification

www.utoronto.ca/mcis/q2/index.htm

This is the web site of Q², Q-Squared in Practice: a Conference on Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Poverty Appraisal. The conference is taking place in Toronto this month and the site provides access to the agenda, many of the papers that will be presented and brief biographies of presenters. Organised and opened by Ravi Kanbur and Paul Shaffer and closed by Robert Chambers, the conference will focus on empirical examples of best practice in the use of mixed method approaches to the analysis of poverty in the developing world. Fifteen speakers have been invited to make short presentations followed by group discussion. The fifteen successful candidates, whose work is from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America, were chosen from a very high quality pool of around seventy five applicants. It is anticipated that the papers presented at the conference will appear as a special issue of a journal.

www.arts.cornell.edu/poverty/kanbur/QQZ.pdf

The Q-Squared in Practice conference referred to in the previous column is the third in a series. The first, held at Cornell in March 2001, on Qualitative and Quantitative Poverty Appraisal: Complementarities, Tensions and the Way Forward, focused on conceptual issues in the use of mixed methods in poverty analysis. The above link gives access to the conference report which consists of all the 22 short position statements of those who presented. The compilation represents a remarkable statement of the state of the art and the debate on "Qual-Quant" at a time when the complementarities are being recognised but the tensions are ever present and analysts and policy makers are looking for a way forward in using the two approaches to design effective poverty reduction strategies.

www.rdg.ac.uk/ssc/partiandstats/intro.html

Part of the University of Reading's Statistical Services Centre (SSC) web site, these pages contain materials aimed at helping with the integration of statistical and participatory principles for research. The intention is to contribute to the development of methods that take advantage of the strengths of statistics and participatory methods when gathering information for decision making in a development context. Downloadable papers include Barahona and Levy's *How to Generate Statistics and Influence Policy Using Participatory Methods in Research*, Wilson's *Some Practical Sampling Procedures for Development Research* and Abayasekera's *Quantitative Analysis Approaches to Qualitative Data: Why, When and How*. There are details of three workshops in July/August 2004 on *Strategies for Dealing with Data from Participatory Studies - Bridging the Gap between Statistics and Participatory Methods* and a link to other SSC material on integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Web sites - donor evaluation

www.undp.org/eo/

UNDP's Evaluation Office site features the Development Effectiveness Report 2003 which not only seeks to explore how effectively UNDP's own resources are being deployed towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals but also looks at some key issues affecting development assistance in general. UNDP's Knowledge Management and Performance Management strategies are also explained. Under the *Methodology* section are handbooks and manuals on monitoring and evaluation and results-based management. The *Publications* section includes recent, strategic, thematic, programme, institutional and post-conflict evaluations. The *Essentials* section aims to facilitate the sharing of lessons, experiences and emerging good practices in country programming, in particular those that are based on evaluations. The recent *Assessment of Micro-Macro Linkages in Poverty Alleviation: South Asia* is also available to download.

www.usaid.gov/au/about/pia/Quality_Assurance_Page.cfm

This section of AusAID's web site focuses on evaluation and quality assurance. It explains how this area of AusAID's work is managed and defines aid quality and assessment criteria. The Activity Monitoring Brief, AusAid's principal method of reporting for country and regional programmes, is explained and the form is downloadable. More than 20 per cent of Australia's aid is provided to multilateral development agencies in core funding. AusAID developed the Multilateral Assessment Framework (MAF) in 1998 in response to the Government's policy that support for multilateral development agencies be more strategic and based on informed assessment. The Multilateral Assessment Framework was developed to record and report on these multilateral programs and is downloadable from the site. A number of evaluation and quality assurance reports are also available.

www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/

Use the Quick Links to the Organisation Chart to find the site of the Performance and Knowledge Management Branch which provides details of policies and frameworks, and, under Guides, information tools to improve performance measurement and reporting. These include the How to Perform Evaluations series which sets out working standards and guidelines in an easy reference format. The series includes guidance on participatory evaluations, gender equality, information collection and analysis, writing effective executive summaries and abstracts and sharing results. The CIDA Evaluation Guide is also available. The What We're Learning series shares the knowledge and insights gained through CIDA's performance measurement and reporting experiences. ■

Enterprise Impact News was edited by Sarah Mosedale, Project Research Officer, as part of the Enterprise Development Impact Assessment Information Service (EDIAIS), which is managed jointly by the Institute for Development Policy and Management at the University of Manchester, and Women in Sustainable Enterprise (WISE) Development Ltd.