Based on an experiment in facilitating self-evaluation of development organisations, this book discusses the approach to participatory evaluation. It identifies the factors that enable activists to initiate a process of awareness-building among the people, the type of entry points required and the underlying ideology. The shortcomings of participatory evaluation, its methodology and the type of facilitator are identified. This monograph is meant to share the experiences of one experiment with activists and professionals who would like to take similar initiatives.

Dr Desmond D'Abreo is Director of Development Education Service (DEEDS), Mangalore

Rs 10

9

Ideology and Process of Participatory Evaluation

Desmond D'Abreo

Ideology and Process
of Participatory
Evaluation

Desmond D'Abreo

I N D I A N   S O C I A L   I N S T I T U T E
New Delhi
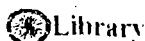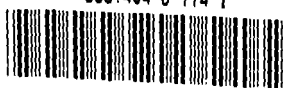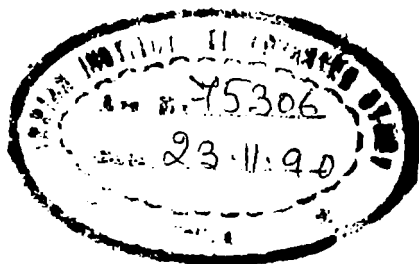
© Indian Social Institute 1983

Published by:
Indian Social Institute
Lodi Road
New Delhi-110003

Produced by:
D.T. Compositors at
Aruna Printing Press
B-78, Naraina Industrial Area
Phase II, New Delhi-110028.

Contents

Introduction

An experiment in Participatory Evaluation of some Social Housing Projects in Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu was initiated by the Indian Social Institute in collaboration with the Development Education Service, Mangalore. After the process of self-evaluation was completed, the participating Development Agencies came together for a meeting at the Workers' Centre, Bangalore.

This monograph is an offshoot of this process. It describes at first the reasons why the collaborating organisations considered a traditional type of external evaluation not fruitful. It then goes on to describe the ideology of participatory evaluation, its methodology, the role of the facilitator, the external organisation, the Development Agency and the people. It insists that the real actors are the people themselves, be it in development or in evaluation.

Many statements made in this monograph are derived from the experience of the participatory evaluation which was assessed at the meeting in Bangalore. Other indications of the approach to be taken were found in another evaluation in Bangalore and in conversation with activists. This publication, while giving the ideology, the process and the methodology of participatory evaluation, uses these experiences as examples. From the experience of this evaluation, we realised the main strengths and weaknesses of a participatory approach, the conditions required for this process to be successful, the shortcomings of this process and possible solutions to problems caused in the course of this evaluation. We hope that these reflections which came primarily from the persons involved in the process will help others who would like to initiate a process of participatory evaluation.

1

People's Participation in Evaluation

The task of community development is a wholly engrossing one. The urgency of helping people to take their rightful place in society and to live as human beings endowed with dignity and a decision-making capacity weighs heavily on all social workers and organisations involved in development. They are so engaged in their work that they forget about evaluating their activities. They are harried by time: "The masses are suffering too much and we have very little time for anything else but to work for their liberation!" or "There is so much to do, so many groups to educate and organise that we cannot afford to waste time on anything else!" They do not think it would be time well spent in examining their own experience, or much less, helping the people with whom they are working, to evaluate the process of their own economic growth and social transformation. Much less do they think it worthwhile having outsiders coming at their own decided times, whether opportune to the group or not, and pestering them with various questions—for such is evaluation generally seen to be!

However, in building up a social or economic structure in which people are helped to take charge of their own lives and concrete situations, there is no substitute for honest feed-back on the process and content of their activities. This does not mean that evaluation is the answer to all problems which arise in development programmes and activities. It cannot redeem a poorly planned and inefficiently run programme or project, nor can it tell finally and definitively what is the next step to be taken to ensure success. But, it is a necessary beginning.

Evaluation means, literally, to place a value on results attained. It is a help to analyse and understand what has happened in the programme and how various elements have caused certain events or situations to come about. It can help to bring to the surface unconscious knowledge, to discover mistakes and to share observations and experiences. It helps to integrate and consolidate learning, to bridge from the smaller to a larger scope, to reflect and summarise and to tie together loose ends. It checks the relevance of various techniques, tools and procedures utilised. Above all this, it helps the people involved in the programme to measure the results achieved against the goals they have set for themselves and to identify the strengths and impacts or the weaknesses and drawbacks of the programme and thus make concrete efforts to rectify them.

Traditional evaluation of development programmes

While these purposes of evaluation have been generally accepted, it is wondered whether the traditional method of evaluation of development programmes has been able to achieve these goals. Most development projects in our country have to be accountable to some organisation which supports them with financial or personnel resources. These supporting organisations initiate a process of evaluation of these projects to ensure security, the right use of funds and personnel and the achievement of the goals that they, together with the implementing agency, have set for the projects. The supporting agency sends its own personnel or delegates somebody to carry out the evaluation of the project on its behalf. This person is received with awe and respect befitting one who carries behind him the backing of the funding agency, and on whose report will depend the future flow of funds and resources. All efforts are made to placate him and to provide him with positive and pleasing answers so that he may ultimately present a glowing report of the project. Objectivity of the evaluation is thus to a great extent destroyed. The personnel of the evaluated agency know full well as a result, that his report will not be representing the genuine situation. Hence

the suggestions that will emanate from his report will be correspondingly taken with a grain of salt. Such an evaluation process is not conducive to subsequent action once the evaluator has left the place.

The implementing agency sees evaluation as the need of the supporting agency who wants to assure itself of greater security in the disbursement of its funds. It is not seen as the need of the implementing agency, much less as that of the target population. Further, it is seen as a need of the traditional evaluator, who gathers data and information which is summarised and packaged in a report. When this report is presented to the agency that has delegated him, he is recompensed financially, while the report becomes material containing knowledge for the future support of that agency, without any service value for the people at the grassroots from whom the data was culled.

But it would not be right to say that such an evaluation is absolutely useless. When systematically done, it can be effective, for it conscientiously examines the objectives of a programme and uses them as the criteria to judge the progress of the project. It collects data, statistics and information through interviews of the personnel of the implementing agency as well as the target population, to assess whether the activities of the agency have been in accordance with these objectives. It also makes an assessment of the objectives in the context of changing times and situations and offers proposals to renew or change them so that they can become more relevant. It is thus able to test whether the programme is benefiting the people at the grassroots economically and socially. It tries to find out whether the people are deriving the benefits expected from the programme, whether they are critically aware of their own situation, to what measure they have become self-reliant and whether they have acquired the capacity and readiness to translate ideas into action.

All the same, such an evaluation is replete with shortcomings. In the first instance, it treats the grassroots people as objects of the study, not as active participants in the process. As a result, it is often alienating, dominating or oppressive in character. It alienates not only the grassroots population, but also the personnel of the implementing agency. That

is why many implementing agencies are never happy when the evaluator comes along. Often it also happens that if the report is too devastating, or endangers the smooth flow of funds, the relationship between the evaluator and the evaluated agency personnel becomes strained.

The traditional method of evaluation oversimplifies social reality insofar as it indulges in generalisations, extracts information from individuals in isolation from one another and aggregates the information into a single set of figures. The illusion of accuracy through numbers has been perpetuated by many evaluation reports and unfortunately, this illusion obscures reality. An evaluation that treats respondents as sources of raw information, has very little likelihood of creating a human atmosphere which is conducive to change.

The methods of this evaluatory process are not consistent with the recognised principles of adult education. Such an education must be based on adult needs. The adults must be rendered better able to articulate their learning needs and draw up strategies by themselves to achieve desired goals of their own. The traditional evaluation, on the other hand, is very much like the banking system of education in its approach. The evaluator comes from outside and is looked upon as the one who is to judge. He knows and offers suggestions, he makes decisions which others are to follow. He plans and the others accede to the evaluation plan that he draws up. He decides what questions are to be asked, which spheres of activity are to be evaluated and has the authoritative word on the method, process and duration of the evaluation.

Consequent on these weaknesses, many problems can arise with regard to the traditional method of evaluation. Superficiality, irrelevance and manipulation are natural offshoots of a situation in which an outsider dictates the processes and establishes the norms for the working of people who are merely "respondents" and objects of the study. The evaluator may also become insensitive to the group's feelings and make too many demands on their time and energy. Finally, there is also the danger of "dumping" taking place, where criticism of an individual starts people dumping all their present and past upsets on that person. This happens when an outsider

interviews people in isolation from one another and in the process discovers shortcomings in the programme, which they attribute to one absent from the interview.

Traditional evaluation rests on the incorrect, though long prevalent, concept that development occurs by being injected from the top down towards the bottom of society. In such a concept, the people at the grassroots level are considered passive recipients of the benefits showered on them by an external agent through a programme which is planned and implemented for them. The primary agents of development are seen to be the personnel of the implementing agency who are well trained in social work, and who follow in the tradition set long ago by the National Community Development Programme of 1952. This tradition is rooted in the assumption that the trained social worker must work for the development of the masses. These masses are ignorant, incapable of deciding for themselves or of working for their own progress. They are not aware of the whole project being planned and operated for them. All important planning and decisions must therefore be undertaken by the implementing agency personnel, who, coming from a higher stratum of society, are better educated, and well motivated, but who have rarely, if ever, any actual experience of the oppressive and miserable life situation of the people at the grassroots.

The implementing agency, relying on outside resources for its social work, is answerable to the agency that supports it financially or with personnel. This supporting agency, therefore, in the main, is the one that calls the tune, that approves and sanctions the project, that checks on its progress through evaluation. Hence, evaluation, according to traditional thinking, is the work of these agencies, and like development, it has to be exercised on the target people.

Participatory evaluation

Today, however, development is realised to be the task of the people themselves. It is increasingly being seen as an awakening at the "bottom," that is, as a catalytic process of freeing the creative forces of the impoverished and exploited

of any given society and enabling those forces to come to grips with the problems of their own underdevelopment. Simplistic formula for improvements based on increased production, industrialisation and reforms of schooling are no longer looked upon as leading to development. Rather, development is being re-defined today as a process of transformation of fundamental structures of society. This process is bound to imply a struggle involving pressure by the poor on the rich, by wage labour on the owners of the means of production and by landless labourers on landowners. It is these poor, daily wage earners and landless labourers who are going to be the primary agents of their own development—and liberation!

People who have been involved in evaluation of development programmes, while at the same time being committed to a fundamental transformation of society, have found many tools of traditional evaluation to be inadequate to the task. They have found it all too easy to slip into intricacies of increasingly sophisticated control of variables at the expense of solutions of real social and human problems. A growing number of these are trying to experiment with evaluation of a different pattern based on three main concerns.

The first is a concern that the traditional method which emphasises quantitative data does not provide an adequate understanding of the complex reality. Today development is not seen in terms of buildings or institutions, projects or schemes, finances or budgets, administration or organisations, but as dealing with man as the primary reality. It is not quantity that matters so much as human growth and relations.

Secondly and deriving from this, it is realised that there has to be a view of human behaviour which sees people as active agents in their environments rather than as passive objects to be studied, researched and evaluated. People must themselves be involved in their own evaluation.

Finally, there is a growing desire on the part of many implementing agencies as well as the supporting agencies to have a kind of evaluation which can be used as a base for setting policy and for developing programmes which will promote social justice and greater self-reliance and enable the grassroots people to be the primary agents of their own development.

What is participatory evaluation?

Because of this, a new form of evaluation has evolved which can be termed participatory. It is a method of assessing a development programme which addresses itself primarily to the poor and oppressed, and can only be developed with them, for its purpose is to stimulate the autonomous organisation and creativity of the group. In such an approach, the working classes, the peasants, the exploited and the poor who up to now are supposed to be the beneficiaries of development and evaluation, will participate in an analysis of their own reality. No longer should they be the objects, but rather must take a principal role as subjects of a collective evaluation. What must be very clearly understood is that the objective of this evaluation is the people and their development, and not the advancement of knowledge for the sake of control and study.

Such an evaluatory process will therefore mean working with the poor to share knowledge and experience as between equals. Evaluation must therefore be a joint endeavour with equal participation of the people in appraising the programme, in adapting it better to their needs and to the environment. Even before that, the people must play a major role in deciding how evaluation will be made, in devising the evaluatory procedures, in conducting the interviews and collecting data and finally in arriving at judgments and conclusions.

Participatory evaluation programme must be developed within a commonly accepted frame of reference. In our traditional Indian village and slum context, this means the continued and close cooperation between the grassroots people, the personnel of the implementing agency, the various supporting agencies and the outside evaluator, who must in practice function only as a facilitator. Only complete participation among all these will create a proper sense of social consciousness about and commitment to community development. If development and evaluation programmes are designed at the level of the implementing agency, employing preset and abstract theories and formats, concepts and categories derived apart from the subjective reality of the recipient communities, such an evaluation is likely to be misunderstood

and misapplied, quite apart from their dis-functionality within the community.

Participatory evaluation must both in its process and results be of immediate and direct benefit to the grassroots community. It must involve the community in the entire evaluation process from the formulation of the areas of evaluation and the interpretation of the findings to the planning of the corrective action based upon them. Participatory evaluation therefore becomes part of a total educational experience which serves to determine community needs and to increase awareness of problems and commitment to solutions within the community. It is a dialectic process, a dialogue which takes place in an ever changing situation. Its object is the liberation of human resources for the solution of social problems. All this flows from the ideology which underpins it, namely that development is the people's business, and it implies a struggle and an on-going process towards transformation of the fundamental structures of society.

This aspect of development as an on-going process is very important and must be constantly borne in mind while undertaking the evaluation of a programme. Social reality is never static, fixed or dead. It is never an object to be observed and manipulated. Rather, it is alive. Its life and movement are the result of struggle, tension and conflict. Reality is not just a given fact or a finished product which will remain unchanged so that it can comfortably and leisurely be assessed and evaluated. It is the precarious result of the confrontation between exploiter and exploited—a result that can be examined only while it is in the process of evolution. Hence, evaluation does not concern itself with what is, as much as with what can be. Rather than clinging to the status quo and the established order, with frozen objectives enunciated in the past, it dwells on alternatives to an oppressive reality. Participatory evaluation is not a means of using science as a simple technique for making society function better and inserting the masses into this society, but rather a useful tool for unmasking and criticising any situation that negates the human being, its dignity and worth.

Objections against participatory evaluation

Obviously, such a switch over from the traditional evaluation is going to come under attack from social scientists long accustomed to the classical methods of research and evaluation. To the extent that the grassroots people are involved and participate in the evaluation about them and their development, scientists will hold that there would be an interference with the scientific method and the results would neither be in a pure form nor guarantee sufficient objectivity.

It would be good to remind ourselves, and these scientists, that here we are not dealing with abstract concepts or things but with human beings and their actions for their human development. In such an exercise there would not be any results in a pure form. As a matter of fact, when the traditional evaluators who emphasise this concept of objectivity are in their studies trying to write up reports, they cannot escape from their own subjectivity which will be interfering with the pure form of the findings. Besides, it must be remembered that when dealing with persons, the very presence and questioning of the outside evaluator will interfere with the objective reality. They cannot be just detached observers. They are also persons who come from a given section of society with a historical and cultural background and an experience which conspire together to condition their world vision, and determine their interests, attitudes and orientations to the objects of their evaluation.

Evaluation of a development programme does not consist merely in looking at concrete facts and physical things but also includes the ways in which the people involved with these facts perceive them. Hence, the concrete reality is made up of the connection between subjectivity and objectivity, and never objectivity isolated from subjectivity. To build up this connection, the facilitator must use methods for investigation which involve the people of the area as evaluators. They should take part in the investigations themselves and not serve as passive objects of the study.

2

An Exercise in Participatory Evaluation

It was with this aim of involving all the people concerned in the process of evaluation that the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, initiated an exercise of participatory evaluation with a few implementing agencies. It requested the Development Education Service to facilitate this evaluatory exercise. As a first step towards a comprehensive evaluation of many categories of development programmes in India, the Institute proposed to undertake an evaluation of five social housing programmes in India during 1981-1982. The reason for selecting social housing programmes as a start for such an evaluatory process was because shelter is one of the fundamental human rights which unfortunately is denied to more than half the population in our large cities. They are forced to accommodate themselves in hutments crowded within a small area in the heart of the cities. They live without the basic human amenities, and exist constantly with the threat of eviction and demolition of their huts by the civic authorities. It was felt important to start the participatory evaluation process in programmes that dealt with this grave problem for it would be an opportunity to share with the victims of this situation invaluable insights about their way of life, their hopes and fears, their sorrows and anguish, in order to help them as effectively as possible to find a way out to regaining their human dignity.

An invitation to enter into this participatory evaluation was sent to five agencies at work in social housing programmes. Of these, one agency felt that its people were not ready for this kind of exercise. Another accepted, but for various

reasons, did not want to go through the process after the first stage. Hence the evaluation was carried out with the three agencies whose personnel and target population were willing to enter into the process. One of these was operating in Madras, another on the outskirts of Bangalore and the third in Ahmedabad.

A preliminary format of points for evaluation was prepared at the Indian Social Institute and sent to these three agencies. The personnel of these agencies discussed them among themselves, and in one case, even got the people of the area involved in the discussion. They sent their amendments and comments to the Institute. Based on these comments, the format was modified and put in the form of questions and sent to the project sponsor or head of the implementing agency. This basic format is given below.

Evaluation of social housing project

Purpose of the evaluation

The main purpose of this evaluation, keeping in view the areas of concern in the light of the Indian situation, is to critically review the development initiatives of the voluntary agency in collaboration with the local grassroots community in their development process. It involves the study of :

i.   The type of project holder.
ii.   The nature of the project, its main thrust in the initial stages and at present.
iii.   The implementation of these projects—the extent of people's participation in its formulation and implementation.
iv.   The role played by the educative process and the economic content.
v.   The role played by the project in opening the people/ the animators/the sponsor/the sponsor's organisation/ to broader national and regional issues—cultural, economic, social, political, religious, etc.
vi.   The role played by government and national/regional organisations—reactions and suggestions.

vii.   The role played by the funding agencies—reactions
        and suggestions.

AREAS OF EVALUATION

Part I: Social aspects

I.   *Type of sponsor, project holder: his vision*

Under this we have to study whether the project holder
i.   is centraliser or initiator of democratic processes;
ii.   is dedicated and devoted to the cause of the weaker
      sections of society, especially Scheduled Castes and
      Scheduled Tribes;
iii. has managerial skills or not;
iv.   has technical competence or not;
v.   if the initial approach was efficiency and heavy invest-
      ment-oriented whether he/she has evolved towards
      greater training and involvement of the local people
      in the project or still has an attitude of better utilisa-
      tion of the technological means. Has he/she been able
      to reflect on the role of the economic content and the
      educative process and the link between the two?

II.   *Nature of the project*

To review the nature of the project, we have to find out
whether the project has:
i.   From a technical point of view concentrated on
      changing the village environment or on giving some
      sustained power to the people i.e. to the weaker
      sections.
ii.   Predominant involvement in technological inputs or
      in training personnel for continuing effort or a combi-
      nation of the two.
iii. Concentration primarily on forming cooperatives or
      associations adapted to the technological inputs or on
      organising people to help themselves in which the
      technical inputs and foreign aid work as catalysts.

iv.   Involvement and participation of the local people in:

—the origin of the project
—the formulation of the project
—implementation of the project
—contribution of local resources (human, organis-
ational, financial, technical, etc.)

v.   Participants (target group) are the poorest and weak-
est sections of the project area or not.

vi.   Taken into account the felt, expressed and priority
needs of the participants or not.

vii.   Replicability: cost-wise, inputs-wise know-how-wise
and process-wise.

viii.   Whether supplements or supplants the government and
other local resources (technical, organisational, cultur-
al, financial, human).

ix.   Whether tapped the local financial resources or
not—collaboration   with   local   government and
non-governmental funding bodies (banks, KVIC, etc.).

III. *Implementation of the project*

This is the most crucial aspect of the evaluation which
would involve a careful study and review of the following:

i.   *Achievement of physical targets*

a.   Implementation—actual against proposed physical
targets.

b.   Realisation of objectives in terms of results which
were proposed to be achieved.

c.   What were these objectives—education, housing,
acquiring of essential amenities or assets, change
in people's attitudes, people's organisation, etc.?

d.   Have these objectives changed in the course of
formulating/implementing/evaluating the project?

ii.   *Organisational achievements*

a.   Progress achieved by the administrative structure
if it was created during the planning stage.

b. Progress achieved by the structure if it had come
    into existence after the commencement of the
    project.

c. Extent of involvement of the people in decision-
    making. The operations in which they are
    involved.

d. Involvement of the people in administrative struc-
    ture created or evolved during planning and
    implementation; behavioural pattern of beneficia-
    ries towards the sponsor, vis-a-vis the project ad-
    ministration; the nature of participation of people
    that emerges from this behaviour.

e. Achievement in organising the beneficiaries and
    other local population from the point of view of:

    —meaningful decision-making;

    —developing community spirit and collaborative
    efforts;

    —identification as social group;

    —obtaining public services and schemes as right
    not as a favour bestowed on them;

    —eligibility for subsidies, concessions included in
    local schemes and programmes, etc;

    —developing technical skills;

    —Anything else?

IV. *Educative value*

a. Educative values imparted/imbibed by the partici-
    pants as a group/project sponsor/project staff/
    sponsor's organisation, as a result of the planning/
    formulation/implementation/evaluation of this
    project.

b. Is there any provision or process for an on-going
    self-evaluation of the programme? At what level?

c. How have these educative values or other proces-
    ses affected the people? Has there been any type
    of arrangement of ownership made by the people
    such as transfer or benami sale of houses or
    mortgage which is legally called malpractices but
    in reality may be having deeper causes? If there

have been such deals, what are the socio-cultural causes or economic factors that led to these actions?

d. Has this project had catalytic impact in the locality/area? In other words, has the participant group itself begun at its own initiative other schemes that go beyond this particular project e.g. thrift or credit schemes and what is the progress achieved through them in shaping values, changing attitudes, in improving health and hygienic habits, improving knowledge and above all in developing new self-help approaches to solve their problems? Have these attitudes/benefits spread to non-participants?

V. *The role of women*

i. What has been the impact of the transfer to the new house on the life of women? Often women belonging to the informal sector have jobs such as domestic help in the upper class houses in the city or in the upper caste houses in the villages. How far is the present house from their place of work? Has it affected the life of women and children who can often lose out because of the transfer of residence?

ii. If the man of the house has to put up with some inconvenience because of the shift of residence, is it because the decision to build the house on this spot was taken by the panchayat/government/voluntary organisations without consulting him or is it because he is prepared to put up with some inconvenience since the present spot provides better work facilities for the women to work in?

iii. The life of old women in particular can be affected by this change of location. Did they have any type of job to do in their former place which they cannot do in this new location?

VI. *Public relations*

a. Between the project sponsor and the people;

    b.   Between the participants;

    c.   Between the participant group and the project staff;

    d.   Between the project staff and the sponsor and his organisation;

    e.   Between project group/project sponsor and the superior authorities of the project sponsor's organisation;

    f.   Between the participant group and the people outside;

    g.   Between the project group/sponsor/staff and government/local bodies;

    h.   Overall image of the project, the project holder and the participant group in the minds of the people or officials outside the project.

VII. *Local leadership and national perspectives*

    i.   Have this project and the training imparted to the people been instrumental in the emergence of grass-roots level leaders?

    ii.   Has the emergence of leaders and the consciousness in the people of their rights helped them to grow in the awareness that the project belongs to them? Has there been any effort on their part to take over the project? If there has been such an attempt, has it been by a small clique and some vested interests or by the community as a whole? Have these efforts led to conflicts between groups among the people or with outsiders or between the community as a whole or part of it and the sponsor and/or his/her organisation? Have other problems prevented the people from even considering this possibility or made them postpone the effort? What is the nature of these problems?

    iii.   What is the quality of the grassroots leaders who have emerged? Are they capable of going beyond local needs to broader perspectives? Are they the type who limit themselves to material benefits or would be able to help the people with their organisation?

    iv   Do the people view the problems they faced and the

solutions they attempted within a limited local project prespective or within a national policy framework i.e. their marginalisation as the result of broader policies and as a result, the need for finding broader solutions? In other words, has the project tried to solve only a local problem or have the sponsor/animators/people been aware that it is a problem caused by national and state-level policies? Have the people gone beyond the project to broader human and organisational issues?

Part II: Technico-economic aspects

I. *Technical aspects*

   a. Do the technical aspects support or negate the assumptions made during the planning stage, regarding the availability of raw materials for production, cost of production services from government/voluntary agencies, patronage of customers (in case of non-housing projects) machinery/tools, implements/equipment for the purpose for which it was acquired, etc.?
   b. Technical efficiency in implementing the project.
   c. Problems which cropped up during implementation; have they been avoided or contained or not? Are they beyond the scope of the managerial and administrative capacity of the sponsor and the participants? Why? (e.g. inflation, recession, natural calamity, group rivalry, involvement of people, etc.)
   d. The role of the people/of the sponsor/of the staff in analysing and solving these problems.

II. *Economics*

   a. The performance of the project (including non-housing) from the point of view of:
      —Recovery of capital from repayment;
      — Meeting the day-to-day needs of beneficiaries;
      —Ensuring continuity by generating income for maintenance;

  —Expansion to meet additional needs, extension of the scheme to more beneficiaries or to the same group for other needs.

b. Pressures suffered by the project due to:

  —poor technical feasibility;

  —open market competition;

  —marginality or viability (economics of scale);

  —socio-economic condition of participants and the decision of capital through poor rotation;

  —diversion of funds to other project areas;

  —market fluctuations/restrictions;

  —government regulations/restrictions;

  —factors beyond the control of the project, like natural calamity, accident etc.;

  —lack of technical skills;

  —lack of people's involvement.

c. Has there been any revision of the project as a result of those pressures or because of any other causes? What were the causes and what are the consequences of these changes on the main/revised objectives of the project?

III. *Procedural accuracy*

I. *Report-writing*

  a. Maintenance of records, namely, files, record of events, cash books, minutes of meetings, resolutions, survey data, etc.

  b. Regularity and knowledge of report-writing on the part of the leaders, animators, etc.

  c. Practical problems faced by the project holder in maintaining procedural accuracy e.g. too busy, not interested, lack of skills or discouraged due to poor progress of the project, etc.

2. *Accounting procedure*

  a. Whether the accounts are up to date;

b. Separate account for the project or mixed up with the accounts of other projects or of the whole organisation; if mixed up whether or not the expenditure incurred on the project is identifiable.

c. Availability of vouchers and receipts supporting the various expenditures.

d. If accounts are audited, comments of the auditor.

e. Explanation for lapses in accounting, if any.

f. Up to what point are the people involved in the maintenance of and decision-making about records, accounts and funds in general? What is the effect of this involvement on the project as a whole? Has it affected efficiency or productivity? Has it led to growth of local leadership and peoples organisations? If it has affected efficiency or productivity, are efforts made to overcome these problems? If people are not involved, are efforts made to involve them?

IV. *Cost-benefit analysis*

1. If any difference in the proposed costs and actual cost; whether it is marginal or extraordinary.

2. Reasons for the difference:
   a. Revision of the project.
   b. Delay in sanctioning the project by the sponsor's organisation; national organisation/funding agency.
   c. Delay in implementation.
   d. Lack of availability of raw materials.
   e. Inflation.
   f. Poor mobilisation of local resources.
   g. Subsidies and grants not received from other sources.
   h. Poor planning.
   i. Anything else?

V. *Supervision*

a. Efficiency of the administration and management in general.

b. Technical supervision for implementation, market-
ing etc. Availability of personnel and consultancy
services availed of (in case of non-housing pro-
jects).

c. Role played by and the management capacity of
the project sponsor.

d. Local Committees; their impact and feasibility.

e. The role of the people in supervising the imple-
mentation of the project—and its impact on effici-
ency and productivity.

Part III : External organisations

I. What role did the funding agency play in the plan-
ning, evolution, dialogue or growth of the project/pro-
ject holder/people? —Any suggestions for the future?

II. What do the people/animators/sponsor's organization
have to say about the relations between the project/
project holder/people and the funding agency?

Part IV : Conclusions

a. whether the project, on the whole, is adequate,
partially adequate, inadequate—explain;

b. possibility of salvaging the project, if it is judged
inadequate and not functioning well;

c. suggestions regarding the steps towards real devel-
opment i.e. development of human beings as a
community aware of its rights and capable of
changing itself.

It was made quite clear that these questions were not
meant to be answered point by point as a reply to a question-
naire, but were the presentation of various topics to be dis-
cussed by the agency personnel and the people of the commu-
nity. After about three weeks, the facilitators from Develop-
ment Education Service visited the group for a week and met
the project sponsor, the project staff independently and to-
gether with the sponsor, the local core group, and some repre-
sentatives of the target population through visits on the site

of the project. They also visited the responsible officers and officials of the supporting organisations like the bank, the government departments associated with the project, for example, the Special Officer of the Municipal Corporation and the Member Secretary of the Madras Metropolitan Development Authority in reference to the Madras Programme.

The facilitators then left the project area and wrote out a report of all these meetings. The basis of this report was the objectives on which the programme had been originally founded. The facilitators felt that evaluation should be conducted along certain criteria which are rules or norms by which the programme activities were to be weighed in order to form a correct judgement respecting the programme. It was thought that the most important element in a development programme and its progress was the determination of its objectives and goals. Most of the other factors in such a programme would depend upon what objectives were established. On the basis of these objectives a draft report was prepared which also included points for reflection on the objectives themselves, to see if the changing circumstances did not call for fresh enunciation of goals and objectives. This report was sent to the project sponsor for discussion with all the people who had participated in the evaluation. After a few days, the facilitators returned to the organisations, met these people or their representatives and together with them made amendments to the report wherever they found it necessary.

The final report was thus the product of all the people involved in the programme, assisted by the outside facilitator. A number of suggestions for improvements were made at the end of each report. There were also reflections on the original objectives and goals in the light of the changed situations of the people. Orientations were indicated in the report towards changing the objectives accordingly. Since the report had been discussed again and again and amended according to the desires and opinions of the personnel of the implementing agency as well as of the grassroots community, they felt free to accept these suggestions and orientations or to reject them. It was heartening to note that none of these were rejected. In fact, some of the suggestions were amended to make them more stringent.

3

Assessing the Evaluation Process

From the 22nd to the 24th August, 1982, a workshop was conducted at the Workers' Centre, Bangalore, in which representatives of the three projects gathered together with the facilitators of the evaluations as well as some social workers who were undertaking social housing programmes in other parts of India who played the role of resource persons in the workshop. The organisation which had withdrawn from the evaluation after the first stage was also represented by its recently appointed director.

The three days were spent in reflecting on the whole evaluation process that had been completed in the period of the last nine months. Each project was reported on by the project sponsor, and the evaluation report on each was summarily presented by the facilitators. The other resource persons also presented a brief report on their own programmes. A general discussion was held on the projects and a common assessment of the evaluation process as it had been carried out was made by the whole group.

General impressions of the evaluation undertaken

The evaluations were looked on as very important events in the progress of the programmes. They were considered by all the participants as a valuable experience. The sponsors and the project workers present at the workshop welcomed the opportunity it gave them to set aside some time from their activities to reflect on their programmes. They realised how necessary it was for them, who were constantly engaged in their work and unaccustomed to take time off to think, to

be able to stand back and see where they were in their programmes. The social workers who had joined the projects after they had been functioning for some time, saw this evaluation as an opportunity to learn about the origins and previous growth of their programmes.

The participants of the workshop found the method of self-searching interesting and the dialogue with the facilitators useful. They also felt that this participatory evaluation approach provided some deeper understanding of the ideology that should underly their work and it increased their motivation for future work in the programme. They also realised that this participatory method brought them closer to the grass-roots people, and that it increased their mutual respect and understanding.

Ideology underlying participatory evaluation

An insight of the workshop was that evaluation, like development, cannot be value-neutral. The evaluators and project agencies may consider themselves objective and hence politically neutral, but the system in which they operate is itself not politically neutral. As a matter of fact, this very stance of neutrality is political! Evaluations of development programmes are, in this sense, always political and either maintain, justify the present socio-economic and political system or provide data to question, critically examine and transform it.

The ideology of the evaluator and agents of development will provide the orientation of the evaluation they will undertake. Traditional evaluation, as we have seen, is linked to an approach that sees development as coming down to the people through the planning and efforts to experts and social workers. Such an evaluation emphasises professional control over the discovery, utilisation and elaboration of knowledge, just as development, in this view, emphasises the control by the social worker over the economic and social progress of a community. On the other hand, participatory evaluation, consequent on its development orientation, is ideologically committed to the people at the lowest stratum of society. It is essentially related to social transformation. The

reason why one of the organisations to which this participatory evaluation exercise was proposed, refused to share in it was precisely because its development approach was oriented completely from top to bottom, with the project sponsor and project workers taking all decisions and treating the grassroots people merely as recipients of their gifts in the form of houses and other amenities. Such an evaluation would constantly be at tension with this orientation.

This does not imply that the participation of the people in the other programmes was total and perfect. But, at least, there was the manifest desire to increase such participation that readily accepted this sort of evaluation. In the process of our evaluation, we, the facilitators, encountered our first major obstacles with the project sponsors in some of the programmes. Two of them were concerned with the definition of the word "participant." "Who", asked one, "was to take part in our participatory evaluation effort?" It became clear to us in the course of our first conversation with him that we had rather different ideas about participation. For him, participation was the share of the people in the work of the housing programme that would help to reduce the cost and make the programme as economical as possible. Hence, the contribution of the people was limited to the designing and construction of the houses. They were not the primary agents of the programme, but contributed in terms of labour and time so that the programme could be the cheapest housing project possible.

The director of another programme felt that the participants of the evaluatory process should be the programme workers, both paid and honorary, the members of the staff and the student body of the training college of which he was a professor. We, in turn, had envisaged a committee of slum dwellers, a body of representatives appointed or elected by those for whom the houses were being built, heads of families and others at the grassroots level of the slum community.

This obstacle was enhanced during our initial discussions with the slum dwellers. When we suggested to them that they themselves design a new plan for their evaluation, they stared at us in surprise, They had never dreamed that they could be given such a heavy responsibility. To us their reply sounded

very tragic indeed, "You are educated and know best what should be done. We know nothing and are ready to follow whatever you say!" This was a sad commentary on the fact that the people at the grassroots have become accustomed to a relationship of dependency on the project sponsor and project workers. That is why they find it inconceivable that they be entrusted with the task of defining and establishing an evaluation process. We considered these attitudes to be the result of a series of psychological blocks, and realised that there had been a great lacuna in their education and awareness building process.

The judgement the people make of themselves as incapable of planning their own evaluation is an overflow of their attitude of dependency in all the development activities undertaken on their behalf. They underestimate their own worth and abilities. Changes are brought about in their lives, their environment and their working patterns that put them on the defensive. They feel powerless against the changes they are witnessing. Unfortunately, the implementing agencies reinforce this sense of inadequacy and sustain it to preserve their dependence on them.

In two of the programmes evaluated, this was the people's attitude when we began the process. But we were happy to see that after a few sessions with the core-group members and with the enthusiastic cooperation of the project workers who wanted to bring about a change, this attitude was modified, so that a greater degree of participation of the people was noted during the rest of the evaluatory process.

Participatory evaluation should ascertain beforehand this participation of the people, for it should be solely undertaken in response to the felt need of the people at the grassroots level and is a part of their growth into consciousness. It is that reflection which will naturally leads to action for the transformation of society. Participatory evaluation can, therefore, contribute towards the liberation of the people only if it is associated with some participatory social or developmental activity. A programme where the people's participation is practically non-existent will find this kind of evaluation totally irrelevant, unnecessary and meaningless. This was found not only in the programme mentioned above which refused this

evaluation, but also among some of the members of an imple-
menting agency that accepted the evaluation. They seemed to
question or even resented an evaluation in which the people
of the grassroots were being given the opportunity of question-
ing the activities of the agency on their behalf. Participatory
evaluation can only function where there is a people's move-
ment or organisation, however rudimentary. Or conversely,
such an evaluation, as we did find, can also be the means of
deepening the process of building up a people's organisation
towards social transformation.

If people are to be the primary agents of the evaluatory
process, what is the role of the implementing agency? This
agency's role in development is catalytic. It respects the
primacy of the people in the decision-making and action in-
volved in the development process. So here too, in evaluation,
its role is secondary, insofar as it must help the community
to undertake its own evaluation. The funding or supporting
agencies too just accept second place in evaluation of develop-
ment programmes. In the past, they have always taken the
initiative in project evaluation. The reason for this was mainly
because of their need to assess the financial aspects of the
programme, to check on mismanagement or misappropriation
of funds. Such an evaluation may be necessary in some pro-
grammes, but these should not be dignified by the term
"development programmes." Quite certainly projects and
agencies which are indulging in this kind of corruption will
never want to have any participatory evaluation!

In an evaluation of genuine and honest development pro-
grammes, in which the grassroots people are the evaluators
of their own organisation and action, they are within their
rights to assess the catalytic efforts of the implementing
agency and the supportive role of the funding agency. This
took place in some of the projects that came within the
experiment we had. In one project, the people assessed the
role of the project sponsor stating that he was taking too
much on himself in contacting government and police officials
by phone. They expressed the wish that he leave it to them to
try to approach these officials on their own in order to in-
crease their own self-reliance and ability to articulate with
those in authority in government circles. The organisation

also brought the funding agency within the sphere of their evaluation when the people stated that this agency demands regular reports, which are accordingly sent. However, apart from acknowledging receipt of these reports, the funding agency does not offer any further comment. Being in a position of contacting several development agencies all over the world, the funding agency would surely be able to offer some suggestions and comments which could help the implementing agency and the people to improve in their work in the programme.

The facilitator

The participants felt that being an external facilitator in participatory evaluation is not an easy task. He has to be true to himself, to the people and to the agency who has asked for his assistance. Being an external facilitator is a challenge and an opportunity for a learning and educational experience for himself. In helping with the evaluation, the facilitator is educating and being educated with and by the people. To the extent he helps the people to put into practice the plans resulting from the process of self-assessment, he is changing the levels of consciousness of the people, and by this change, he is re-evaluating. Thus there is a dynamic movement between evaluation and acting on the results of the evaluation.

This readiness to learn from the people demands a genuine humility on the part of the facilitator. He will never be able to enter into a dialogue with the people involved in the programme, especially those at the grassroots, if he always projects ignorance on to them concerning the intricacies of developmental ideology, approach and method. A person who is closed to the contribution of others, weakened by the threat of being displaced can never enter into dialogue with them. Self-sufficiency is incompatible with participatory evaluation.

This attitude of learning is rooted in faith in one's fellowmen, even those who are on the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder. To participate with people in the evaluation of their work requires faith in their power to make and

remake, to correct and improve on their own activity, faith in
their vocation to be fully human, which is not the privilege of
an elite, but the birthright of all men. However, this faith is
not to be seen as something naive, but one which includes an
awareness that although all men have within them the power
to transform their world, the concrete situation of oppression
and alienation may impair the use of that power. All the
same, this alienation will itself strike the facilitator as a chal-
lenge to which he must respond. This faith is, to a great extent,
contagious, for its presence in a person makes him acceptable
to the people with whom he works in the evaluation. It is
essential for a fruitful participatory assessment that the people
have a deep trust in the external facilitator, so that the
dialogue between them be genuine.

Obviously, with such an attitude of humility and faith, the
facilitator will not set out in his evaluation to pick holes and
search for defects in the programme. His first preoccupa-
tion will be to find out what is good and praiseworthy and
encourage the people along these lines in which they are
making headway. In the process of going along the way of
their success, they will themselves be able to spot their deficien-
cies and determine to set them right. Once again, in this con-
text, it is useful to remember that if people are treated as always
change-resistant or as hostile or ambivalent, they will build up
a strong resistance to any suggested change. In the process of
common reflection, it is important to build up the positive
self-image of the people involved in the programme and to
remove any real or artificial doubts concerning their own
abilities. The facilitator will try to identify the strengths of the
people and demonstrate how these can be applied to obtain
the recommended goals.

It is also necessary that the facilitator have the ability to
communicate with the people. This communication does not
imply merely the knowledge of their language, but must go
deeper to understand their thought-structures and the
semantics of their language. Sometimes, we found that when the
people used the same words as we did, we had the impression
that they were using these words in the same context and that
we understood their meaning. But in actual fact, these people
at the grassroots were thinking of something different. This

happened when we were talking of participation, of people's solidarity and organisation, etc. In order to be on the same semantic wave-length of the people, we realised that it would be necessary for the facilitator to have had some experience of living and identifying with the people with whom he is participating in evaluation. This implies, further, that the facilitator does not proceed to evaluate programmes straight from the academician's desk. Failure to understand this aspect led to problems in one case.

The facilitator must learn to establish a relationship with the people such that a progressive acceptance takes place. However, he must be accepted as he really is, that is to say, as someone who comes from outside, who wishes to do an important and useful work with the people, but who, it must be clearly understood, will eventually go away again. It would be useless—and even wrong—for the external facilitator to desire to be totally immersed and be fusioned into the community.

Finally, we might say that this type of evaluation can be done by the people and the implementing agency alone. So is there any need of an external facilitator? At present, people in development programmes are not accustomed to self-evaluation and are not acquainted with the techniques and processes involved in it. Today many small groups of activists are springing up all over the country without any or with minimal external funds. Their primary goal is to build up awareness in the people and help them to organise themselves for their own economic and social transformation. With these groups, an external facilitator may be redundant because participatory evaluation is an in-built element of the very process of social change. As we shall see later, their method of functioning and the goal for which they strive, which is the socio-economic and political transformation of society, makes it essential for them to have a constant and deep participatory evaluation without the help of any outsider.

But most groups and organisations working for development in our country still have a long way to go to arrive at this ideal type of social work. They are, by and large, in the process of learning to inquire into their own approach and methodology. They look to an outsider to help them in the

process. But once this method of self-searching and assess-
ment has become the norm, it is hoped that there will be no
more need of external facilitators for participatory evaluation.

Methodology of participatory evaluation

For the process of participatory evaluation to start, it
would be ideal if the request came from the people involved
in the development programme, and much more if it came
from the grassroots people themselves. However, failing this
initiative on their part, an evaluation can be triggered off by a
proposal from the external facilitator. This proposal must,
however, not be made by the evaluator with the desire of
generating knowledge for himself as a commodity that he can
market, but in a spirit of concern for the people so that they
may be able to be more effective in their work of social trans-
formation. Neither must his proposal contain any hint of
pressure or force. The people must feel absolutely free to
accept or reject an invitation for participatory evaluation.

In order that the people feel the need of such an evalua-
tion or are ready to accept it, they must undergo a prior
education which will deepen their realisation of the need for
constant and continual analysis of themselves and their work.
The choice of the evaluatory process, of the facilitator, if that
is possible, and of the spheres of activities which are to be
evaluated, must be made by the people, that is, the grassroots
community or its representatives, the project holder and
workers, as well as the supporters, like the funding agencies,
etc., who must realise that this is the people's evaluation of
themselves, and not their evaluation of the people. The sphere
of activity to be evaluated should be one which the people
feel is an immediate problem situation.

There must be a joint agreement on all these points be-
tween the facilitator and the people involved in the programme.
They must all be clear with regard to the reason, objectives,
terms of reference, methodology and scope of the evaluation.
For this agreement to be satisfactory to all concerned, it is
necessary that there be proper communication between the
facilitator, sponsor, agency and the grassroots community.
Time is needed for this process.

The participants of the workshop stressed the need of a prolonged period for this preliminary preparation. In the present evaluation initial contact was through postal correspondence. Personal contact is essential to establish this communication. Lack of sufficient dialogue was one of the main reasons why one organisation was unwilling to go beyond the first stage of this participatory evaluation. These points should all be expressed in a preliminary format. It was suggested that the present format be extended to become more comprehensive. However the people involved in the project should decide whether such a format is necessary, or whether it can be dispensed with.

After the joint plan has been clearly established, the final questionnaire could be prepared and sent to the people involved in the programme. The questionnaire can be discussed by them in groups according to the tasks they fulfil in the programme, or according to the geographical sections of the area in which the people live. After the required period of time for this common reflection on the questionnaire, the facilitator can come in on the scene and continue the reflection with various groups and persons. This reflection for the purpose of data collection will be through open interviews rather than questionnaires to be filled in. New avenues have to be explored to make this evaluation people-oriented rather than researcher-oriented. The discussions could take the form of case-studies, taken from the programme, or hypothetical ones, simulation exercises, etc.

In all this data collection, the role of the facilitator is crucial. He must understand the people from the beginning and keep a strict record of the facts that can be compared from the start of the programme to the present period. These would be their awareness of facts and realities around them, knowledge of practices related to their work and problems, their attitudes towards them, their resistances and prejudices, their acceptance or level of adoption of various social, health and similar practices, attitudes towards various social, economic and civic measures, readiness for involvement in matters which are of a common concern, etc. These changes will then be known with better precision and permit an estimate of the nature and extent of their development.

In his conversations with the people as well as with the project personnel, the facilitator will try to observe their readiness to overcome some prejudices and resistances to processes of change, as well as to observe their social behaviour and communication abilities. Articulation is a good indication of self-confidence and clarity of structural analysis, and can tell the facilitator a lot about the progress of a programme. Hence, he must keenly observe their ability to participate in a discussion, to show an enlarged interest and outlook towards various problems not only on the micro-level but also those on the macro-level which can have a direct or indirect impact on their own life in their local situation.

The purpose of all this data collection is primarily to help the people's reflection on themselves and their concrete situation so that they will be able to act purposefully for the transformation of society. It has been suggested that the facilitator should train some local animators during three or four days, and that they could continue the work in his absence. The success of this would depend on the availability of the right type of local animators and the time at the disposal of the facilitator and of the local facilitators for their training. Three or four days might not seem sufficient for such an orientation. The use of these local facilitators would not be necessary if the external facilitator is ready to spend more days with the group, and if in his contacts with the people, he gets so closely involved with them and involves them so much in the process that they do not feel the need of other "mediating" facilitators.

When collecting the data suggested above, the facilitator should not hold his information close to his chest, but should divulge it to the people and discuss it with them, so that the ensuing conclusions will be not merely his own, but those of all the people. In this way, the data analysis will be a group analysis. But due to limitations of time, the facilitator could prepare a draft report which is sent on to the organisation for discussion. The outline for the report could take various forms, but one we have found practical and effective is the following:

1. *Criteria for the evaluation:* The objectives of the programme which are dealt with one by one.

2. For each objective—
    a. *The actual condition* is stated simply and clearly. It could include percentages and statistical data, wherever necessary.
    b. *The causes for the actual situation:* Here are spelt out the reasons for the deviations from the criteria which, in turn, have brought on the present actual condition. These should be handled very carefully, for there may be a danger that the cause statement can result in finger pointing.
    c. *The effects:* The report goes on to state the hazards or risks that the organisation is exposed to if such deviations continue. This section should centre on an analysis of the risks the organisation encounters because the condition that actually prevails is not the same as the objective expected.

3. All this can be set in the context of a macro-level analysis of the socio-economic and political structures of society, pointing out to the root cause of underdevelopment. The vision of development as in the concrete situation of the programme can be delineated as the ultimate goal towards which every development programme in particular should aim at. Against this, the methodology, the tactics and strategy utilised by the project should be assessed.

4. *Final conclusions and recommendations, if any*: These should be so expressed that they become educational and can lead to attitudinal adjustments, which in turn will lead to group behaviour in support of the change. These conclusions and recommendations should establish hard, concrete goals. A very effective exercise is to conduct a brain-storming session with the people of the local community together with the project personnel, in order to draw out these suggestions and recommendations. Each of them can then be weighed one by one from the point of view of factual possibility, motivation and basic assumptions underlying them.

To help the people to act on these recommendations, the report must attempt to state the end product, the conditions

under which this final goal will be achieved, and the criteria by which they can further evaluate their performance in meeting these goals. However, the facilitator must bear in mind that there should be some flexibility maintained in these recommendations proposed by the group.

Even though the report may be drafted by the facilitator, he must be constantly aware that it is a group document, a report of an evaluation done by the whole organisation, consisting of the project personnel and the people. It must be so written that people must be able to personalise it and make the ideas contained in it totally their own. In order that this internalisation of the report take place, the facilitator sends it to the programme sponsor and through him to all the people concerned in the programme. They will discuss it seriously, point by point and make their amendments to it, wherever necessary, thus ultimately conforming it to be their report and not that of the facilitator.

Follow-up of the evaluation

The Workshop at the Workers' Centre, Bangalore, after having delineated the main lines of the above process and methodology of participatory evaluation, recommended that when this process has been completed, there should be a follow-up in some form. This was actually already effected in one of the programmes evaluated, for the facilitators from Development Education Service were invited at a later date to conduct a training programme for the personnel of the organisation.

Another suggestion that cam up in the workshop was that a system of linkages should be built up between programmes which have the same objectives. For example, the programmes involved in social housing should be able to maintain a linkage with one another. There are different groups which are grappling with similiar issues, seeking solutions to their problems, looking for guidance and expertise in housing and in training from those who have succeeded in programmes of social housing in other parts of the country. These should be brought into contact with one another through exchange

programmes in which people from one organisation could spend some time with others that have succeeded in solving the problems it is now encountering. A means of disseminating the methods and approaches that have been successful could also be tried.

In fact, one of the objectives of taking this initiative for participatory evaluation was precisely the hope of helping some groups to become resource centres for others in the area who wanted to go through a similar process. We feel that though in most cases an external facilitator is required, it is important to make the outsider available within the region itself. This makes it possible for the group to have as facilitator or trainer, someone with sufficient prior knowledge of the region and someone with whom they can keep in touch for follow up.

We were only partially successful in attaining this objective. The groups that went through the evaluation had an open mind required for this process. But their internal organisation had limitations that will require a longer process than the one we have been able to go through. Besides, the shortcomings of the methodology mentioned above, diverted our attention for some time. Consequently, except for one group that can be a resource centre for technical aspects, the others will need a longer time to become consultants for an evaluatory approach.

4

From Reflection to Action

Subsequent to this Workshop to assess the Participatory Evaluation exercise covering three social housing programmes, in November 1982, Development Education Service received an invitation to help in the evaluation of a programme that is being conducted in Karnataka. Feeling that this was an opportunity for us to put into practice what had been discussed in the Bangalore Workshop, we readily accepted the invitation.

We had preliminary discussions with the project workers and the people. In these discussions we delineated the objectives, scope, methodology and duration of the evaluation. From these discussions, we intended preparing a preliminary format to be discussed by them during a period of two weeks. We proposed that we would come back after this time and help continue the discussions, collect the data required and help the group to formulate its report and recommendations for the future. However, the group thought that the whole process could be done in a concentrated period by all of us together. We therefore fixed a week in which we planned to be with the group on their project site.

When we returned on the appointed day, we found the group waiting to start the evaluation with us. They consisted of eleven of the project personnel, including the project director, and fourteen of the local people who constituted the core-group of the grassroots community. We started the first session by getting from them a description of their project, its objectives, the phases of the work involved, their present

situation, their difficulties and successes, and the role each one played in the programme.

The aim of the programme, according to them, was "to impart education among the underprivileged, downtrodden, neglected and deprived sections of the population of the target area which comprises 85% of its total population." The objectives envisaged to achieve this aim were literacy, adult education, mother and child care and rehabilitation of the orphans and widows through training in income-generating skills.

The programme had been functioning for the past two years, and much effort had been put in the two entry points which were literacy and mother and child care. For these two programmes, four literacy teachers and three trained nurses were employed. Before they began their work in the project, the seven of them were sent for training in community development to an organisation in Tamil Nadu. As the work progressed and the confidence of the people was won, more centres were added, especially for the literacy programme, and from among the learners, a number of young people were selected to form the core-group. These were given an intensive training by two of the project personnel who kept in constant contact with them after their training and helped them with on-going reflection on their activities.

The activities of the core-group were varied and centred around the issues that concerned the community. Starting with the abolition of the differences in service meted out to Harijans and others in the local tea shops, they went on to more involved ones like house sites for Harijans, access to their burial grounds, and pensions for widows and old people.

The difficulties they encountered originated from the opposition of the higher caste people of the area who objected to benefits accruing to the Harijans from the project. But so far they were not violent in their opposition. In the meanwhile, the project director and workers felt that they should concentrate on the education and organisation of the people so that their unity might provide a sufficient deterrent to the higher caste people in case they intended any violent attack on them.

After we had gone through the various aspects of the project, we had an exercise on the structural analysis of the

target area. The participants were divided into five groups of five members in each group. Each participant was provided with a sheet of blank paper. On it we asked them to draw a symbol which would express their image of their target area. Because the whole idea of "symbols" was entirely new to both the project personnel and core group members, we gave a couple of examples of symbols, e.g. depicting an area like a half withered tree, standing for a certain percentage of the population flourishing well and the greater part like withered branches and dying or fallen leaves. It took quite some time for all to get into the hang of the thing, but finally after about twenty minutes, all had their symbols ready.

We then asked them to explain their symbols to the other members of their own group. While this was being done, we gave each group a sheet of coloured chart paper and asked them to draw a large circle on this sheet, representing their target area. They were then to discuss and arrive at a consensus about drawing the symbols of each participant within this circle, either integrated into a synthesised form or each symbol separately.

After this was finished, they discussed the question, "What are the factors which have the greatest impact on our target area at present?" When they had decided upon four or five of these factors, they were asked to indicate these within the circle by arrows pointing towards the centre. The factor with the strongest impact was to point closer to the centre while the others were to be indicated by their relative distances from the centre.

The next question they discussed was "What are the factors whose impact is diminishing at present?" The four or five factors they decided upon were indicated by arrows going outward away from the centre, the more important ones being closer to the centre and the least important ones being nearer to the circumference.

Finally, we asked them to discuss the question, "What do you foresee will be the factors having the greatest impact in the next ten years?" These factors were indicated by arrows pointing towards the circumference from outside the circle, the more important ones being nearer to the circumference.

When this was done, we asked each participant to write

on his white sheet of paper what he thought about the exercise and what he had learned from it. But as soon they began this, we were brought to realise the mistake we had made. Some of them were not fluent in expressing themselves in writing, though they were literate. Hence we stopped this part of the exercise and asked all the groups to come together and explain in turn what was on their sheet of chart paper.

We discovered some very interesting symbols of the target area in this general session. One group had covered the whole circle with prison bars, through which we could see a child suffering from rickets, a rich man pushing a labourer away and snatching up his sack of grain, a pile of coins on top of his table to signify corruption and a broken idol signifying superstition. Another group had the pyramid in the form of an aeroplane on top with a few people in it, a few cars lower down, below them some more motor cycles, below still more bullock carts and bicycles, while the masses right at the bottom were walking.

The factors that, according to the groups, had the strongest impact at present were unjust distribution of wealth, corruption, illiteracy, brain drain from the villages and the population explosion. Factors whose impact was diminishing were the value system, Indian identity, standard of life, and unity among the people. The factors which will have a strong impact in the future were unemployment, greater disparity between the rich and the poor, revolution, unrest and indiscipline.

A long time was spent analysing each of these factors, their root causes and the attitude we should have towards them with the consequent action that we can take to counteract or to foster them, as the case may be. It was felt by all that this was a very useful exercise which helped to clarify a lot of ideas, to make their own reality more alive and to give a correct orientation to their future work.

From here we went on to describe what would be the ideal state of development that we would all aspire to for ourselves and for our programme. In the general session which took about two hours, we arrived at the following conclusions:

1.   We must look for a development of the people that will imply their self-reliance, an equitable distribution

of the means of production and equal opportunities
for all to avail themselves of the resources of the
country. This implies that all people must share in
decision-making in the social, economic, political and
cultural spheres.

2. We must deepen our educational process and link it
    up with our economic programmes.
3. Development of a community implies the development
    of each individual in it. We must work in our project
    so that every individual of our community can freely
    exercise his ability to reflect on himself in his own
    situation, he can unite with others in a spirit of solid-
    arity and can make his own decisions.
4. We must strive to build a strong organisation of our
    people for collective action through which they can
    free themselves from the oppression and exploitation
    of the rich and from those who belong to the higher
    castes.

Once this vision of the goal of their programme was
established, they compared it with the aim of their project.
They realised that it was a spelling out of their original aim,
which, as one of them said, had up to now been only a phrase
on paper, but which was now given much more meaning.

This whole process took two days of concentrated work.
In the evenings, we visited the people in the area and through
our conversations with them reinforced some of the ideas
which were coming up in our sessions of the day.

The next day was spent in trying to evolve some basic
principles of development deriving from the vision that was
outlined. We did this first in small groups and then in a gen-
eral session. The principles that they enunciated were the
following:

1. The primary factor of all develpment work is man, not
    projects, finances or administration.
2. The goal of development is the transformation of
    society, not just the integrating of people into the
    present society which is rooted in injustice.
3. The planning of the programme must be done by the
    community.

4. The community must be the primary agent of its own development.
5. Local resources and personnel must be used to the maximum.
6. The development worker must be identified as much as possible with the people. He must live with them and share their way of life.
7. The people must be educated and made critically aware of themselves and their own situation, and must be helped to organise themselves for their own development.
8. Project workers and sponsors are to play a secondary role in the work of development.

Finally, we asked the participants to break up into small groups and discuss each section and phase of the work of the project, to see whether it was in any way working towards the vision they had outlined on the second day, and what measures they would have to adopt to reach their goal more effectively and to eliminate the deviations that may have cropped up in the process of their work. In all this reflection, we asked them to have the principles they had themselves enunciated as their guidelines.

This group reflection was followed by a general session, which was characterised by a free and frank dialogue, in which the distinction between project director, project workers and core-group members was hardly discernible. A lot of criticism about their past activities came through, but it was very obviously constructive criticism, and the spirit in which it was conducted was on the whole quite friendly. At all costs, we made it imperative that there be no personal fault-finding or finger-pointing. However, there were some moments of tensions which were fortunately quickly dispelled. The result of the discussion was a number of very concrete suggestions which would help the programme to move effectively towards the goal and vision of development that had been spelt out previously.

The participants then nominated a drafting committee consisting of the project director, two project workers, three core-group members and the facilitator. These were asked to prepare an evaluation report and submit it to the whole

group after a week. This report was duly prepared and sub-
mitted at the determined time. The group was given a week to
read and discuss it. After that, we met once more and the
amendments suggested by individuals were reflected on and
added to the report.

What did we learn from this experience in participatory
evaluation? First of all, we had learned to modify our own
ideas about participation. We found that we had not been
very sure ourselves at the beginning about the participation
and contributions of the grassroots people. Granted that, in
the beginning of the process they were hesitant and not very
forward with ideas that might not please the project director
and workers. But very soon, possibly because of the atmos-
phere created by the first exercise, namely that of the circles,
they became much more open and spoke their mind more
freely than we had expected. Perhaps, it was our own faith in
the people that was not as strong as it should be!

Secondly, we found that participatory evaluation did
accomplish a number of important goals which might not, at
first, seem obvious. It led to the pooling of ideas and infor-
mation of both agency personnel and grassroots people, at the
same time helping to create better understanding of and res-
pect for each other, as villagers and professional personnel.
It also acted as a strong motivational tool among the villagers
themselves, as their opinions were sought and considered and
they deepened in the conviction that was already initiated in
their prior educational processes that they could influence
and control their lives. This participatory evaluation devel-
oped a sense of social responsibility for what was going on
and a commitment to be actively engaged in the development,
education and the organisation of their own community.

It is important that there be a direct link between the
initial discussions on the structural analysis of the area and
of the objectives and vision and final evaluation of the com-
munity development process. This gives a clear and objective
background to the whole process of assessment. Similarly,
there have to be links between the community education pro-
gramme that has preceded with the evaluatory process. One
is necessary as a means to achieve the other. But neither is
sufficient in itself.

The structural analysis, vision of development, the principles of development and the recommendations made by the group were not perfect, but they indicated a definite progress by the group in its thinking and a clarity in their resolve for further action. It can quite justifiably be hoped that this is just the beginning of a process of participatory evaluation. In further exercises of this type, their ideas and actions will surely be more clearly defined and made effective towards social transformation.

This experience in participatory evaluation has led us to reiterate as a final conclusion the realisation that we, as outsiders, need not serve as the main catalysts for evaluation if the people are prepared by a previous education process to be their own evaluators. It is important that we, the external facilitators, begin viewing our responsibilities not only in the development process but also in the evaluatory process, as something other than control. In order to hasten the day when we are not needed to fulfil the role of facilitators, we must urge the groups who are working for development and social transformation to increase their efforts in the line of this education.

The most heartening conclusion we have drawn from this experience is that if the people are given the opportunity to participate in the identification and solution of their problems and of assessing their own activity as well as the catalytic activity of the agency which is sponsoring their work, their creativity and imaginative capacities are greatly enhanced and their long hidden potentialities are brought gloriously to light!

Evaluation in radical political organisations

A final note that we should like to add is the answer to a question raised not only in the Bangalore workshop on the assessment of the evaluation of the social housing programmes, but also in this last experience in evaluation. What are the links of this evaluation with radical political organisations? How do these organisations that are working at the grassroots level to bring about social transformation through socio-economic and

political action go about evaluating their work? A conversa-
tion we recently held with a member of a radical organisation
helped us to find the answer to this question.

We have been dealing with the evaluation of development
programmes done through the mediation of voluntary organ-
isations, which are mainly receiving external aid for their
work. But the real thrust of development is being given by
organisations which are working for social transformation
through grassroots education and mobilisation. These groups
are constantly exposed to conflict from vested interests and the
establishment. They see an urgent need for constant evalu-
ation. As a matter of fact, evaluation is for them the means of
survival. Given their type of political orientation and activity,
they can survive only when they have an in-built system of
participatory evaluation.

Their evaluation is covered in two spheres, namely, process
management and crisis management. The process manage-
ment covers all their routine tasks like people's education,
building up people's committees, these committees taking up
responsibility for actions, and the taking up of issues. For
each of these tasks, a process observer is appointed from
among the people. Every task, be it a training camp, a village
meeting, or a study circle, has an appointed process observer.
This function is rotated among all the local participants so
that each of them may have the opportunity to learn and
become proficient in the skill of evaluating. Objectivity is
ensured because the instinct for group survival demands it.

The observer is not so much involved in the event which
he is observing, yet he is not considered to be an outsider by
the other participants. His role is to give objective feedback
on all that he sees in and outside the sessions. He adds his
observations to the general evaluation which is made by all
the participants of a particular event. Many of his valuable
contributions come from what he observes outside the sessions.
For example, in a training camp, he is generally the last one
to fall asleep, for he is moving around the various groups of
participants who informally discuss what has gone on or
struck them most during the day.

The second sphere of evaluation for action group is crisis
management. For every strike, public protest meeting, *dharna*

or other forms of protest, an observer is appointed. He is different from the person who is responsible for the event. He is in charge of organising the event and does not make any speeches during it. The observer stands at the back of the crowd and observes reactions of the various groups of people involved in the event, the men, the women, the police and sections of the crowd coming from different villages. He gives a feedback to the one who is responsible, sometimes while the event is in progress through pre-determined signs and gestures. He is also helped by other activists who alone are aware that he is the observer for that particular action. He is the observer for the duration of the action even if it is prolonged for two to three months.

The crisis observer always keeps a record of what goes on. He maintains a diary of the whole event. In this he is not alone, for every activist in the organisation maintains a diary of whatever action is going on. A consolidated report is made up of each event from all the diaries of the activists. This helps to make a deep evaluation of the action for establishing norms for subsequent activities. It also serves as a protection from later accusations by police or other opposition groups.

Hence, for activist groups, evaluation is not merely assessment, but it is accountability with responsibility and communication. The one who is in charge of any event, whether it be a part of the routine process or a crisis, has also to take care of coordination. Responsibilities are allotted area-wise, struggle-wise and issue-wise. None of these continue for more than a year. Together with this, the organisations evolve village committees which provide constant feedback and evaluation.

From the very beginning, the organisations initiate and strongly encourage a process of regular criticism and self-criticism. There are many difficulties at the start of such a process, for the villagers generally find it very difficult to say things critical of others in their presence. Hence this self-criticism is organised in such a way that each one can defend himself freely when such criticism is directed towards him. No criticism of anyone who is absent is permitted at these sessions.

5

Conclusion

The success of the struggle for fundamental change in our Indian society depends upon the extent to which the masses develop an understanding that it is they who must be the harbingers of structural change. With this understanding must go a determination to bring about a radically new society.

Assuming that there can be no radical change without radical consciousness, the primary goal of the whole development process must be to bring about a situation where the masses strive to replace the present unjust and inequitable system by an entirely new society which might best be described as non-violent, non-exploitative and democratic.

The radical action group we have spoken about just now is aiming at this kind of a change. The process by which it keeps its movement alive and constantly enkindled is its participatory evaluation. It is interesting to note that this very group had started many years ago as a traditional development group that was striving for the development of the underprivileged and downtrodden. There is no doubt that the constant and on-going process of participatory study and evaluation has gradually rid it of all elements that were superfluous and deviating, and have helped it to concentrate on the essentials of a genuine development towards a just, stable and sustainable society. It is this constant participatory evaluation that has brought it to the stage in which it is at present.

Also the participatory evaluation of the social housing programmes and of the agency near Bangalore shows a similar trend. In all these programmes, the development agency had used a non-priority item as an entry point. In at least one project, the development organisation had evolved from its charity orientation to a more educative process. However,

its target area is in the slums where housing (i.e. habitat, not necessarily the middle class type of built houses which few slum dwellers can afford) is a higher priority than in the rural areas. As a result, response from the people was faster than in the other two projects that were based either in fully rural areas or in what are called "dormitory villages" i.e. places inhabited by people who are dependent on the consumer needs or jobs in the neighbouring city.

The orientation of these groups differed, and as a result, also the impact of participatory evaluation. One group had a strong technical bias with education as a secondary input. This group feels the need of identifying its strengths and weaknesses in order to specify the areas where it can act as a resource centre. The very fact of introducing technical inputs relevant to the people has led to greater self-confidence among the participants of this programme. That is where the development organisation has to see its limitations in support-ing the process among the people. In fact, reflection on its identity was one of the by-products of the evaluation.

The group that had begun with a charity orientation had turned to an educational process. But after a major crisis, it was in danger of becoming a target-oriented organisation. Participatory evaluation was instrumental in beginning a new process of reflection in this group and enabling it to go once again in the direction of people's education. The first steps required for handing the project over to the people are already being taken and the leaders who could have become like the earlier "slum-dadas" have been made more accountable to the people.

In the third group, lack of regular contacts had led to what can be called lack of clarity of development vision. Evaluation became a step in helping the development workers to reflect on their role and take new initiatives.

We dare not say that in any of these groups, we achieved the objective of enabling them to become resource centres for other development organisations. What was achieved was a new process of reflection in each group and of building link-ages between agencies involved in similar work. One of them is strong in technical consultancy. The others still have a long way to go. But the educational process begun here gives

some hope for the future.

One of the reasons why many objectives of the evaluation could not be achieved was the time constraint. Though this was meant to be participatory evaluation in which every decision has to be taken by the people, the need of external facilitators had its own constraints. To some extent, a target date had to be fixed to suit the busy schedule of the facilitators. This target was later changed according to the needs of the groups. However, the very fact of having an initial (externally fixed) target had its limitations.

Apart from its internal organisational limitations, the time factor was one of the causes of the problems that eventually led to the withdrawal of a group after the first phase. Though in this case, we had met the project director personally to discuss the evaluation with him, and the proposed facilitator had spent some days with the organisation to make himself familiar with the area, the time limits did not allow us to analyse the reactions of various persons. Had there been more time, we would have had better insights into the academic outlook of the facilitator and the internal constraints of the organisation that made participatory evaluation difficult. The problems caused would either have been avoided or a decision would have been taken not to initiate such a process in the organisation.

Added to the time factor was the fact that initial contacts for decision-making were by and large through postal correspondence rather than a personal visit. The development organisations were not clear about the process or even about the motivation for this evaluation. At least two of them thought that the proposal came from a funding agency and accepted the proposal since they felt some pressure. This misunderstanding was at the root of many problems that cropped up in the course of the evaluation. One agency took a somewhat defensive stance and its focus shifted to the choice of a facilitator who would not be threatening, though eventually a person who could lead the group through a participatory process was identified. The second group was undecided on what should be done. Prior personal relations with the third group prevented any misunderstanding though it was not clear on many aspects of the evaluation. The group that

pulled out of the process from the beginning was not clear on where the proposal came from. Consequently, it gave somewhat evasive replies to our queries.

At this stage we realise that because of the initial defective approach, more time than feasible was spent on clarification of the procedure during the process of the evaluation itself. We are convinced that in many cases it is advisable for an external agency to take the initiative in participatory evaluation. But all factors that can divert attention from the main process need to be tackled before the decision about the evaluation is taken. A personal visit to the group seems to be essential. The group has to be given a sufficiently long time to internalise the values of the process and take a decision without any external pressure. Any involvement of an agency that might have funded the work would have to wait till the development organisation feels strong enough to face it, rather than in the beginning.

Though an external facilitator is useful and may even be essential in many cases, ultimately, his main work, as we have insisted again and again, is to make the local group self-sufficient in every aspect, including evaluation. Hence we consider the training of animators an essential feature of any evaluation. The process itself can strengthen the training given. But at present we tend to believe that at least one week's training before the process begins is essential and that the evaluation itself cannot be considered training,

With this self-sufficiency in view we feel that as much of report-writing as possible has to be done by the local group. The facilitator can supplement this report, rather than be himself the main report-writer. The ideal may be to have two different reports, one by the animators and the other by the facilitator, and merge them into one before it is presented to the people. It may be useful to let the suggestions come from the people rather than insert them already in the first report. However, we would like to add that we are not yet clear on many of these aspects.

What is clear to us at this stage is that ongoing evaluation has a definite role to play in the growth of development organisations. If they consistently and honestly maintain a process of participatory evaluation, combined with a deep

study and analysis, there is no doubt whatsoever that they too will arrive at discovering the correct ideology and vision and the most effective method and strategy for building up a new society of justice, equality and liberty for all.

Select Bibliography

Anonymous, *Participatory Research: An Introduction.* New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.

Arnove, Robert F., "Foundations and the Transfer of Knowledge: Implications for India," *Social Action* 31 (n. 2, 1981), pp. 144-173.

Bappa, Salihu, "Popular Theatre for Adult Education, Community Action and Social Change," *Convergence* 14 (n. 2, 1981), pp. 24-35.

Baraclough, Solen et al., (eds), *Dialogue about Participation* Vol. I & II. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), 1981.

Bhasin, Kamla and Vimala R. (eds), *Readings on Poverty, Politics and Development.* New Delhi: Food and Agricultural Organisation, 1980.

Boal, Augusto, *Theatre of the Oppressed.* New York: Urizen Books, 1979.

Byram, Martin, Greg Conchelos et al., *Emerging Rural Application of Participatory Research.* Paris: UNESCO, 1976.

FAO, *Asian Survey of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development: Starting from Below.* Rome: FAO and UNDP, 1977.

Fernandes, Walter (ed.), *People's Participation in Development: Approaches to Non-Formal Education.* New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981 (Reprint).

Fernandes, Walter and Rajesh Tandon (eds), *Participatory Research and Evaluation: Experiments in Research as a Process of Liberation.* New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 1981.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970.

———.*Cultural Action for Freedom.* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.

Ghai, Dharam and Anisur Rahman, "The Small Farmers Groups in Nepal," *Development* 1981 (1), pp. 23-28.


Rahman, Anisur Mohammed, "Transition to Collective Agriculture and Peasant Participation—North Vietnam, Tanzania and Ethiopia," *The Bangladesh Development Studies* 7 (n. 3, Monsoon 1979).

———.*Some Dimensions of people's Participation in the Bhoomi Sena Movement.* Geneva: UNRISD, 1981.

Shrivastava, Om and Rajesh Tandon (eds.), *Participatory Training for Rural Development.* New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1982.

Tandon, Rajesh (ed.), *Participatory Research in Asia.* Canberra: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, 1980.

Tilakaratna, S., *Grass-Roots Self-Reliance in Sri Lanka: Organisations of Betel and Coir Yarn Producers.* Geneva: International Labour Office, 1982.
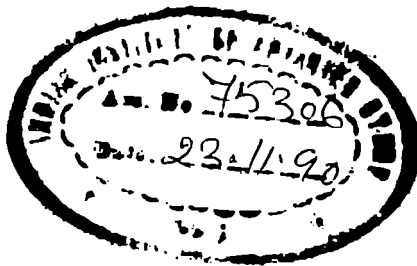
Indian Social Institute Monograph Series

General Editor: ALFRED DE SOUZA