PN-AAY-972

GENERIC QUESTIONS FOR PVO EVALUATIONS

Submitted to AID/FVA/PVC
By Dr. Mary B. Anderson

January 1983

GENERIC QUESTIONS FOR PVO EVALUATION

Introduction

Following are questions suggested for inclusion in all or most upcoming FVA/PVC evaluations. Their purpose is to gather comparable information from the wide variety of projects funded through FVA/PVC in order to 1) further learning from project experience for future project design and 2) help establish the priorities for future AID support. These questions are not the only ones to be asked. Each project should also be evaluated on its own terms for its design and impact.

The purpose of this kind of evaluation is to discover the connections between project characteristics and project environment which, as they interact, determine project results (success or failure). The usefulness of information collected from a variety of projects in different settings but focussed on the same issues through generic questions is that it provides a basis for the generalized learning that can affect future project effectiveness.

Because the focus is on PVOs *per se*, the generic questions are focussed on those elements of PVO method and approach which may make a difference in project success. These include those characteristics which PVOs claim are important in defining their work--i.e., participation and benefit distribution, innovation, and replicability. These questions are chosen here to build on the work done previously for FVA/PVC by Tendler, DAI, Pyle, Development Associates, Inc., Robert Nathan Associates, et al. The question for comparative study is

not whether these characteristics are always accurate descriptions of PVO approaches or even whether they work in all settings. What we want to find out for future planning is under what circumstances are these characteristics, which PVOs claim, found to make an appreciable difference in project effectiveness.

This is what these generic questions are designed to gather information about. Suggestions for tabulation of findings in order to facilitate comparisons follow in Section II.

SECTION I

I. Participation

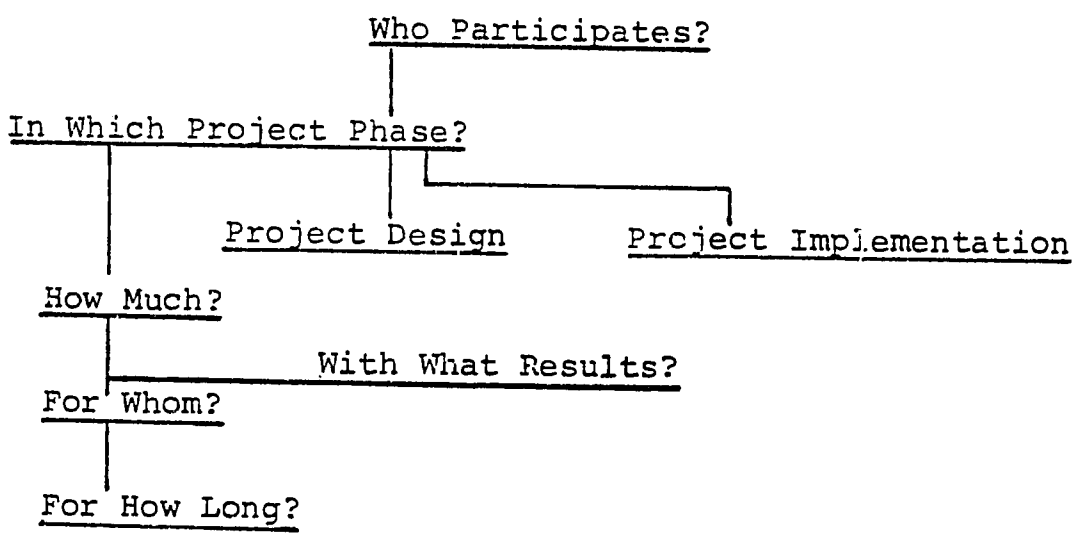
What is important about the PVO claims to work in participatory ways? To understand this we want to find out what difference participation makes to project effectiveness, i.e., to the achievement of project objectives and, specifically, to the achievement , distribution. and sustainability of project benefits. Evaluation questions about participation should seek the connections between project type, project context, participation and benefits. When and how is participation correlated with the achievement of desired benefits and of the desired distribution of benefits? When and how does participation affect positively and directly the sustainability of benefits?

Tendler's work makes clear two things--namely that participation is not always a hallmark of PVO activity and that

participation is not always the only or best way to achieve project objectives. The generic questions in this area, then, must be designed to find out the characteristics of projects and of project contexts which influence the correlation between participation and project effectiveness in achieving the desired benefit distribution and in sustaining benefits.

Following directly on the work of Tendler and of DAI, the following research design emerges.

The composite question may be asked: Who participates in which phases of a PVO project, how much, with what results, for whom, and for how long? To show the sequencing of this question, we represent it diagrammatically.



Answers to the components of this question will be put alongside a classification of project type and a classification of the type of participation (see below). To focus the answers

to the various parts of the question, sub-questions or categories are specified as follows:

A. Who Participates?

1. By Income Level High Middle Low

2. By social status level (not, as most literature assumes, necessarily correlated to income level)
High Middle Low

3. By Description. Tenants, small farmers, small entrepreneurs, the landless, women, the disadvantaged, temporary workers, small craftspeople, small holders, etc.

To determine the income level of the participants, evaluators should certainly do more than ask income statistics. They should visit the project site and observe housing, other living arrangements, farm plots, clothing, health, etc., to make the determination. Furthermore, this classificaion should be made both for within the area of the project (where do the participants fall within the wealth levels of the immediate project area?) and for the country as a whole.

To determine social status levels, evaluators should also observe as well as question. Indicators include seating and participation in meetings, directions and frequency of advice giving and seeking, reported lines of decision-making in families and communities, number of people for whom an individual is responsible, etc.

B. In Which Phase of Project?

1. In Design Phase (1, 2, and 3 from A above)

2. In Implementation Phase (1, 2, and 3 from A above)

The evaluators should find out who participates in the several distinct phases of a project. Are those who were involved in the identification of the project focus and its design the same people as those with whom the project actually works? When seeking data on the identification of groups who participate, evaluators should simultaneously find out specifically at which points in the project the involvement occurred.

C. <u>How Much?</u>

1. In Design:	None or little	Somewhat	Very Much
2. In Implementation:	None or little	Somewhat	Very Much

Evaluators should describe the actual involvements of local participants in project design and implementation and make a judgment as to its centrality or importance to the project. That is, was the involvement of the participants very important to the project's occurrance in 1) the amount of time they put in; 2) their contributions of other resources to the project; 3) their ideas and thinking to the way the project was run; or 4) their efforts to involve others and to establish the credibility of the project's work locally? It is possible, of course, that the actual amount of time put in by local people may not be very great but that their ideas and loyalty to a project's efforts were absolutely central to its definition and design. The evaluators should assess this in both the design and implementation phases.

D. <u>With What Results?</u>

1. Participation had a positive impact on project effectiveness because:

a. participants were empowered to plan, to manage, to demand services or resources from government, etc.;

b. participants learned how to work together;

c. participants identified a real need that was not necessarily known before;

d. participants corrected a PVO misperception which would have made the project less effective.

2. Participation had a negative impact on project effectiveness because:

a. too much time was spent on participation; it was not efficient for local people in terms of what they got in return;

b. participants made bad decisions, identified unimportant needs, etc.;

c. emphasis on participation diverted scarce resources so that fewer people were reached with benefits and/or less was accomplished than could have been; it was not an efficient project design for use of project resources.

3. Participation made no appreciable difference to project effectiveness because:

a. participants simply joined the project in order to get its benefits but were not interested in participation <u>per se</u>.

E. <u>For Whom?</u> (Identification of Project Beneficiaries/ Measure of Benefit Distribution)

1. Same as participants in project design phase (B-1 above)

2. Same as participants in project implementation phase (B-2 above)

3. Other (Classify as in A-1, -2, or -3 above).

In identifying project beneficiaries, evaluators should also find out who, if anyone, may have been negatively affected by a project. Are the benefits distributed by the project seen, by any groups, as detrimental to the functioning of the society? Have patterns of control or power been altered? If any group sees the results of the project as deleterious, the characteristics of this group should be specified as in section A above.

F. <u>For How Long?</u> (Measure of benefit sustainability)

1. Only in the immediate process and aftermath of of the project

2. Over the long run

The DAI report suggests several good indicators of benefit sustainability. These include: a) the evidence of capability in a local group or organization to carry on activities of the project; b) the commitment of resources to the project by local groups or individuals; c) the existence of adequate mechanisms for continuing to mobilize resources needed for project activities; d) improvements in resource bases in household, farms, enterprises, etc., on which future activities could draw; and e) the establishment of new organizations

or associations through which the project can serve either as a continuing catalyst for activities or perform the functions of the project.

As stated earlier, the answers to all of these questions should be put alongside a classification of project type as well as a classification of the type of participation stressed by the project in order to determine the interaction of project characteristics with participation and benefits. The following classifications build on the work done by previous consultants for FVA/PVC to look for explanations of the importance of participation in achieving desired benefit distribution.

G. Project Type Classification (Based on work of J. Tendler)

1. Project providing limited-access technology. Local elites can coopt benefits if participation is not broadly representative.

2. Public goods project. For any to gain, all must gain as is true in many public health projects. Hence, participation may be hypothesized to be irrelevant to benefit distribution.

3. Externally-delivered service projects. Though broad representation may be important in the conceptualization of the project to justify its plan, it is possible that local elites could coopt the services later, as for example, in the builidng of a school or hospital or provision of staff for either. Participation in implementation may be very important to benefit distribution or this could be guaranteed by an outside or higher authority such as government or PVO.

H. Classification of Types of Participation

Though many PVOs may claim to be working in a participatory mode, there may be a great deal of variation as to what they mean by this. Some may define participation entirely by organizational form so that by forming cooperatives, they claim to be working in a participatory way. Others may feel that true participation is found only when everything is decided in open public meetings and discussions. Some may insist on a combination of factors in their definitions of participation. In order to compare projects, it is important to know which types of participatory approaches are being pursued in any given project. Following are classifications for the types of participation pursued by PVOs.

1. Cooperative or collective organization
2. Animation--individual consciousness raising through visitations, extension workers, training, etc.

3. Group consciousness raising through community meetings, discussions

4. Reliance on existing local leaders

5. Reliance on existing local organizations, associations, clubs, IPVOs, administrative or governmental structures, etc.

6. Self-help, contributions by community of labor and/or money.

II. Innovation

An innovative project is one which introduces a new idea, technique, or method or which introduces a new application of a previously used idea, technique, or method as, for example, to a previously unreached group. Whether or not an idea (etc.) is new is relative to the context. What may be new in one area and, hence, an innovation, may be "old hat" in another area. There are, however, approaches and ideas which are old hat everywhere so that evaluators must know the state of the art of the activity of a project in order to assess innovativeness in broad terms as well as to establish whether an approach is new in a given area.

Further, the success of a project is not always related to its degree of innovativeness. Thus evaluators must also consider and determine the degree to which innovation is a relevant issue in any given project, and who gains or loses from it. In some areas, it may be that innovation for its own sake is detrimental to project objectives. Cross-project comparisons will help determine this as well.

The following questions seek to determine the degree of innovativeness in any project and the importance of innovation to a project's success.

A. Is anyone else in the area of the project doing the same kind or similar work?

To answer this question, evaluators should ask this kind of question of people both inside and outside of the project. Staff of the PVO, project participants and beneficiaries should be asked. Other PVO staffs, village/local leaders, government people in the area, non-participants in the project should also be asked. The specific areas of difference or innovativeness should be identified. For example, is the project the first of its kind to introduce a technology to the area or is it using old techniques with new groups? Is its method of organization new to this area though the activity is one that other PVOs work in?

B. If anyone else is doing the same or similar work, when did they start doing it?

Evaluators can find out both something about the relationship of the PVO to local and national government through this question and about the directions of influence. Who pioneered an approach and who followed?

C. If others are involved in similar work, who are they?

Again, evaluators can discover directions and patterns of transfer (related to project replicability discussed below) through this question.

D. To what extent does the project represent the state of the art in the area (activity) of its work?

Evaluators should interview experts in the area of project activity and read current literature and critiques to make this determination. They should answer this question by giving examples of other activities which are similar and/or different.

E. Has the PVO crossed any previously held social or economic barrier through this project? Who else is working with the same groups of participants?

Evaluators should look for new or innovative linkages which the project may have tried as well as its extension to new constituencies.

F. Was innovation an appropriate goal in this area?

Evaluators should determine: How advanced is the state of the art already in the project's area? Is so much known and are successful methods prevalent so much so that innovation for its own sake is irrelevant? Is the project meeting a real need albeit in well known ways? Would anything be gained by changes in its approach?

G. Are there things that PVOs in general seem to be able to do in the area of the project that other large donor projects and/or government sponsored efforts cannot do? Is this project doing these things?

Evaluators should ask this question of PVO staffs, local people, AID Mission Heads, local government officials, and

other AID agency staffs. The question should be asked in two phases: first, respondents should be asked the general question of whether there are things PVOs can do that others cannot and, then, they should be asked whether the project in question does these things.

III. Replicability

The PVOs claim that their projects provide models in method, specific project activity, organizational structure, etc., which can be applied elsewhere. The following questions look for replicability at several stages and levels.

A. What aspect of the project might be appropriate to replicate?

1. its organizational structure?
2. its specific activity?
3. its methods?
4. its use of some special kind of agent for action (barefoot doctors, etc.)?
5. a new combination of these?

B. Who thinks so? Why do they think so? What reasons do they give?

C. Do the project participants/beneficiaries think that any aspect of the project should be repeated in any other local setting?

D. Has anyone else, another local group, town council, etc., asked the project for help in getting something similar started?

E. Has the project staff or its participants "advertised" their work in a way to help others get the same ideas?

F. Has the PVO sought to convince other PVOs or groups that they should adopt aspects of this project?

G. Can any aspect of the project be transferred to entirely different contexts? Has the PVO made any efforts to advertise its work to areas in other countries through its own staff, through other PVOs, through AID or other funders, through its brochures? Does it offer any help in getting others to use its approaches? Does it need additional resources to make this happen?

H. Where did the idea for this project originate?

Evaluators should note that information gathered for one category sometimes is also relevant to other of the generic questions. Some of the questions on replicability relate to sustainability of project benefits. For example, if institutions are created which can help sustain projects, there may also be a greater possibility that the same institutions will aid in transferring the model of the project to other relevant groups. Interrelationships of this sort can be identified and studied as data for a number of projects are compiled and compared. Section II discusses an approach to tabulation of the information which may facilitate such comparisons.

SECTION II

Some years ago when a group of scientists were involved in developing a science curriculum for use in high schools, one well known physicist commented that he hoped to create a "teacher proof curriculum." The approach discussed here is designed not to be an "evaluator proof" evaluation instrument. Rather, the assumption is that careful comparison of projects over time requires thought and analysis. Evaluators are required to interview a variety of people and to weigh conflicting information and opinion, to compare it also with observation and to make judgments about reality which incorporate them all.

In the area of these general questions, as we have said, we want to relate special PVO project characteristics to project context and to compare and assess alternative project results. Above we have discussed project characteristics and below we shall talk about how to summarize them for the purposes of comparison. Also, for every project, it is necessary to determine elements of project context so that projects operating in similar contexts can be compared and comparisons can be made among contexts. Context classification should include three elements: National government; government-PVO relations; and project sector. Table A contains these classifications. The indicators should be seen as important in all projects and providing one slice of cross-comparison for all other factors shown on the other charts.

In the specific areas of the generic questions, evaluators should write a thoughtful narrative "history" which explains the background and trends which are relevant to the particular question. The answer to any single question should be based on the information and analysis contained in the corresponding narrative paragraph(s). In addition, evaluators should provide summary information of findings in chart form for comparative purposes.

Illustrations for the issues of participation and benefits, innovation and replicability follow.

When the information for each generic issue has been generated for a number of projects, it will be possible to compare and analyze certain aspects of these issues holding some project variables constant while examining the interactions among others. For example, one could collect all project evaluations where the projects were those which transferred a limited-access technology and where participation in the design phase of the project had been low, medium, and high. One could, then, compare the resulting benefits distributions and determine to what extent the involvement of a wide group in the design of a project may, or may not, ensure equitable distribution of project benefits. To enrich the findings from such a comparison, one could do an analysis by project sector as well. By pulling all projects in the health field, for example, one could hold sector constant and observe other variations. One could learn that in health programs, the degree of early participation is less important, for example, to later benefits distribution than in agricultural projects. Or one could

determine whether any significant differences occur in projects where women are the explicit beneficiaries. Similar comparisons would be possible for innovation or replicability.

The summary charts provide a tool for tabulating the relevant information on a variety of projects in a way which is conducive to comparison. Such information could be programmed into a computer for easy retrieval. The evalutors' narrative paragraphs would continue to be important, however, so that anyone who wanted to understand the causalities behind the summaries would have access to the information on which the summaries are based.

CHART A

PROJECT CONTEXT SUMMARY

A. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Authoritarian
- Non-supportive of PVOs
- Supportive

Participatory
- Non-supportive
- Supportive

OR

Centralized/Strong
Centralized/Weak

Decentralized/Strong
Decentralized/Weak

B. GOVERNMENT-PVO RELATIONS (Tendler's Categories)

Complementary
Filling unoccupied territory
Replication or diffusion
Government takeover
Competition
Substitution
Brokerage

C. SECTOR

Agriculture
Small enterprise
Private enterprise
Health
Education
Urban development
Village development
Housing
Infrastructure development

CHART B

PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS SUMMARY

				F. PROJECT TYPE	G. PARTICIPATION TYPE
A. PARTICIPANTS					
In Design Phase				C	
Income Level	High	Medium	Low		F
Social Status Level	High	Medium	Low		
Description	(Farmers, women, etc.)				
In Implementation Phase					
Income Level	High	Medium	Low		E
Social Status Level	High	Medium	Low		
Description	(Farmers, women, etc.)				
B. HOW MUCH?					
In Design Phase	Very Much	Somewhat	None	B	D
In Implementation Phase	Very Much	Somewhat	None		C
C. EFFECT ON PROJECT					
Positive Effect	Strong	Medium	Weak		
Negative Effect	Strong	Medium	Weak		B
No Effect					
D. BENEFICIARIES					
Same as Design Participants				A	A
Same as Implementation Participants					
Other					
Income Level	High	Medium	Low		
Social Status Level	High	Medium	Low		
Description	(Farmers, women, etc.)				
Adverse Effect					
Income Level	High	Medium	Low		
Social Status Level	High	Medium	Low		
Description	(Farmers, women, etc.)				
E. SUSTAINABILITY OF BENEFITS					
Local Org. to Continue	Strong	Medium	Weak		
Local Resource Commitments to project	Strong	Medium	Weak		
Mechanisms to Continue	Strong	Medium	Weak		
Improved local economic base	Strong	Medium	Weak		
New Local Org.	Strong	Medium	Weak		
Probability of Sustaining	Strong	Medium	Weak		

Chart C

Innovativeness Summary

A. Some or Similar Work

1.	Same group	No	Yes
2.	Same services	No	Yes
3.	Same kind of staff	No	Yes
4.	Same organizational structure	No	Yes
5.	Same technology	No	Yes
6.	Other (specify)		

B. When similar Work Began in Relation to Project under Evaluation

1.	Same group	After	Before
2.	Same services	After	Before
3.	Same kind of staff	After	Before
4.	Same organizational structure	After	Before
5.	Same technology	After	Before
6.	Other (specify)		

C. Who is Doing Similar Work

	Government		PVO		
	Local	Central	Foreign	Indigeous	Other local group (specify)
1. Same group					
2. Same services					
3. Same kind of staff					
4. Same organizational structure					
5. Same technology					
6. Other (specify)					

Chart C (continued)

D. Project in Relation to State of Art

	new & untried	up-to-date	old hat
1. Same group			
2. Same services			
3. Same kind of staff			
4. Same organizational structure			
5. Same technology			
6. Other (specify)			

E. New Linkages/Crossed Previous Barrier?

Yes No

F. Appropriateness of Innovativeness

Very (new methods needed) Medium Not very (tried and true methods exist)

G. Special Roles for PVOs

1. PVOs believe they have special roles	Very much	Medium	Not much
2. Others think PVOs have special roles			
a. AID Mission	Very much	Medium	Not much
b. Government	Very much	Medium	Not much
c. Project participants	Very much	Medium	Not much
d. Other	Very much	Medium	Not much

Chart D

Replicability Summary

A. Aspect of Project to Replicate

1. Organizational structure
2. Specific activity
3. Method of work
4. Agents
5. New combination of above
6 Other

B. Who Believes Should Be Replicated

	Project Staff	Proj. Particip.	Local People	Govt	Other PVOs	AID Missi
1. Organizational struc.						
2. Specific activity						
3. Method of work						
4. Agents						
5. New combination of above						
6. Other						

C. Who Has Asked for Help from Project

1. Local groups (specify)
2. Nearby groups (specify)
3. Other PVO
4. Government (specify)
5. Other

Chart D (continued)

D. Efforts to Spread Information on Project

1. By project staff	Strong	Medium	Weak
2. By project participants	Strong	Medium	Weak
3. By others (specify)	Strong	Medium	Weak

E. To Whom Has Effort Been Made

1. Other PVO	Strong	Medium	Weak
2. Other local groups	Strong	Medium	Weak
3. Local officials	Strong	Medium	Weak
4. Higher gov't authorities	Strong	Medium	Weak
5. To another context (other countries)	Strong	Medium	Weak

F. Origination of Project Idea

1. Tried in other location by this PVO
2. Tried in other location by other group (specify)
3. Tried by other group in this location (specify)
4. Originated by this project