Anecdotes and Beyond

101 Ways to Assess an ICT Project

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AED/dot-ORG

Why Evaluate?

Two key reasons
Accountability & Learning

- Document success – rather than "claim" success for every project

- Learn from projects - including project failures

Levels of M&E

Impact Assessment

Mid-term Evaluation & Final Evaluation

Monitoring & Reporting

Types of Questions

So what?
What has changed? Would this change have happened without this project?

Is the project moving towards achieving its objectives?
(Formative Evaluation)

Did the project achieve its objectives?
(Summative Evaluation)

Is the project making expected progress in terms of implementation?
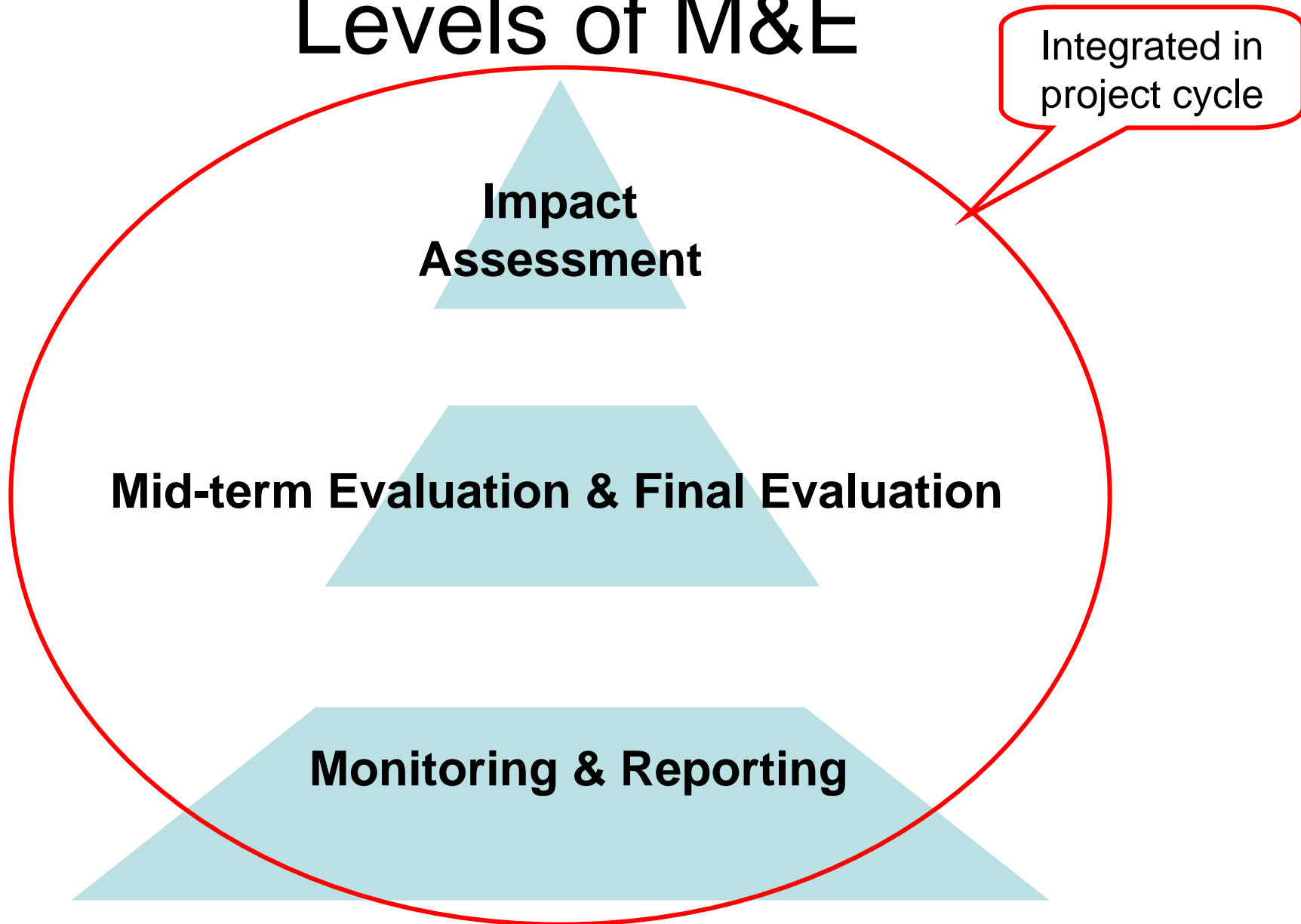
Sample Questions

What is that increased access used for and how are these "uses" having an impact on socio-economic development?

How are the telecenters doing? Are their revenues from Internet services increasing?

Are the telecenters sustainable? Did they increase access?

Monitor # of clients, revenues, expenses

Levels of M&E

Impact Assessment

Mid-term Evaluation & Final Evaluation

Monitoring & Reporting

Integrated in project cycle

Designing an Evaluation

- Start with the project's objectives
- Define your evaluation goals.
- Identify specific evaluation questions and indicators or sub-topics to be investigated.
- Take into account some of the evaluation challenges specific to ICT projects.
- Select a mix of data collection methods appropriate to cover all evaluation questions.

Defining your Evaluation Goals

- What do you want to know? Why?
- What are the key evaluation questions?
- How you planning on using the evaluation's findings?

"Utilization-focused evaluation"

Collect Only What You Need

Asking the Right Questions

- Which type of institutional setting is best for telecenters? Radio stations, mayor's offices, parastatal institutions, teachers' colleges….?

Rephrased as…

- Does the institutional setting of the telecenter make a difference? How? What are the strengths and weaknesses of different institutional settings?

Balance Focus and Flexibility

Challenges in Evaluation
of ICT Projects (1)

Social processes involved in diffusion and utilization of ICTs are not well understood.

- "Design-reality gap" (Heeks)
- Challenge of "development content"

Challenges in Evaluation of ICT Projects (2)

Rapid technological change requires deployment of new technology & business models and constant "piloting/testing".

By the time we've learned enough about a technology or model to make it work well, there's something better on the horizon.

Challenges in Evaluation
of ICT Projects (3)

Scale and network effects

What works as a pilot may not work as well when scaled up; some things can only work at scale and won't have significant impacts as pilots.
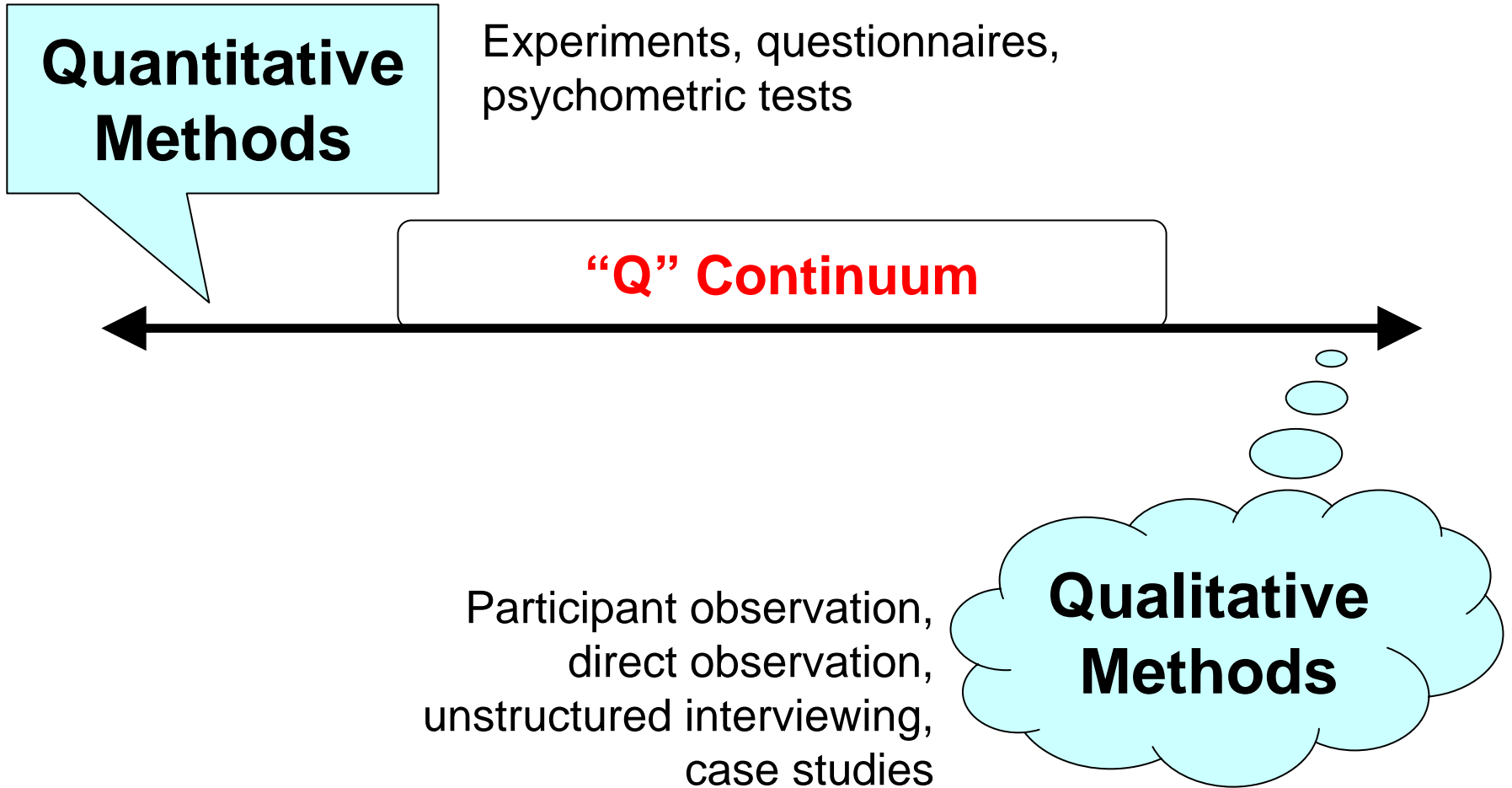
How to Evaluate?
What Approach?

Quantitative Methods

Experiments, questionnaires, psychometric tests

"Q" Continuum

Participant observation, direct observation, unstructured interviewing, case studies

Qualitative Methods

Different Approaches for Different Questions

Quasi-experimental Designs

- *Before-After* — Data on specified indicators are collected before and after the intervention, and compared.

- *After Only* — Where no baseline information is available, it is difficult to isolate and quantify impacts.

Strategies in the Absence of Baseline Data

- Retrospection, asking the users to state how they got the information or carried out the task before the intervention;

- Contrary-to-fact questions such as "If you did not have access to this __, how would you do this?"

Anecdotes

- Anecdotal means, "**based on casual observations or indications rather than rigorous or scientific analysis**."

  ---- negative connotations ---

- Anecdotes often lead to hypotheses to be tested.

Case Studies

- Most evaluations of ICT projects are "case studies".

- Case studies tend to be of uneven quality & value.

- Yet case study methodology CAN be rigorous & can include quantitative methods.

- Findings are not generalizable

The "Stories" Approach

Stories touch on what is not easily quantifiable but which is nevertheless essential.

"Most Significant Change" (MSC) Technique
- Throughout project cycle
- Monitoring without indicators
- Focus on intermediate outcomes and impacts
- Participatory

Q methodology

- **Q-sort:** Participants arrange/rank a set of statements according to how well they represent their viewpoint.

- Micro-entrepreneurs and Mobiles: An Exploration of the Uses of Mobile Phones by Small Business Owners in Rwanda (ITID, Fall 2004)

Data Analysis

Documenting "Lessons Learned"

After-Action-Reviews

- What did we want to achieve?

- What did we achieve?

- What worked?

- What didn't work?

- How would we do it differently?

Sample "Lessons"

- "Women are more likely to use telecentres if telecentre staff are women (or include women)." (IDRC Telecenter Evaluation, 1999)

- "Radio stations and teachers' colleges are more successful than other types of institutions as hosts for telecenters" (Mali telecenters)

Review of Key Principles

- Incorporate evaluation in project cycle
- Start with a clear statement of the overall objectives of the evaluation
- Develop evaluation questions & prioritize them
- Select your approach and the appropriate mix of methodologies & tools

It's All About Starting With The Right Questions!

Other Issues

Evaluability

Evolution of M&E in ICT

Leveraging ICT for M&E

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Questions? Comments?

Credits

Source for Cartoons
"The Most Significant Change Technique:
A Guide to its Use"
http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

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