Evaluability Assessment: A Tool for Incorporating Evaluation in Social Change Programmes

WILFREDA E. THURSTON
University of Calgary, Canada

LOUISE POTVIN
University of Montréal, Canada

In this article we discuss the evaluation of a particular type of health promotion programme where social change is a central theme of programme development, implementation and evaluation. Evaluation of social change programmes requires a politics of accountability and a utilization focus. These require a process of planning evaluations that mirrors the process of programme planning and implementation. Such an approach must be open to the possibility that the demands on evaluation research may change over the lifecycle of the programme. We propose an evaluability assessment framework as a participatory tool for planning evaluations that meet the need for credible evaluative accounts of social change and contribute to social change. This framework is a tool that can be used at any time to plan and review evaluations.

KEYWORDS: evaluability assessment; evaluation; framework; social change; stakeholders

Introduction

In this article we discuss the evaluation of a particular type of health promotion programme where social change is a central theme of programme development, implementation and evaluation. These programmes are often rooted in principles of social justice and equity. Like all health promotion practice, social change programmes are in need of evaluation both to provide evidence that they benefit populations in meaningful ways and as a means to advance knowledge in the field (McQueen, 2001; Potvin et al., 2001; World Health Organization Working Group on Health Promotion Evaluation, 1998). The approaches to evaluation research and the methods adopted, however, must be relevant to the work of health promotion (Rootman et al., 2001). One of the tenets of social change-oriented

health promotion is that the people affected by a programme collaborate with health promotion professionals or experts in development and implementation of that programme (Fawcett et al., 1995; Hancock et al., 1997). The term empowerment is commonly associated with the process of participation. Wallerstein (1993: 219), for instance, defined community empowerment as 'a social action process that promotes participation of people, who are in positions of perceived and actual powerlessness, towards goals of increased individual and community decision-making and control, equity of resources, and improved quality of life'. Participation is an important aspect of evaluation planning as well as programme planning. Decisions about who participates and how are influenced by the programme context and by the expectation that the evaluation of health promotion contributes to social change while producing meaningful reports. In this article, we present a framework for doing the evaluation planning in concert with programme development, implementation and institutionalization and argue that ongoing participatory evaluability assessment (EA) is a valuable process for evaluating social change programmes.

We first present what we mean by social change programmes, differentiating these from service or remedial aid. We then discuss evaluation of social change and the need for accountability and utility of evaluations. The elements of the EA Framework are then presented.

Social Change Programmes

At the outset, we distinguish a programme as an organized set of activities and/or services aimed at modifying a problematic situation that affects segments of a population. Both state and civil society organizations may institute programmes. A social change programme – like any programme – can therefore be described in terms of the goals and objectives or ends intended, the activities carried out and the resources required to achieve these ends (Potvin et al., 2001). Social change clearly does not depend solely on programmes; for instance, social movements are potent leverages for social changes (Castells, 1997) that have both non-programmatic and programmatic components. The women's movement is characterized as beginning around both unstructured consciousness raising and development of programmes, such as rape crisis services (Briskin, 1999; Ristock and Pennell, 1996). In this article, we are concerned with the evaluation of programmes. This is in no way meant to privilege programmes as the best way to achieve social change. However, because programmes are often the means by which organizations produce social changes, adequately designed and conducted evaluation of social change programmes may aid the understanding of social movements (Lichterman, 1998; Polletta, 1998; Taylor, 1998).

Our interest here is particularly focused on evaluating social change that is value specific and concerns social problems, not particularly 'private troubles' (Mills, 1959). In other words, we are not interested in programmes where the focus is provision of health and human services that address individual needs.

We expect that most people will agree 'social change' concerns change in society; however, how society is to be understood is the continued basis of

theoretical debate. As Knutilla (1998: 27) argued, the 'basis or core of society' can be usefully understood to be composed of organizational and 'institutional practices that facilitate material production *and* biological reproduction'. 'Organized and institutional human practices that make up our society' can be categorized as those of the state and those of civil society. A society, therefore, is a relatively fixed system as:

> This analytic view of society holds that all the various realms of human activity and practice *are related* [emphasis added], although a certain primacy is attached to material production and species production. (Knutilla, 1998: 27)

Congruent with this view, social change programmes are those that aim to change the social practices of social agents, including their relationships.

We are not addressing actions that target the state, namely advocacy, state reform or development of public policy; rather we focus on those programmes that target civil society and organizations concerned with eliminating or decreasing harm from oppressive forces. The main sites of oppression in western societies are often considered to be white supremacy, patriarchy and capitalism: simultaneous, inter-locking and 'mutually constituting' forces (Razack, 1998: 11). Social change, in the context of health promotion, therefore, would be about increasing the ability of people who are not white, male or materially powerful to 'increase control over and to improve their health' (World Health Organization, 1986: 1). Consequently, it might sometimes be about decreasing the power or control of one group over another. Negotiating what one means by social change can, therefore, still be contentious between and among groups of people with apparently similar agendas. Contextual factors can make social change programmes particularly difficult. In Canada, social change advocates often work outside of the state in non-governmental organizations (Briskin, 1999). The state, which is a major source of funding for these organizations, has been cutting back on operational funding and exerting more control over the work of the groups through restrictions on what is fundable (Thurston et al., 1998). As we will show later, one of the benefits of the EA Framework proposed in this article is that it explicitly requires an accord among key players about what social change means to them.

Social Change and Evaluation

We advocate strongly for evaluation activities to be viewed as parallel to and equally important as other programme activities. In this way, evaluation, and EAs in particular, can be tools for social change. As stated by Potvin et al. (2001):

> In our view, evaluation is to be seen as a feedback system between the programme and its environment. An important purpose of this feedback system is to produce information that facilitates local programme improvement. Another no less important purpose is to produce knowledge that improves theories of treatment and consequently our understanding of how health promotion works more generally. (Potvin et al., 2001: 23)

In order for the evaluation to be viewed as valuable by all stakeholders, particularly those who are targets of change or proposed beneficiaries, the value

of the intervention must be evident. In other words, people must see the evaluation and the programme as inseparable, and participation in both as worthwhile. If this is not the case then the internal validity of the evaluation may be jeopardized by refusal to participate in either data collection or interpretation (Berg, 1999; Graham and Bois, 1997; Kowalsky et al., 1996; Potvin, 1996; van der Eyken et al., 1995). Thoenig (2000: 220) describes such focus on stakeholder needs as a pragmatic approach to evaluation that focuses 'on specific needs and opportunities for action'. Methodologically, this supports our contention of the need for ongoing EA processes that capture opportunities for action. For this type of evaluation process, the weight falls in favour of having inside evaluators working alongside social change programme providers, participants and beneficiaries. More is said about this in the discussion of the EA Framework.

Whether inside or outside evaluators, or both, are used, a 'politics of accountability' (Razack, 1998) is needed in evaluation of social change. Programme evaluation is an inherently politicized process, rather than a benign technical activity (Chelimsky, 1995; Duran et al., 1995; VanderPlaat, 1995). The evaluation itself provides an opportunity for systems of domination to be understood and resisted. Rather than acting as though all stakeholders are equal and denying difference, a politics of accountability requires us to understand difference and to be clear about how and for what purposes we reach those understandings. Ristock and Pennell (1996: 19) speak of this as building inclusive communities where separate identities are respected and 'rendering accounts . . . a means of holding ourselves accountable both to others and to ourselves for our critical analysis and responsible use of power'. Evaluation of social change, therefore, must strive to develop practices to further the goals of empowerment (Fetterman et al., 1996). It must also be utilization-focused (Patton, 1997), by which we mean developed and designed to answer questions that are important to meeting the needs of stakeholders. While Patton (1997) draws fundamental distinctions between research and evaluation, we argue that this utilization focus does not preclude a role for what is known as pure research or knowledge development. In fact, the opportunity to build theories of practice and to strengthen our repertoires may depend on this role. In addition, conceptual utilization, where stakeholders learn something important about themselves or the project (be they evaluators, community development workers or other participants) may be as significant to social change in the long term as information that directly results in programme changes.

Neither a politics of accountability nor a utilization focus, in our view, precludes the use of any specific research tool (i.e. research methodology). What they do require is an approach to evaluation planning and implementation that mirrors the approach to social change programme planning, implementation and institutionalization. Such an approach must be open to the possibility that the demands on evaluation research may change over the lifecycle of the programme (Blackwell and Cartwright, 1988) and it must respond to changes in the political context. We propose an EA Framework as an appropriate tool for planning evaluations that both meet the need for credible evaluative accounts of and contribute to social change.

Evaluability Assessment Framework

EA is not new. Authors have described it as 'a set of procedures for planning evaluations so that stakeholders' interests are taken into account in order to maximize the utility of the evaluation' (Rossi and Freeman, 1989: 114; Rutman, 1977). We think that this body of work needs to be rejuvenated. In this article we build on Rutman's work and argue the case that the work on the evaluation process should start with the programme planning process. Contrary to Rutman, however, our conception of EA is not one of a technical procedure that is applied once and for all at the beginning of the evaluation. In our view, EA is a starting point of the programme-evaluation process but, particularly in social change programmes, EA also will be used at any time to review and plan evaluations. The process described here is based on a synthesis of the evaluation literature and experience with multiple EAs, many of which were conducted in a graduate course on programme evaluation. The elements of our EA Framework (see Box 1) will be described as a set of interrelated activities and decisions.

The desired product of an EA is a thorough description of the programme, the key questions to be addressed by the evaluation, an evaluation plan and reaching an agreement among the stakeholders on all of these. The product of an EA can easily become a formal programme evaluation proposal (see Box 2). Ideally then, an EA of social change programmes would be conducted as a parallel process to programme planning from the proposal writing stage to the end of the programme. In this way, the two processes (i.e. EA and programme planning) would be linked and would inform each other. It is never too early nor too late to institute an EA; in cases where resources for evaluation are made available only after the programme is underway, the relative importance of each of the six elements would change.

Element 1: Selecting an Evaluability Assessor

The first question to be answered is who will conduct the EA and what resources will be allocated to this task. Since an EA is an important decision-making process, key stakeholders should be involved in selecting the 'evaluability assessor(s)'. Thus, the existing decision-making procedures of the programme are used. A related issue is whether a separate evaluation management committee or sub-committee is needed to oversee the EA. The basis for this decision

Box 1. Elements of the Evaluability Assessment Framework

1. Selecting an evaluability assessor
2. Identifying stakeholders
3. Identifying and assessing key documents
4. Developing the programme logic model and evaluation plan
5. Reaching agreement to proceed with an evaluation
6. Identifying and assessing time and other resources required

Box 2. Components of a Programme Evaluation Proposal

Description of the sponsoring organization or group
Social context and needs analysis
Purpose, scope or mission of the programme
Goals and objectives of the programme
Principles
Support for proposed activities and management structure
    Theories
    Experiences and other knowledge
Proposed activities
Management structure
Evaluation plan
    Evaluation research questions
    Methods
    Ethical considerations
Resources needed and budget

should be the current demands on the programme management structure (be it participatory or hierarchical) and the time permitted for the EA. It should be assumed, however, that all stakeholders need to provide some resources to the EA.

The evaluability assessor may be the same person who conducts the evaluation that is subsequently proposed; however, this is not necessary. In fact, given that a programme may want to contract or hire an evaluator for an extended period, completion of an EA would provide an opportunity for both sides to assess the prospects and to decide if they want to continue to work together. Having a contract ending with the EA gives both sides an opportunity to decide the future in a less complicated context than if an extended evaluation contract has already been awarded and/or money already committed.

One of the big questions for a social change programme is whether to have an internal or an external evaluator. The former may be an employee of the organization who is external to the programme or someone who is an employee of the programme. An external evaluator is someone who is not employed with the organization (Love, 1991). As we said earlier, methodologically, the weight falls in favour of having inside evaluators. The issue cannot be characterized as simply a debate between positivist versus postmodern understandings of objectivity and science. The role of insider versus outsider carries a social identity (Kelly and van Vlaenderen, 1996; Ristock and Pennell, 1996). Some believe that when the success of the programme is linked to the success of the evaluation, an inside evaluator may be tempted to overstate the success of the programme. Insider evaluators of participatory processes may not be able to see the 'blind spots' characterizing relationships between participants (Kelly and van Vlaenderen, 1996). EA as an ongoing process helps to understand political claims that are used to advocate for either an internal or external evaluator. Political claims are

sometimes framed in terms of science (e.g. loss of objectivity) when the issues are who is trusted, who can speak with authority, relationships and other issues of power. Programme leaders can use the EA (e.g. discussions with stakeholders about decision-making processes) as an opportunity to clarify political claims. In this way, they can articulate qualifications and processes for an evaluability assessor or an evaluator that address: 'honesty, critical distance, integrity and avoidance of conflict of interests' (Finne et al., 1995: 16). There will be times when a project sensibly opts for an external evaluator because of the strength of the political claims (e.g. when relationships within the programme undermine trust of potential internal evaluators). The impact of choosing either internal or external evaluators on participation and on the usefulness of the evaluation should be openly discussed in either case.

An EA may be initiated several times in the life of a programme because of the need to monitor the appropriateness of the evaluation plan and the evaluator. If evaluation is running parallel to the programme management and implementation, this will be a relatively quick process demanding few extra resources for the new EA (Ramaliu and Thurston, forthcoming; Casebeer and Thurston, 1995).

Element 2: Identifying Stakeholders

The ongoing task of an EA is to identify which stakeholders must be involved and at which points. In a social change programme, participation is key; however, it would be unwise to assume that participation had been successfully integrated into the programme before the EA began. A variety of people will have an interest in a given programme: people with an immediate and legitimate interest will include staff (including administrators), boards of directors, advisory committees, funding bodies and targets of change. In the case of social change programmes, the proposed beneficiaries of a programme may be different from the targets of change (e.g. we may target racist behaviour in order to benefit people of colour). The EA should identify all stakeholders and their roles, notably the various gatekeepers (van der Eyken et al., 1995) to information and control, but other key people also. During the EA, the prime users of the proposed evaluation must be asked what the purposes of the evaluation will be and how decisions will be made after the evaluation. Other stakeholders should be asked the same questions. Resources will determine how many stakeholders can be consulted and how. The consequence of leaving out stakeholders or engaging them in a less than participatory process for the programme as well as for the evaluation should be discussed. The issue for the EA is who must be involved and have input into the design of a programme evaluation and how opportunities for input will be provided. Discussion of participation necessitates consideration of power relations. Power relations will influence ways of working and participation of marginalized groups, particularly in programmes that respond to the needs of diverse stakeholders. Gregory (2000) recommends use of Ledwith's (1997) 'Sites of Oppression matrix' to examine critically processes of power. Use of the matrix prompts exploration of how elements of oppression (e.g. paid work, unpaid work, culture, sexuality, violence and the state) operate

across different levels (e.g. personal, community, national and global) (Gregory, 2000). This ensures consideration of who should participate, the barriers that exist for their participation and strategies to overcome such barriers. Reflection on power relations must be an ongoing part of EA because the relative importance of stakeholders can change over the life of a programme.

Ledwith's (1997) Sites of Oppression matrix draws attention to the strong influence of social and political context on decisions regarding participation in social change programmes. In most countries, a common mechanism for social change is a community development programme. The definitions of community and community development employed vary considerably in epistemological, ontological and methodological views, that is, what one considers knowledge and truth, one's worldview and where these take one in terms of action and evaluation strategies (O'Neill, 1998). People from two very different philosophical positions, for instance, might both support community development for overlapping reasons but with quite different principles of participation, equality and empowerment (Alcock and Christensen, 1995; Balogh, 1996; Perkins, 1995). One might see participation as limited to elected representation, and the other to social democratic principles; one might privilege the voices of the poor over the voices of elected representatives.

Element 3: Identifying and Assessing Key Documents

Identifying existing programme documentation concerning the goals and objectives and activities of the programme is a valuable element of an EA. At the creation stage of a programme, obviously few documents exist; however, as the programme develops, depending on its size and complexity, different types of documents may be developed. Existing programme proposals, previous evaluation reports, manuals, brochures and minutes of meetings can be very informative. Documents often represent the formal description of the programme; however, it is not uncommon for programmes to evolve and make substantial changes without updating the formal description of the programme. In addition, differences between types of documents may reflect differences between stakeholder groups; for instance, the brochure may reflect staff priorities, the manual administrative priorities, and the annual report board priorities. One of the questions asked about the documents is whether they reflect consistency in ideology, the kinds of services the programme is intended to build and beliefs about the kind of changes being sought. One looks for what was said, as well as 'what was not said' (Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 54), revealing potential tensions, strengths, conflicts and the impact on the service.

In a programme where evaluation runs parallel to programme management and implementation and an EA Framework is being followed, one will find fewer inconsistencies. Both the EA and resulting evaluations offer opportunities to fine tune and improve the social change programme. We do not want to imply that this process automatically creates unanimity or harmony; strong differences of opinion and power struggles will still arise. It does help to ensure that important differences are not obscured and internal conflicts left to subtly undermine success in social change.

Element 4: Developing the Programme Logic Model and Evaluation Plan

The most challenging task for an EA is developing what has been variously described as the programme logic model, programme theory (Chen, 1990), outcome line (Mohr, 1995) or programme coherence (Potvin et al., 2001). Evaluations often start with several assumptions about the programme under review. These are that:

- the nature and distribution of the problem or issue are known;
- the targets of the programme are identified; and
- the intervention has been described in an impact model (i.e. a statement about the expected relationship between a programme or set of interventions and its goals and objectives).

EAs are a means to test these assumptions by linking empirical knowledge in the area to programme components and facilitating stakeholder feedback once assumptions are made explicit. Many assumptions will be found to be unsubstantiated in cases where the programme has been operating without an evaluation component (Potvin et al., 2001). In this section we will describe how the programme logic model assists in identifying unique features of social change programmes (e.g. their necessary links with other social change programmes in order to meet social change targets; their evolutionary nature). We will also briefly describe strategies for developing logic models.

Articulating programme logic through the EA process safeguards against evaluating social change programmes as generic entities and opens the door to co-ordinating social change efforts across a number of programmes (e.g. complex social change targets such as the prevention of domestic violence require input from diverse programmes). Social change programmes, like all programmes, vary in complexity, as indicated by the number, range and scope of objectives, resources, activities, targets of change, initial conditions and environmental conditions. Further, a number of programmes may be planned to create a co-ordinated strategy of change. For instance, a social marketing programme may be combined with provision of a service to the population, and education may be provided for professionals who will refer to that service. This might also be augmented by a non-programmatic change intended to change the social environment (e.g. legislation).

Social change programmes vary in complexity, as described above, but also according to their stage of development. Blackwell and Cartwright (1988) and Potvin et al. (2001) refer to these developmental stages as the lifecycle of a programme. Programme logic models developed through EA will reflect a programme's current stage of development. A programme has an early developmental stage, an implementation stage and a phasing out or ending stage (Potvin et al., 2001). Blackwell and Cartwright (1988) refer to these stages as early, middle and mature programmes, and they add the preliminary or embryonic stage. Each of these stages in the life of a programme requires administrative activities designed to ensure a fit between the programme theory, objectives, resources, activities, environment and target of change. An EA process

explicates programme theory and evaluation research questions that are relevant for a particular programme at its particular stage of development. Based on this information, evaluations are designed to produce findings that will help decision-makers throughout the life of the programme. Social change programmes and their logic models will necessarily evolve through different programme stages in order to remain responsive to the programme environment.

One issue that has received insufficient attention is that of sustainability. Some community programme literature assumes that all programmes should be sustained; in fact, government funding in Canada has supported this notion by demanding that applicants describe how a programme will be maintained after the grant ends. Surely social change programmes should examine this issue in some depth. First of all, programmes that replace the state may weaken civil society (Whaites, 1996) because they decrease the interaction between citizens and the state; food banks are a good example of how state responsibility was picked up by the civil society, diverting energy into annual food drives and away from demanding state support of minimal food requirements. Second, there may come a time in the life of a programme when it is time to concede that it is in-efficient and a new programme is required. An ongoing EA approach captures changes in programme theory and promotes responsiveness to the changing demands on the programme and to changing evaluation needs.

In the absence of a clearly articulated programme theory, it may be necessary to bound the programme in order to begin to develop the logic model; that is, to specify which activities, services, targets, results and parts of the environment are understood to 'belong' to the programme in question. This at first seems simplistic; however, when one considers the complexity of social change organizations and projects, it is important to make this distinction. Graphical representations are effective tools for helping stakeholders articulate what is happening and is expected to happen in the programme. Traditional organizational flow charting (Finne et al., 1995) of, for example, inputs, through-puts and outputs, where records are stored, can be the source of many insights; for instance, segments of eligible targets that are missed and where and how drop-outs are recorded. Finne et al. (1995) refer to flow charts as a 'chain of reasoning'. They note:

> Each actor may have a different chain of reasoning, or programme theory, or cognitive map, which integrates their thoughts about the programme. Making this explicit is helpful in relating individual issues to each other. (Finne et al., 1995: 23)

EA is designed to identify these differing programme theories. How they are reconciled will depend on the programme context. Differences may, for example, be used as a stimulus to develop new programme elements that meet diverse needs or as a basis for discussion about programme elements that no longer meet stakeholder needs.

Potvin et al. (2001) developed a framework that is a valuable guide for developing a social change programme logic model. The three broad components of the framework link the internal features of programmes that are commonly assessed in EAs (i.e. the objectives driving the programme; knowledge, people and infrastructure instrumentally involved; services or activities carried out in

pursuit of the objectives) with those required for an EA of social change programmes (i.e. the target of change and the social environment). Use of the framework encourages consideration of the initial condition of the target of change as well as the condition of the target resulting from the programme. It also encourages the evaluability assessor to account for the influence of the programme social environment on programme resources and activities (e.g. organizational culture supportive of social change) as well as less direct environmental influences (e.g. governmental funding initiatives, competition with other programmes in the community). A chain of events links the programme objectives, resources, activities and initial and resulting conditions in the target of change. In the framework proposed by Potvin et al. (2001), this is referred to as the theory of treatment, or for our purposes, the theory of change or programme logic. The categories of evaluation questions identified by Potvin et al. (2001) can be adapted to the evaluation of social change programmes:

- How coherently linked is the theory of social change to the programme's objectives, resources and activities and services?
- What are the achievements of the programme's activities and services?
- How relevant are the programme's objectives to the environment around the target of change?
- How responsive are the programme's components to environmental conditions?
- What are the indications of programme results in the environment?

These questions not only help to explicate programme logic but also lay the foundation for the programme evaluation proposal described earlier (see Box 2).

After bounding the programme, the next step in developing a logic model is identifying goals and objectives and then linking them back to the activities and the organization. Useful questions to identify broad goals or missions are:

- Five or ten years from now, what would you like this programme to be known for?
- What difference will it have made in the world?

To get at specific programme goals, useful questions are:

- How will the targets look, act or think differently after they have been exposed to the programme?
- How can this be recognized when it occurs?

We argue that objectives should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time limited. The EA process facilitates achievement of social change goals through ongoing review of programme objectives. By setting SMART objectives and committing to ongoing review, social change programme planners may avoid becoming mired in narrow objectives and are better able to make the incremental changes necessary for achieving desired outcomes (Thoenig, 2000).

When a theory has been articulated, either previously or through the EA, the task of the EA is to assess 'whether the programme plan corresponds with the

most up to date professional knowledge' (Potvin et al., 2001: 12). Stakeholders (and external consultants when necessary) will use both experiential and professional knowledge to ask if it is logical to assume that the expected results will be attained given the resources and activities of the programme and its relationship to the environmental conditions.

An important step when developing the programme logic model is actually observing the programme in action or engaging the stakeholders in an analysis of how closely the model described up to this point actually captures real life. This might be called scouting the programme, visiting programme sites or reality checking. This is necessary as before embarking on an evaluation of any kind, it is best to know that there is a strong link between the planning and the actual implementation of the social change programme. Planning is not an absolute activity. It maps out the possible directions and activities that a programme may take. Those in charge of the implementation, however, may decide to incorporate relevant activities that were not initially envisaged but whose importance became apparent as the programme unfolded. The goal at this stage is to develop congruence between the programme and the evaluation, and agreement among stakeholders on the programme logic model as observed and articulated in planning documents. A big gap between the logic model that is developed based on document review and the model that is developed through scouting the programme might highlight the need for formative evaluation in order to reassess programme goals and objectives. We specifically use the term agreement because obtaining consensus to proceed may be unrealistic given the politics involved.

Element 5: Reaching Agreement to Proceed with an Evaluation
A number of things may affect obtaining agreement to proceed with an evaluation. Having progressed through an EA, the stakeholders have a thorough description of the programme and have expressed their expectations for an evaluation plan. Developing an evaluation plan with the stakeholders entails deciding what the evaluation priorities are given the life stage of the programme, resources, the environmental context and the results of the EA. The results of the EA may have identified some problems with the programme that require programme modifications, for instance, activities that were not linked with the stated mission or objectives of the programme. This is not always a welcome or expected EA outcome, particularly when the focus of the programme is on achieving social change targets. Some stakeholders may have assumed that evaluation was synonymous with impact assessment and may need convincing that other forms of evaluation (e.g. formative evaluation) have merit.

Agreement to proceed with an evaluation process may be sought on several occasions throughout the EA elements. The framework for EA of social change programmes is iterative and assumes that a participatory process has been developed and followed. Any activity included in this framework may be re-visited, and the decision to move on to another activity may rest on the degree of agreement that has been obtained. A group may decide that although consensus has not been obtained they would like the evaluability assessor to gather other information or to begin another task. It is also possible that some stakeholders

will want to reassess their involvement in the EA, the evaluation or the social change programme itself. Changes in stakeholders can have major effects on a programme.

While it may seem problematic to stimulate potential crises in a programme while planning an evaluation, in all likelihood these problems would arise in some form during the life of the programme. The consequences for the programme of raising them earlier should be no greater, and the chances of a useful evaluation are enhanced. Graham and Bois (1997) identify a number of conflicts that can arise because of role conflicts, stakeholder issues and differences of opinion. The goal of a participatory project should not be to avoid conflict, but to enable conflict to be expressed in a productive and non-destructive manner (Finne et al., 1995; Ristock and Pennell, 1996; Scott et al., 2002).

While communication strategies may be used to address individual-level conflict, addressing conflict between the state and non-government social change programmes requires additional strategies. A form of resistance to state and non-governmental social change programme conflict may be having two agendas for programme funding, a public agenda meeting the demands of the state and a private agenda to fulfil the goals of the organization. Van der Eyken et al. (1995) identify compartmentalization of public and private positions as a way of avoiding interpersonal conflicts, so that one can voice consensus at a meeting and fundamental differences in private. It is beyond the scope of this article to address the implications of this dilemma; however, all stakeholders, including the evaluability assessor and/or evaluator, must consider confidentiality issues as an essential part of the discussion around the participatory process (Thurston et al., 2003).

Element 6: Identifying and Assessing Time and Other Resources Required

If elements of a programme evaluation proposal (see Box 2) already exist, ongoing EA of social change programmes will take fewer resources and less time than when little information has been recorded. In any case, the most significant resource required of existing personnel and volunteers may be their time. Their willingness to participate will be directly related to how they assess the potential contribution of the evaluation to the social change agenda. The amount of time required to do an EA depends not just on the complexity of the programme and existing documentation, but also on the relationships and amount of consensus about the programme among stakeholders. Therefore, a programme with an evaluation process running parallel to programme management and implementation will use less time in an EA (Casebeer and Thurston, 1995; Ramaliu and Thurston, forthcoming).

The framework can be applied at any point in the lifecycle of a programme, and various activities will take more or less time and other resources depending on the complexity and the stage of the programme. In our experience a very good EA can be conducted in less than a month with an evaluability assessor working less than half time (Casebeer and Thurston, 1995), dependant on the research and communication skills of the assessor, the availability and co-operation of programme stakeholders, and the availability and accuracy of written materials.

Conclusion

We have presented a framework for developing a social change programme evaluation. This framework assumes a participatory process and the goal of integration between programme operations and evaluations. Although we have not discussed the various designs or methods that can be used in programme evaluations, we recommend that both qualitative and quantitative methods be used to ensure that useful data and interpretations are produced. Much has been written elsewhere on these topics (e.g. Greene et al., 2001; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Also, we have only touched on the many ethical issues that can arise in programme evaluation (Thurston et al., 2003). These should receive just as much attention as methodological and procedural issues.

One of the struggles that programmes will have in designing integrated evaluations is resource allocation. Evaluations are necessarily expensive, particularly good evaluations (Potvin, 1996). The World Health Organization recommended that policy makers require a minimum of 10 percent of the total programme funds to be allocated to evaluation (World Health Organization Working Group on Health Promotion Evaluation, 1998). The model of evaluation that we are advocating will result in:

- learning throughout the lifecycle of a programme;
- better-articulated programmes; and therefore,
- more opportunity to extrapolate what is learned from one programme to another.

In addition, co-ordination of evaluation research will result in a more rapid advance in knowledge of how to execute social change. Economic efficiency is dependent on two conditions: allocative efficiency (how worthwhile programmes are) and operational efficiency (the best way of producing worthwhile results) (Donaldson and Gerard, 1993).

Ongoing EA can be used by any social change programme to guide development of evaluation proposals. Sharing knowledge of social change programmes gathered through EA and more extensive evaluations will enhance our capacity to compare and contrast projects and their successes and failures. In an increasingly complex world, achieving social change may depend on this.

Notes

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WILFREDA E. THURSTON, PhD is Associate Professor at the Department of Community Health Sciences, Adjunct Associate Professor of the Faculties of Nursing and Kinesiology and Director, Institute for Gender Research at the University of Calgary. Please address correspondence to: Department of Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary, 3330 Hospital Dr. NW, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 4N1.
[email: thurston@ucalgary.ca]

LOUISE POTVIN, PhD is Professor and Researcher in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of Montréal. She holds the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation/Canadian Institutes of Health Research Chair in Community Approaches and Health Inequalities. Please address correspondence to: Département de médecine sociale et préventive, Pavillon Marguerite-d'Youville, 2375, chemin de la Côte-Ste-Catherine, Montréal (Québec), Canada H3T 1A8. [email: louise.potvin@umontreal.ca]