**Basic issues of Evaluation**

There are several evaluation approaches that can be conducted ***ex ante*** or ***ex post*.**

* Monitoring;
* Operational evaluation;
* Impact evaluation;

The main challenge is to find a good counterfactual.

The impact evaluation approaches, each of which involves a different set of assumptions in accounting for **potential selection bias** in participation, include:

* Randomized evaluations;
* Propensity score matching;
* Double-difference methods;
* Instrumental variables;
* Regression discontinuity;
* Pipeline approach.

Monitoring and evaluation together have been referred to as **M&E framework**.

Monitoring consists of comparing program outcomes with specific targets. It requires defined goals and indicators, set targets, and a monitoring system to be established.

Indicators are typically classified into two major groups:

* Final indicators: measure outcomes and impacts.
* Intermediate indicators: measure inputs and outputs.

The actual execution of a monitoring system is referred to as **results-based monitoring**. Kusek and Rist (2004) outline 10 steps to it:

* Conduct a readiness assessment;
* Agreement on outcomes to monitor and evaluate, and indicators to monitor outcomes;
* Define how trends in the outcomes will be measured;
* Define the instruments to collect information;
* Establish targets;
* Collect good-quality data;
* Consider timing of monitoring;
* Consider means of reporting;
* Use results to create avenues for feedback;
* Sustain the M&E system within the organization.

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Impact evaluation is not imperative for each and every program. It is time and resource intensive and should therefore be applied selectively. Conducting an impact evaluation depends on if the program intervention is innovative and of strategic importance, and if the evaluation contributes to the knowledge gap of what works and what does not.

Qualitative assessment cannot assess outcomes against relevant alternatives or counterfactual outcomes. Quantitative analysis is also important in addressing potential statistical bias in program impacts. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods (a mixed-methods approach) might therefore be useful in gaining a comprehensive view of the program’s effectiveness.

There are two types of quantitative impact evaluations: ex post and ex ante…

[…]

The soundness of the impact evaluation estimates depends on how justifiable the assumptions are on (1) the comparability of participant and comparison groups, as well as (2) the exogeneity of program targeting across treated and nontreated areas.