

## CHAPTER VI

### Evaluation Research and Extension Projects

#### A. Introduction:

Primary audience for this chapter is the evaluation team and contracting entity, although some of the information will be useful to both the donor and the implementing team and in discussions between the evaluation team and its clients.

There are several types of evaluations. This handbook assumes a mid-project evaluation which has the main purpose of helping the donor to understand project progress and to make decisions regarding project direction, process, and design. The donor is the primary client of an evaluation. Expect that donor personnel know a great deal about the project and have been conducting a continuous de facto evaluation. In most cases the donor provides a scope of work for the evaluation and may also identify problems or other issues that need attention. In some cases the donor will provide criteria, but in many cases it is up to the team to select and apply the criteria.

While the donor is the main client, these guidelines aim for the evaluation to be useful for the implementation team and even for the host institution. To serve these three audiences it is useful for the evaluation team to take a positive attitude and develop an empathy for the three involved.

Empathy and a positive attitude will serve the evaluation team well on other accounts. In most evaluations the project has not had time to generate definitive impacts, especially if persistence is one of the criterion for impact. This means that evaluators must rely heavily on judgments and inferences in trying to project the probable impact of project strategy and activities. Data will be difficult to come by, and much of the data that can be accumulated must be interpreted. It will not be straightforward. The only way the team can handle the data and develop expectations of its probable significance is to rely heavily on judgment and intuition. That involves considerable risk. One way to make that risk manageable is to approach the task with empathy for the actors in the situation in which they are working.

It is useful to keep in mind the purpose of the evaluation. It is not to find and publish the ultimate truth, or to establish error and place blame. It is to help improve project management and execution, and the key for that is the implementation team. The more successful evaluators are in establishing rapport with that team the more likely their recommendations will be effective. A positive attitude and empathy are useful devices in establishing that rapport.