A five-step process to designing an evaluation in human rights education

Evaluation is sometimes described as a total experience because ideally it is part of our human rights education (HRE) work from the very beginning to the very end. Included as part of all the phases of a project, evaluation should reflect the totality of everything that we do in a Human Rights Education project. As such, evaluation needs to be developed in line with each specific training session. Evaluation should be inspired by the HRE activity itself and enhance our capacity to achieve our goals.

There is no single format for effective evaluation. In fact, the art of evaluation is choosing a process that both gives you the information you need and is, at the same time, feasible for you and your group or organization to carry out. Equitas operates a model in designing and implementing an effective evaluation process for human rights training that encompasses five basic steps:

- Step 1: Understand the change that is needed – Training needs assessment
- Step 2: Describe the desired change – Define results and develop objectives
- Step 3: Increase effectiveness – Conduct formative evaluation
- Step 4: Determine the changes that have occurred in the short, medium and longer term – Conduct end-of-training summative evaluation and transfer and impact evaluations
- Step 5: Determine how to best communicate results to different stakeholders in order to highlight the changes that have occurred – Prepare evaluation report

This *Equitas Shares It* is the **fifth of a five-part series** that explores each of the five steps of the process to designing an evaluation in human rights education. In this edition of *Equitas Shares It* we will cover *Communicate your results-the evaluation report*

Step 5: Communicate results—the evaluation report

The culminating step of an evaluation process is effectively communicating the results to the appropriate stakeholders. The most common means for communicating results is a written evaluation report. Although reports may be required for different types of evaluation, in this section we focus primarily on communicating the results of an end-of training summative evaluation of a human rights training session through a written report. We outline a suggested framework for organizing an effective report and provide descriptions of the kind of information that should be included in each part. Although report formats and content may vary depending on the requirements of particular organizations, funders and other stakeholders, what is presented here are fairly generic guidelines to help human rights educators prepare a professional document that will respond to the interests of different stakeholders.

Planning the report

The evaluation report is the key product of an evaluation process bringing together, into a coherent whole, the pertinent information from an evaluation process. The relevance and credibility of the evaluation results, and ultimately their usability for the different stakeholders, depend to a large degree on the quality of the evaluation report. Effective reporting is an essential characteristic of a good evaluation. Even as we plan our evaluation process we need to carefully consider the preparation of the final evaluation report. Questions we need to ask ourselves are:

- Who are the stakeholders who need the report and will be reading it?
- What questions will these different stakeholders expect the report to answer?
- Among these stakeholders, who are the ones who might apply the results of our evaluation (primary users)? Who are others that have an interest in the results (secondary users)?

Addressing these questions early on in our evaluation planning process will ensure that we collect information that will be essential, meaningful and relevant to the intended stakeholders, and that will be provided to them in a timely and action-focused manner.

Writing the evaluation report

Each evaluation report for a human rights training session is unique in that it tells the story of a specific project, undertaken with specific people, in a specific context. Report writing enables you to tell the story of a training session to different audiences and stakeholders. By organizing and interpreting the data that are collected, you make the results of your work accessible to others, enabling different people to learn from your experiences, both negative and positive. For tips on interpretation of data, see the box below.

Writing an evaluation report is an opportunity to highlight the results achieved by your human rights training and to articulate any contributions you are making to broader social change. Some general guidelines for effective report writing are listed here:

- Use plain, clear language
- Avoid using specialist jargon that may confuse
- Include graphics, tables, diagrams, illustrations and photographs to enhance the presentation of the information
- Organize the information clearly, using headings to facilitate reading; • Keep in mind the specific target audience (i.e., who will be reading, interpreting the evaluation)
- Aim for a length of report that reflects the length of the training, usually no more than 5 pages (for training lasting several hours or one to three days) to a maximum of 30 pages, excluding the annexes (for training lasting a couple weeks)
- Include an executive summary or a summary of key findings and recommendations.

Suggested framework for organizing an evaluation report

Opening pages should include:

- Title page
- List of acronyms and abbreviations
- Table of contents, including annexes
- Executive summary
- Organization of the report (usually 3 parts)

PART I: Description of the training should include:

- Relevant background and context information
- Training goal and objectives
- Overview of the content
- Training approach and methodology
- Learner selection process
- Learner profile
- Trainers, resource people and experts
- Training materials

PART II: Evaluation of the training should include:

- Purpose of the evaluation
- Audiences for the report
- Evaluation methodology, i.e.,
    - Description of what is being assessed
    - Key questions addressed
    - Evaluation tools used
- Information sources
- Key findings/results, i.e.
    - Summary and discussion/explanation of findings
    - Analysis/interpretation

PART III: Conclusions and recommendations should include:

- Conclusions firmly based on the findings and analysis of the findings
- Relevant and realistic recommendations
- Clear priorities for action

Interpretation and conclusions

"**Interpretation** is the process of attaching meaning to the data analysed." Numbers (qualitative data) and narrative statements (qualitative data) in and of themselves cannot tell the full story of the results of a training session. For example, what does it mean that 10 out of 25 learners mentioned in their comments that the training schedule was too demanding? How does this compare with the last time you gave this training session? Were any changes made to the training since the last time it was given that can explain this result? Was the group of learners comparable to the last group? What, if anything, should you do differently next time? Making sense of the results involves determining to what you will compare the data you have collected.

This may include:

- Findings from other evaluations
- Baseline data
- Information gathered through your training needs assessment
- Predefined standards of expected performance (indicators)

Once you have interpreted the data, you can draw on them to explain the training session's successes and challenges in meeting its objectives. The same findings, however, may be interpreted in different ways, by different people. Therefore, it is important to ensure that you take into account different perspectives in interpreting data. Having small group meetings to discuss the data and perhaps also including learners who took part in the training in these meetings will help build greater understanding of the results.

Conclusions are the judgements made by the evaluators after considering all the information. Conclusions should not repeat the findings but rather address the key issues that can be drawn from the findings.

Sources: Ellen Taylor-Powell, Sara Steele and Mohammad Douglah, "Planning a program evaluation", University of Wisconsin Extension, February 1996; Illinois State Board of Education, "Interpretation, use, and reporting of assessment results" in Assessment Handbook: A Guide for Developing Assessment Programs in Illinois Schools (Springfield, Illinois, 1995). Available from www.gower.k12.il.us/Staff/ASSESS/6_ch4.htm#Chapter%204 (accessed 7 December 2010); and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Evaluation report". Available from www.undp.org/evaluation/methodologies.htm (accessed 7 December 2010).