

The six box model for evaluation of community empowerment

Prevalent local evaluation models on empowerment (or the contributory areas) are often weak for some quite simple reasons. They often:

- do not make a distinction between self-evaluation by participants and collection of objective facts
- do not incorporate available results from local government indicator surveys
- do not distinguish between the role of paid practitioners and community activists
- do not distinguish between the target population and those who become involved, hence remain vague about level of success in involving people
- do not distinguish between empowerment or involvement, as a primary outcome, and secondary outcomes which have been affected by empowerment or involvement, such as improvements in cohesion, social capital, safety, environment, amenities or services.

The remedy should be that evaluations include the information which would overcome these weaknesses, ie

- objective facts as well as, and distinguished from, participants' judgements
- balanced information on input, process and outcome
- taking account of known results of local government indicator surveys
- distinguishing between the roles of practitioners and activists
- information on the primary empowerment outcomes (x people involved, x people increasing their influence...)
- information on secondary outcomes affected by empowerment (improved services, amenities, social capital)
- perceptions / judgements on the causal relationship - ie whether empowerment affected the other outcomes
- clarity about the context, initial problem/ baselines, before-and-after picture

This can be summarised in a 'six box' model:

	Inputs / context/ baselines	Processes	Outcomes
Verifiable facts	Eg Catchment population targeted; pre-existing community groups enlisted; provision of x amount of community development worker time; provision of x amount of grant; commitment of officer cooperation from x agencies	Empowerment methods used; activities carried out; cooperation received	Outcomes related to local government performance indicators; outcomes assessed by additional voluntary indicators; community group objectives achieved; number of residents testifying to impact; testimony of local agencies as to impact.
Practitioners' and Participants' judgements	Objectives of the initiative as seen by community group/s; ...as seen by CD workers; as seen by local agencies	Quality of engagement process as judged by, eg, National Engagement Standards (from Scotland)	Participants' and workers' group judgement on quality of outcomes

The basic requirement should be that for any one initiative there should be information in all six boxes.

This requirement is not met in the majority of existing local reports on empowerment. However, for those that are recent the missing information could possibly still be found.
