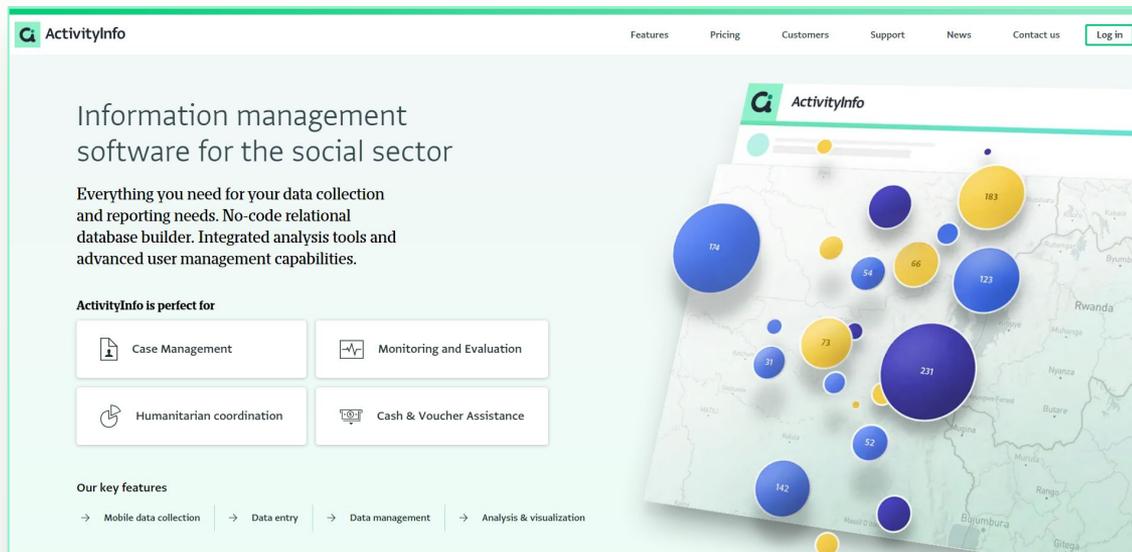# Participatory M&E from Theory to Practice

Elevating Rights Holders' Voices in Participatory M&E

Starting shortly, please wait!

Presented by the ActivityInfo Team

All in one information management software for humanitarian and development operations.

- Track activities, outcomes
- Beneficiary management
- Surveys
- Work offline/online

BeDataDriven Mission

Provide the UN and NGOs with a standard, easy-to-use and comprehensive data management platform so that as many organizations as possible can become data-driven to achieve better outcomes for rights holders worldwide.

BeDataDriven pursues this mission by building and helping organizations implement ActivityInfo.

ActivityInfo
An end-to-end solution for M&E data management

Data collection

Easily collect the data you need from anywhere
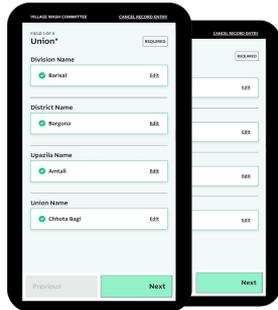
Data management

Organize your information according to your workflow
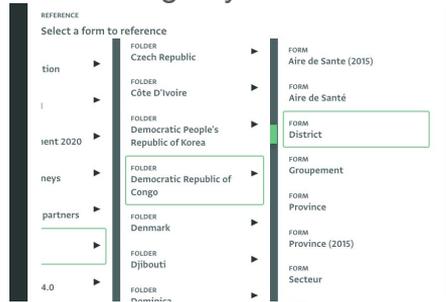
Data analysis

Generate actionable insights in real-time

....built on a relational data model
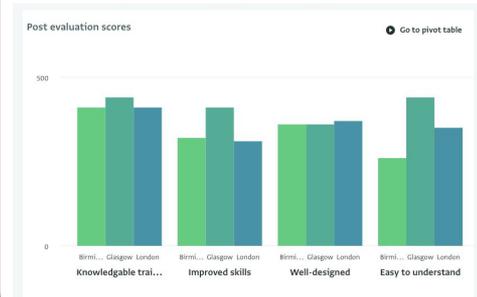
ActivityInfo is your **integrated** solution for managing your data across the data lifecycle.

Data lifecycle

- 01 Generation
- 02 Collection
- 03 Processing
- 04 Storage
- 05 Management
- 06 Analysis
- 07 Visualization
- 08 Interpretation

Diagram adapted from Harvard Business Review

ActivityInfo Users

Self-paced course

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Self-paced course

Designing Information Management Systems with ActivityInfo

- 10 in-depth modules
- Certificate of Completion
- Free of charge

Register now

Eliza Avgeropoulou,
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Specialist- ActivityInfo

Presenter

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M&E Implementation Specialist

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Participatory M&E from Theory to Practice series

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● **LIVE WEBINAR**
MONITORING & EVALUATION

Participatory M&E Series: From Theory to Practice

Part 2: Integrating Participation in the Design of M&E Systems

REGISTER NOW

APR 23, 2026
15:00 CEST

Zeíla Lauletta
M&E Implementation Specialist
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Outline

- What is participatory M&E
- The politics of participation
- Centering communities in decision-making
- Beyond traditional methods
- Protecting communities and staff
- Making participatory findings count

Who tracks progress and defines success in your programs?

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Who tracks progress and defines success in your program?

| Donors | Implementing organizations | Public authorities | People whose lives are meant to change |

Participatory M&E helps ensure that **all stakeholders contribute to tracking progress and learning from results**.

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What is Participatory M&E?

What is participatory M&E?

Participatory M&E is an approach where stakeholders actively engage in tracking progress, analysing results, and learning from interventions.

Conventional M&E

- Led by external experts

- Predetermined indicators

- Surveys and technical tools

Participatory M&E

- Stakeholders involved

- Indicators defined together

- Participatory and mixed methods

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What is participatory M&E?

Conventional M&E

Community → provides information

provides information ↓ evaluators analyse

evaluators analyse → results reported

Participatory M&E

Community

Jointly track progress, analyse findings, and learn

Partners ↔ Practitioners
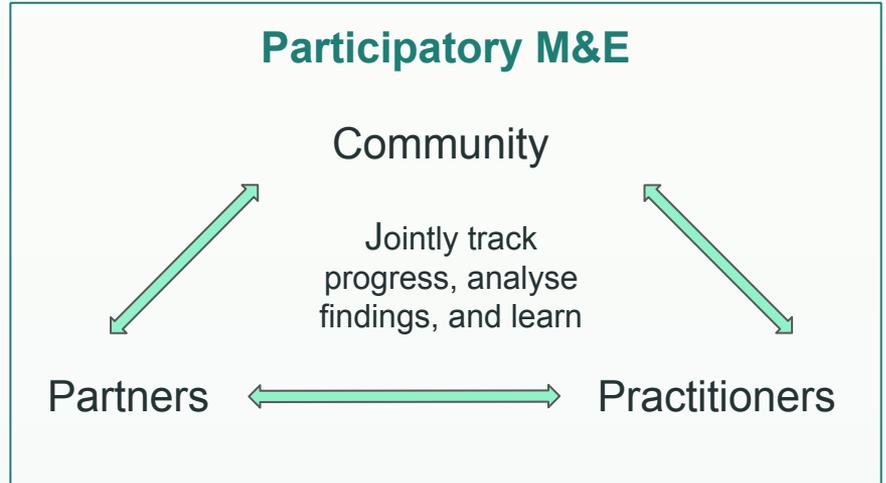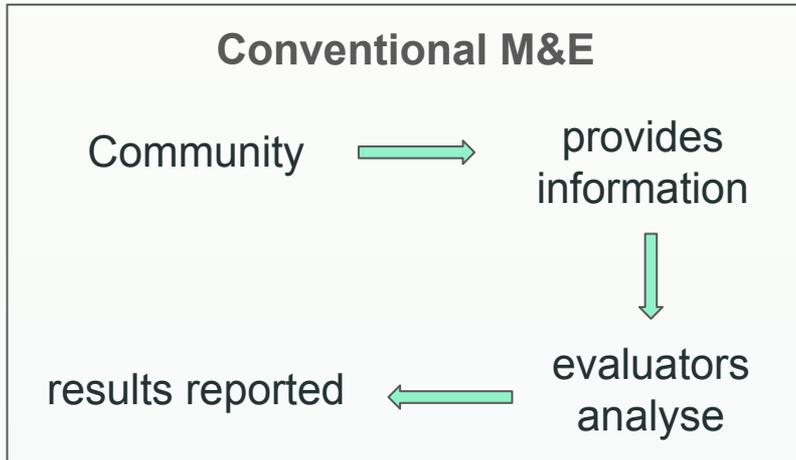
The Politics of Participation

When Participation Becomes Symbolic

Participation occurs late in the process.

Communities provide information but do not influence outcomes.

Meaningful participation requires intentional design and continuous engagement.

Understanding Power Dynamics Within Communities

| Gender norms | Disability and accessibility | Age and generational dynamics | Class, or economic status |

Without careful facilitation, participatory processes may amplify some voices while excluding others.

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Making Participation Inclusive

Creating safe spaces for marginalized voices

Adapting methods for accessibility

Engaging diverse community representatives

Facilitating collective reflection and dialogue

Inclusive participation strengthens the quality of learning and decision-making.

Centering Communities in Decision-Making

Centering Communities Across the M&E Cycle

Define results

defining what success looks like

Track progress

monitoring progress and collecting information

Reflect and learn

interpreting results and lessons learned

Adapt actions

informing decisions and improvements
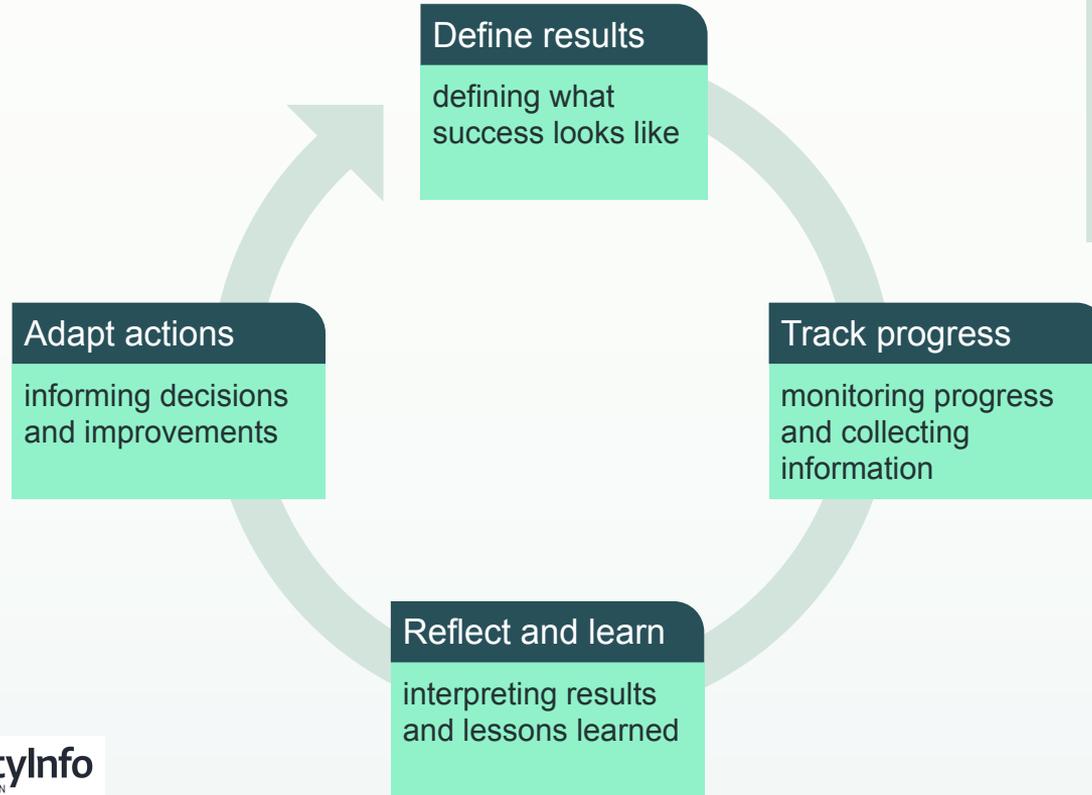
Participatory M&E engages communities and rights holders throughout the monitoring and learning process.

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Defining Results Together

Defining Results and Indicators

1. identifying priorities and needs

2. defining what success looks like

3. selecting meaningful indicators

4. validating program objectives

Example: community workshops

Tracking Progress

Tracking Progress

1. collecting community-level data

2. documenting changes and observations

3. participating in feedback systems

4. monitoring service delivery

Reflecting and Learning

Reflecting on Results

1. reviewing monitoring findings

2. discussing progress and challenges

3. identifying lessons learned

4. interpreting data based on local experience

Adapting Actions

Informing Decisions and Adaptation

1. suggest program improvements

2. identify corrective actions

3. provide feedback on implementation

4. contribute to future planning

Beyond Traditional Methods

Beyond Traditional Monitoring Methods

Conventional M&E
Traditional M&E often relies on surveys, structured interviews, technical indicators and externally led analysis.

Participatory M&E
Participatory M&E uses more inclusive and creative approaches that allow communities to share knowledge, interpret findings, and shape learning.

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Story-Based and Participatory Prioritization Methods

These approaches allow communities to share experiences and identify priorities.

Examples:
- storytelling
- most significant change
- ranking or scoring games to identify priorities

Visual and Creative Monitoring Approaches

Visual approaches can make monitoring more accessible and inclusive.

Examples:
- participatory mapping
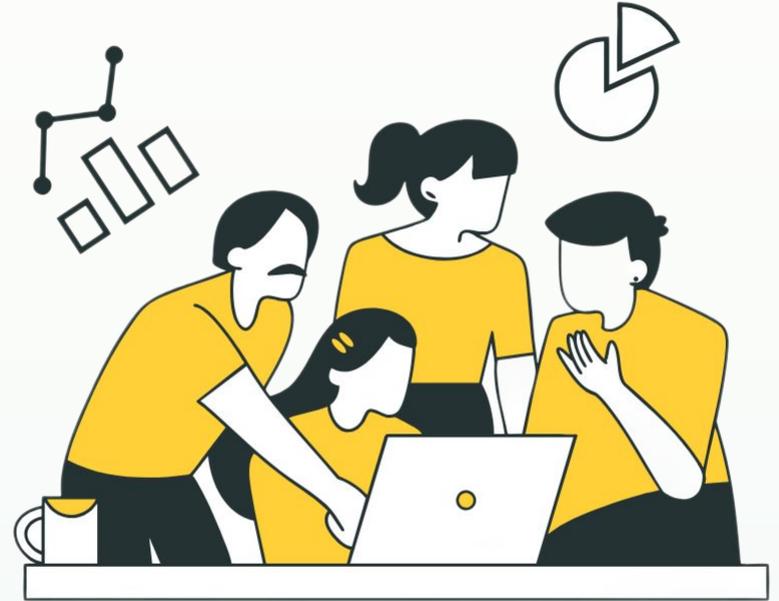- drawing or visual timelines
- photovoice

Community-Led Monitoring

Monitoring activities can be led by community members themselves.

Examples:
- youth-led monitoring initiatives
- peer researchers or community monitors
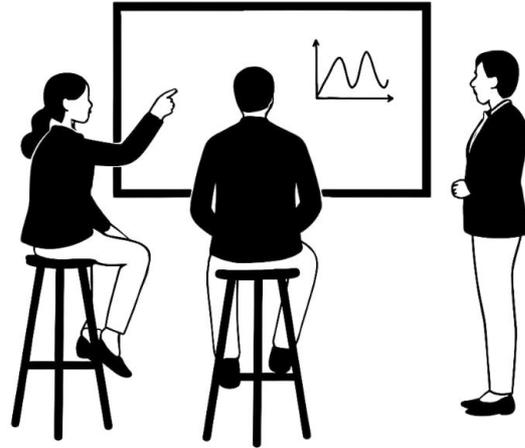- (diverse) community monitoring committees

Interpreting Findings Together

Participatory M&E also involves collective reflection on data.

Examples:

- data walks
- participatory data analysis workshops
- community validation meetings

Poll time! Information systems for M&E

Digital Tools in Participatory Monitoring

mobile data collection by community members

digital storytelling and photovoice

participatory mapping using GPS tools

real-time feedback and community reporting platforms

These tools can make participation more continuous, accessible, and transparent.

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Digital Tools in Participatory Monitoring

Pros

Broader participation across locations

Faster data collection and feedback

Improved visualization and transparency

Stronger documentation of community perspectives

Cons

digital divide and unequal access

technology replacing dialogue rather than supporting it

privacy and data protection concerns

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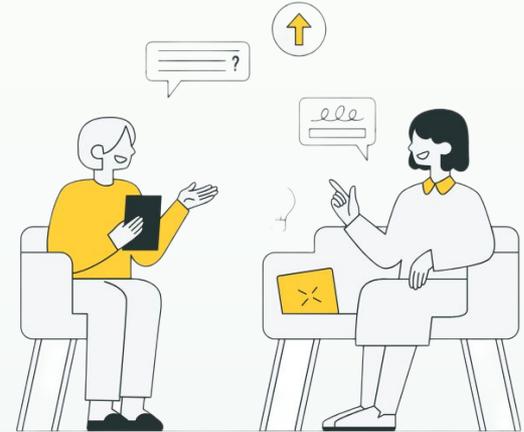BY BEDATADRIVEN

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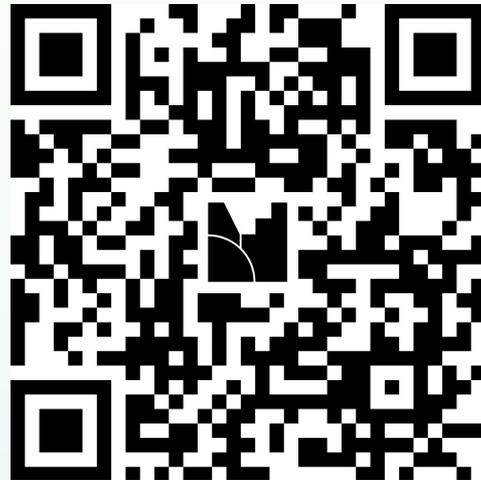# Case Study: Girl-Led Monitoring

Training Session → Photovoice (Mobile Phones) → Storytelling + Most Significant Change

What is the biggest challenge when using participatory methods?

Inclusion and Safeguarding: Protecting Communities and Staff

Inclusion and safeguarding: protecting communities and staff

Participatory processes must ensure safe and respectful engagement for everyone involved.
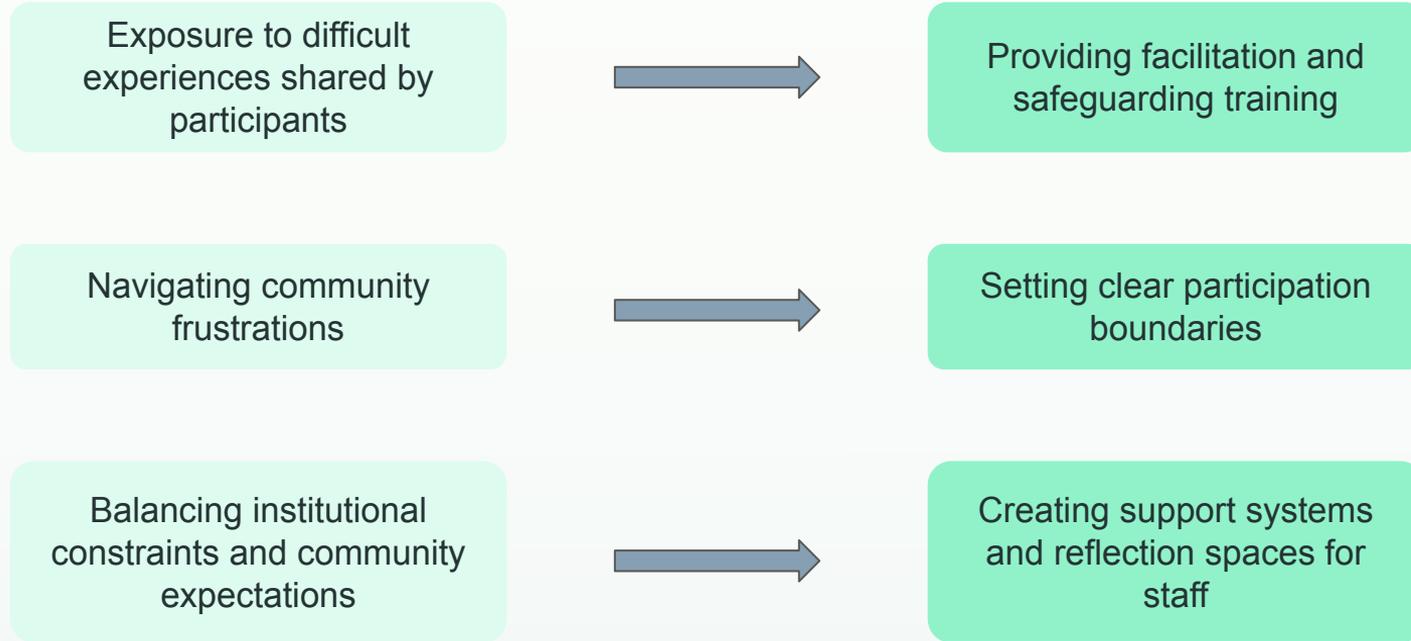
Psychological safety

- creating spaces where participants feel safe to share perspectives
- having safeguarding protocols in place
- respecting confidentiality and local dynamics

Managing expectations

- being transparent about the purpose and limits of participation
- avoiding false promises about program changes

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Supporting Facilitators and Field Teams

Exposure to difficult experiences shared by participants → Providing facilitation and safeguarding training

Navigating community frustrations → Setting clear participation boundaries

Balancing institutional constraints and community expectations → Creating support systems and reflection spaces for staff

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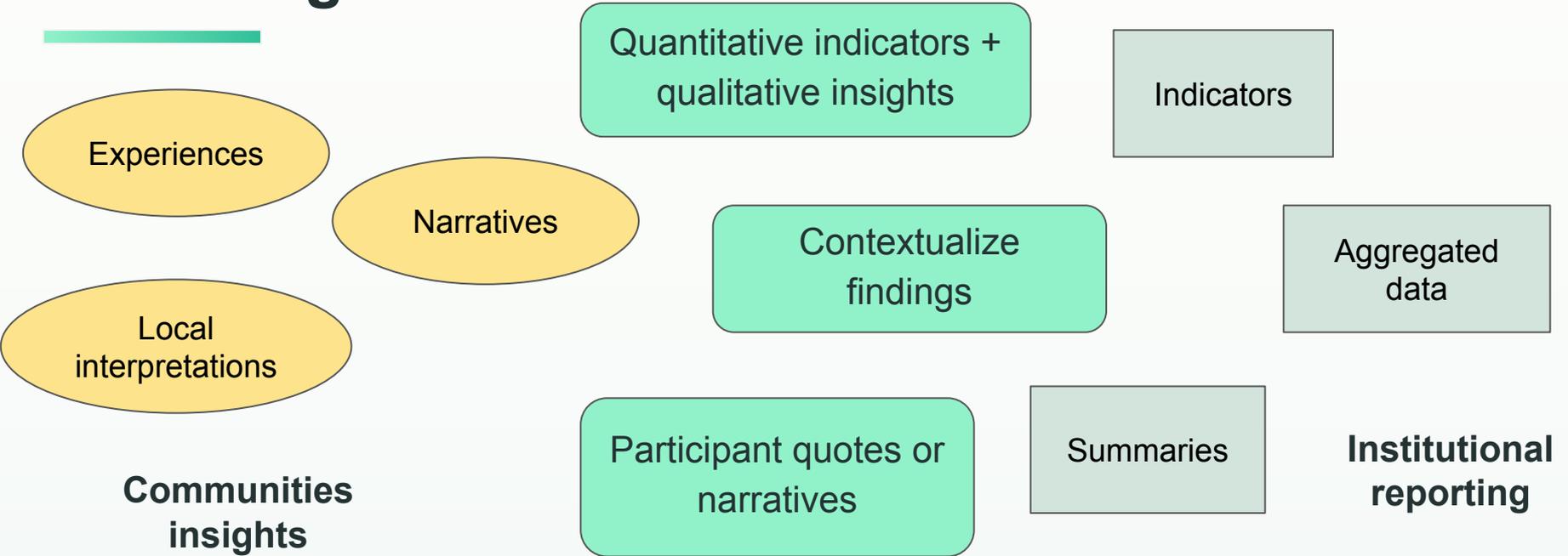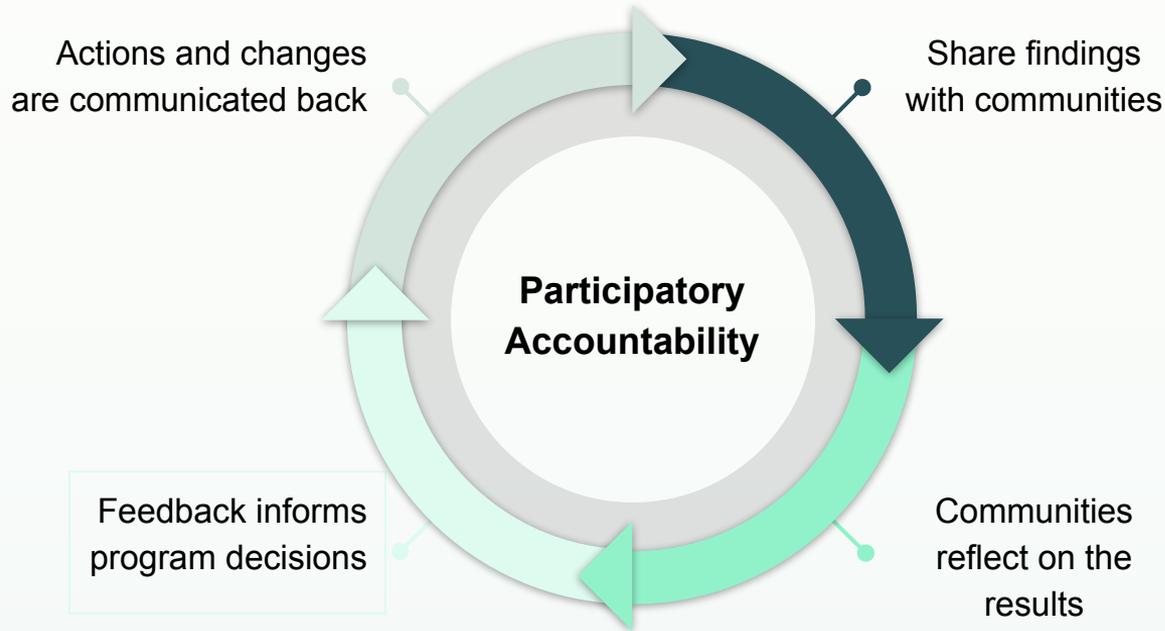
Making Participatory Findings Count: Visualization and Accountability

Communicating Participatory Findings Without Flattening Them

Experiences

Narratives

Quantitative indicators + qualitative insights

Indicators

Local interpretations

Contextualize findings

Aggregated data

Participant quotes or narratives

Summaries

Communities insights

Institutional reporting

Accountability in Participatory M&E

Actions and changes
are communicated back

Share findings
with communities

**Participatory
Accountability**

Feedback informs
program decisions

Communities
reflect on the
results

Key takeaways

Participatory M&E is more than a method

Participation requires intentional design

Methods should enable meaningful engagement

Safeguarding matters for communities and staff

Participation should lead to accountability

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Participatory M&E from Theory to Practice series

Questions?

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LinkedIn group: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/5098257/

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Sources

- Training module on participatory community monitoring and evaluation (FAO)
- Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (Institute of Development Studies)
- Guidance for Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning System (UNDP)

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