



## Tool 4: Menu of data collection methods

Process indicators	Method
<b>Document review</b>	Documents associated with project planning and implementation can be an extremely useful source of data for your evaluation. Documents include minutes of meetings, progress reports to funding bodies, records of attendances at events and project planning notes. The applicability of document review as a method of data collection varies depending on the document concerned. Notes taken during the planning phase of a project, for example, can be useful as a baseline of where organisations or partnerships are at when commencing the work. This baseline can then be reflected upon later to determine any improvements as a result of the project. Progress reports to funding bodies can also contain a lot of information about your project. As such, they can be 'mined' for data against process and impact indicators.
<b>Feedback sheets or questionnaires</b>	Feedback sheets involve posing a set of questions to participants of an activity to find out their thoughts on what has happened. Feedback sheets can contain closed- and open-ended questions and are generally administered immediately following an activity. They can capture data for process and impact indicators; for example, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest), how would participants rate their satisfaction with the activity? Or, what is the most important take-home message for participants from the activity? A variation on the feedback sheet is the pre- and post-activity questionnaire, which involves posing a set of questions to participants immediately before and after an activity has occurred. Pre- and post-activity questionnaires are useful for quantifying changes in an individual's knowledge, attitudes or beliefs resulting from participation in a project activity.
<b>Focus groups</b>	Focus groups involve participants (usually 6–8) in facilitated discussions with the evaluator who is guided by a prepared set of broad questions. Focus groups can be audio-recorded to assist with note taking. As a method of data collection, focus groups are useful for unpacking the progress and achievements of a project in an in-depth way, and when different perspectives and points of views of stakeholders need to be explored for your evaluation. The data captured is often valuable for explaining quantitative data captured by other methods. Discussion of highly sensitive or personal issues ought to be skilfully avoided or steered away from when running focus groups.
<b>Journalling</b>	Journalling involves practitioners (and stakeholders, too) recording their experiences, reactions, observations and thoughts about project activities in a document and on a regular basis. As a method of data collection, it is useful for documenting the challenges and lessons learned throughout the project from the perspectives of those involved. Journalling is also useful for recording the 'unexpected' things that arise during the course of implementation – both good and bad. Journalling is yet another purposeful (yet under-rated) method of data collection for evaluation.
<b>Key informant interviews</b>	Interviews involve participants in one-to-one conversations with the evaluator who is guided by a prepared set of questions but with flexibility to vary the questions as needed. Interviews can be face-to-face, over the internet/by webcam, or by telephone, and can be audio-recorded to assist with note taking. As a method of data collection, interviews are useful for unpacking the progress and achievements of a project in an in-depth way. Interviews are also useful for when a deeper understanding of the perspectives of individual stakeholders is needed by your evaluation. The data captured is often valuable for explaining quantitative data captured by other methods.

<b>Narrative</b>	Narrative is a technique that allows practitioners (and stakeholders, too) to examine the progress and achievements of projects in an exploratory way. It involves bringing people together to share their experiences, reactions, observations and thoughts about project activities. The result of the conversations is a set of shared stories about what people have been part of and/or the difference this has made to them. The technique of most significant change (MSC) can be applied to narrative as a way of refining it. This technique involves generating stories and involving stakeholders in deciding on the most significant ones that reflect the project's progress and achievements. As a method of data collection, narrative is useful for delving deeply into what matters most about a project to those involved. The resulting stories can be included in evaluation reports as case studies (detailed scenarios) to aid with interpreting data that have been collected by other methods.
<b>Observation</b>	Observation involves practitioners observing what is going on during project activities and recording this information in project notes or as part of their regular journalling (see above). As a method of data collection, observation is useful for capturing the rich and detailed contexts in which activities unfold and changes occur. What's observed and recorded is often valuable for interpreting data that have been collected by other methods.
<b>Partnerships analysis</b>	Partnerships analysis involves administering a well-designed instrument and then analysing the results to show how well a partnership is tracking. As a method of data collection, partnerships analysis is useful for evaluations that have identified effective partnerships as an indicator of success. And since primary prevention can't be done without partnerships, this is likely to be the case for many evaluations.
<b>Practice reflection</b>	Practice reflection is a technique for making sense of what's happening (or has happened) in relation to implementation. It involves taking a step back from day-to-day work in order to notice something about practice that you otherwise wouldn't have noticed. You might identify the exact moment during an activity when steps could have been taken (but weren't) to improve it, for example. Or the exact sequence of events that led to a shift in stakeholders' understandings of the causes of violence against women. What is noticed through the art of reflection can then be documented as practice insights or success factors (see journalling), thereby constituting valuable pieces of data for your evaluation. Practice reflection is one of the most purposeful (yet under-rated) methods of data collection for evaluation.
<b>Surveys</b>	Surveys involve a structured and fixed set of questions that can be distributed to stakeholders for them to complete and return. Surveys can be administered in a variety of formats, e.g. by mail, email, online or face-to-face. As a method of data collection, surveys are useful for collecting large amounts of quantitative data about the knowledge, attitudes/viewpoints or behaviour of individuals, and/or when the responses of a sample need to be generalised to a broader population. If the total number of stakeholders involved in a project is small, then the time and cost involved in designing, testing and administering a survey must be weighed up against other methods of collecting the data needed for the evaluation.

For snapshots of four main data collection methods (surveys, focus groups, interviews and observations) see National Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative (2014), *Listening to our communities: Tools for measurement*, <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-fact-sheets/listening-our-communities-tools-measurement>. The references found in this guide's 'Final words and online resources' also summarise different data collection methods for evaluation, so check them out.