WHY USE TEAM SELF-REVIEWS?

Who are the world’s experts on the implementation of a specific project or programme? Answer: the team(s) implementing the work. They are the ones who usually have the most extensive knowledge and understanding of what is being done and with what consequences, as it is they who have the daily responsibility to put the project into action. They possess a treasure chest of information; the Team Self Review process lifts the lid on this box of treasure.

A useful, tried and tested organizational learning mechanism is ‘TEAM SELF-REVIEWS’. Max Peberdy calls it ‘the Treasure Box’ of M&E. Many organizations implement a version of this tool, e.g. through 6 monthly or annual ‘programme meetings’, through 6 monthly ‘Away Days’, or annual ‘Retreats’. This version can be facilitated by an internal team, or even by an external evaluator.

Basically, the implementing team complete the answers to the 3 UNIVERSAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS. Depending on the size of the team this may take 1-2 days or a few hours.

1. Are we doing what we said we would do?

Here it is important to explain that the aim is not to list all of the team’s activities, but to provide an overview, give a few examples and explain anything that is significantly different from what was planned.

2. Are we making any difference?

Here, the team are asked to identify 3 aspects of the project that they believe are making the biggest difference to the project target groups (could be beneficiaries, communities, local organizations, and partners).

They are then asked to explain WHY these aspects are more powerful than others.

3. Are we doing the right things?

This gives an opportunity for the team to share their opinions (that may not have been listened to before). It gives them room to reflect and share their knowledge and learning from what they know has been going well, not so well, and what might work better.

If this is an evaluation, the team reports are primary data that goes into the final report annex. The evaluator then identifies commonalities and examples of ‘most differences’ are followed up.

If this is used as part of an organizational M&E system, all projects can be asked to do this at the same time, during ‘no fly’ days e.g. once or twice a year.
STAGES IN AN ORGANISATIONAL ‘TEAM SELF-REVIEW’ PROCESS

1. All project and programme teams conduct the team self-review process and answer the 3 universal evaluation questions.

2. Each team writes a short (1 – 1.5 pages) report, highlighting the ‘most powerful things’.

3. The short team reports go to a ‘distillation team’ to read.
   - This team comprises 3 people who are TRUSTED in the organisation.

4. The distillation team answers the 4 questions for the whole organisation.
   - They then write an organisational review.

The final organizational self-review can comprise a short, readable, and very powerful statement of where the organization is making the most difference and can help with aggregation of impact across the organization.