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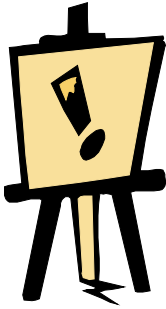
Practitioner's Guide:

Data and Information Assessment Matrix



Data and Information Assessment Matrix

Brief Description



Effective planning and management relies upon a rapid understanding of a few key facts. It follows that, to be effective, information should convey simple, succinct messages which provide clarity in the decision-making process. In an information-crowded world, timeliness is also a vital factor in determining whether information will be assessed, let alone used. The clearest, most relevant information will have little impact if its message is received too late.

- ▶ Information provides decision-makers with the ability to make guided choices. What is needed for these informed choices are brief summaries of complex issues, presented in such a way that they can be absorbed quickly without the need for special tools or expertise.
- ▶ Information can also be tailored to the needs of individual users, this form of aggregated or interpreted information is often termed an "information product".

An information system is created to satisfy a user's need for information based upon a specific requirement, usually the need to make a decision (i.e. decision driven information). When this information is stored and made accessible for others, this can be termed knowledge management. Knowledge management is a system of people, resources and procedures that produces and distributes information to relevant organisational members in a rapid, comprehensive, accurate and cost-effective way.

Knowledge management requires that organisations and institutions manage the organisation's information resources - all of its collective knowledge (institutional memory). Knowledge and information is to be understood as a corporate resource.

As a first step towards achieving this institutional memory it is necessary to determine what data and information is available, either within the organisation or in other organisations. The data and information assessment matrix's objective is to systematically assess the availability, accessibility and actual use being made of data and information. For example the use could be for district planning, regional planning, strategic planning, etc.

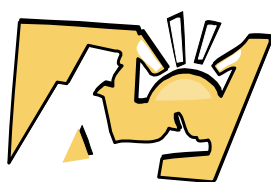
Data and Information Assessment Matrix

Proposed Main Users

District planners, Provincial planners,
Sectoral planners, NGOs, Donor organisations



Purpose of the Method



Understanding and knowing where important planning information is located is essential for the planners and managers. Since it is highly unlikely that the planner can collect, update all sectoral and intersectoral data, his/her role and responsibility should be to act as a sort of "information manager". The first step in being able to manage anything rests in knowing where things are.

First steps in any planning process will be to gain a complete overview of what exists in the district, what the quality level of this information is, how detailed it is, who updates it, are there similar forms of information being collected by others, and so on. The description being provided here assumes that the tool is being used for the first time, however, once applied it merely requires regular updating.

Data and Information Assessment Matrix

Advantages



- ▶ As an information manager for key data and information required for district and village level planning, the district planner must always be in a position to be able to access the data, quickly and efficiently. Knowing where the information is will be a key to successfully managing the data.
- ▶ Not only is such information important for the planner but also for the sectoral line agencies and all others undertaking planning work in the district (NGOs, INGOs, donor projects, etc.).
- ▶ If a subjective assessment of the quality of data is provided, then the matrix can form a basis upon which improvements in the quality of data and the focusing of future data collection exercises can be undertaken more precisely.

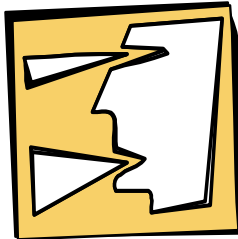
Limitations



- ▶ Main disadvantage of the tool is that it is quite a time consuming exercise the result of which merely provides an overview of what is available.
- ▶ Subjective impressions of the quality of data can be misleading at first sight. The need to update the rating scala with increasing knowledge of the situation becomes all the more important.

Data and Information Assessment Matrix

Principles & General Procedures



Definitions and Basic Steps

A differentiation has to be made between *data* and *information*.

Definitions for data:

- ▶ Data are facts or figures from which conclusions can be inferred (Webster's dictionary),
- ▶ Data are facts that result from measurements or observations about the world,
- ▶ Data describe the traits of objects, relationships between objects, events and processes of the real world.

Definitions for information:

- ▶ Something told, news, intelligence (Webster's dictionary),
- ▶ Information is processed data,
- ▶ Information is the knowledge derived from the analysis and interpretation of data,
- ▶ Information is knowledge about facts, processes and events transmitted by a communication process knowledge is not based upon own experience learning is possible through own experience or communication information to replace learning process.

Using a similar matrix as provided in the example below, the planner should undertake a systematic assessment of the data and information available for planning.

Step 1:

Develop a similar matrix as provided in the example below, however, please adapt the example to suit the purposes and requirements.

Step 2:

Assess all the data and information which is available in your office.

Step 3:

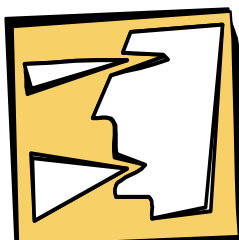
During discussions and interviews with all sectoral line agencies and all other developmental agencies working in the district, assess their own data availability.

Step 4:

Agencies or departments who can not be readily interviewed could be asked to complete the matrix and submit this to your office.

Data and Information Assessment Matrix

Principles & General Procedures



A data and information overview matrix as presented in table 1 is designed merely designed as an example. It is important that the organisation or institution wishing to collect the data and information develops a matrix to suit their needs and requirements. The information can be portrayed differently in the matrix and the type of information gathered can and should also vary. The objective of the matrix is to provide an overview of all of the available data and information that can be used for planning or management purposes. It describes where the information is located, whether it is accessible, when it was last updated and so on. The matrix provides an important first step towards information and knowledge management.

Table 1: Example of a data and information assessment matrix

DISTRICT DATA AND INFORMATION ASSESSMENT MATRIX

DATA / INFORMATION	SECTOR, AGENCY, DEPARTMENT, ETC			
	Min. of Agric.	Min. of Health	NGO	INGO
Types of information available	Production data Land use data	Basic health data Location of health centres Coverage of health services	Community mobilization information Basic data on households	Hydrogeological data Ground water data
Storage mechanism	Mainly in reports and loose files	Reports and files, some digital data available	Files and reports	Fully computerized data
Location of data	District capital	District capital and main towns in the district	District town xxxx	National capital
Accessibility of data (accessible to all?)	Open to all	Open to all	Open to all	Very restricted access
Ownership of data	Feel it is their information and are not willing to provide data	See that data is required for other sectors apart from theirs, but want to ensure that only they update the data regularly	Have developed data collection at the community level and say that the data really belongs to the communities and not to them.	Feel data is theirs alone and they are not willing to share the digitized data
Level of detail	Farm centre level only	Health post level only	At household and community level	district wide at the village level only
Estimation of accuracy of information (Scale 1-5. 1. Highly accurate, 5 Highly inaccurate)	4	3	4	2
Last date when data was updated	1996	1996	1997	1995
Frequency of data updating	Yearly	Yearly	Updating is not foreseen	Updating is not foreseen
Similar data collected by others	Yes, by the	Yes, by	No	No
What data is missing?	No data at community level	No data on spatial distribution	Data does not cover the whole district	Data not disaggregated

Data and Information Assessment Matrix

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