

A COMPASS FOR NAVIGATING A COMPLEX WORLD: METHODOLOGY REFLECTION BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY MEMORIALISATION PROJECT

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The Developmental Evaluation (DE) approach moves the focus of evaluation away from ex-post proving the impact of the project with a view to designing the next project, to directly and immediately helping ongoing projects to adapt and improve their design and implementation. The present study is a methodology reflection based on the experience and learning from using the DE approach to support an innovative project in a complex and changing context, namely the Community Memorialisation Project (CMP) implemented by Search for Common Ground, Sri Lanka, and the Her Stories Initiative during the period 2016-2018. The aim of this paper is to share the key learnings and experiences of using the DE approach to support Community Memorialisation Project. The qualitative-exploratory approach was employed and data were collected using one-on-one interviews and secondary sources. The thematic analysis with the descriptive approach was applied to analyze the data. The study reveals that experience of DE for the CMP is largely positive, but it is also clear that it worked due to the presence of several preconditions. The DE approach needs a substantial time commitment and openness to reflection and sharing learning from the project team, designing and administering evaluation tools together, as well as collaboratively analysing the data promoted an evaluation culture within the team. The findings also revealed that DE helped to provide a better evaluation of the CMP than a more traditional approach; it helped to generate substantially more data than an ex-post evaluation, and the evaluator has a deeper, more nuanced and detailed perspective on the project as to what and how to evaluate it. Had the project had only a rigid log frame approach to tracking changes or an external end line evaluation much of the rich learning that CMP was able to generate – about memory, memorialisation and its role in non-recurrence of violence – may have been lost.

Keywords: Developmental Evaluation, Community Memorialisation Project, Evaluation

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