

Empowering evaluation of the project “Io sto bene qui... in montagna!” to reduce child poverty in a mountain area

Authors: Claudio Tortone*, Mara Grasso*, Alessandro Migliardi*, Giovanni Borgarello**, Giorgio Salza**

*Dors – Regional Health Promotion Documentation Centre – Piedmont Region – ASL TO3

**Torre Pellice Municipality



The project

“Io sto bene qui in...montagna!” was a project aimed to **reduce child educational poverty (0-6 age)** in a disadvantaged mountain area (the Pellice Valley in Western Piedmont Alps).

The leader was Torre Pellice Municipality and other partners were valley municipalities, institutions and health, social cultural and educational services.

The **project's main objectives were**: creating equity oriented educational policies and services, reaching more vulnerable children and families, through the strengthening of intersectorial collaboration, and activating community development to reinforce social support and networks.

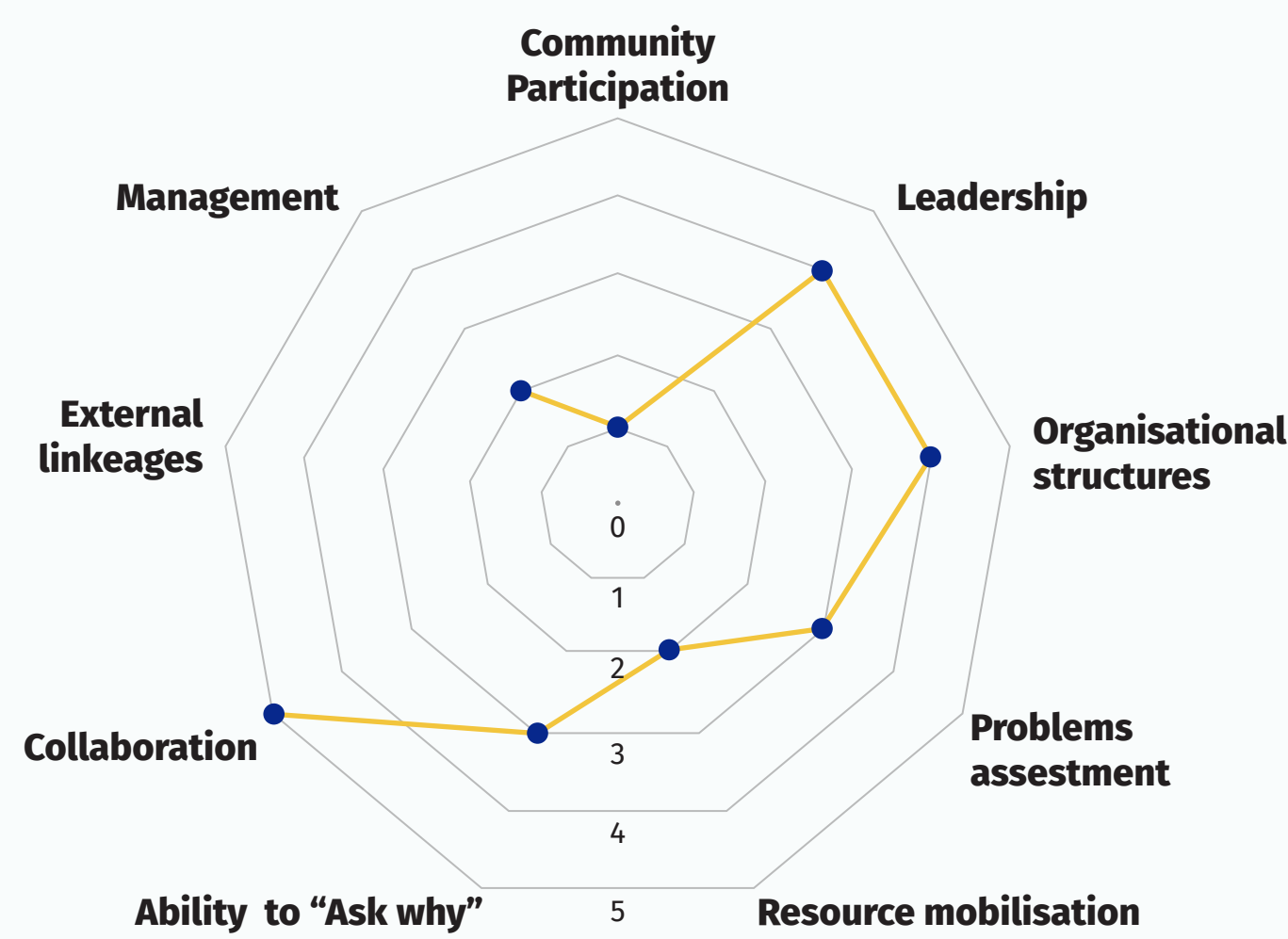


Image 1. The spider web of Laverack domains approach

Evaluation objectives

Measuring the project impact on:

the quality, the use and the accessibility of the childcare services by families

the competencies of the “educational community” and collaboration between partners

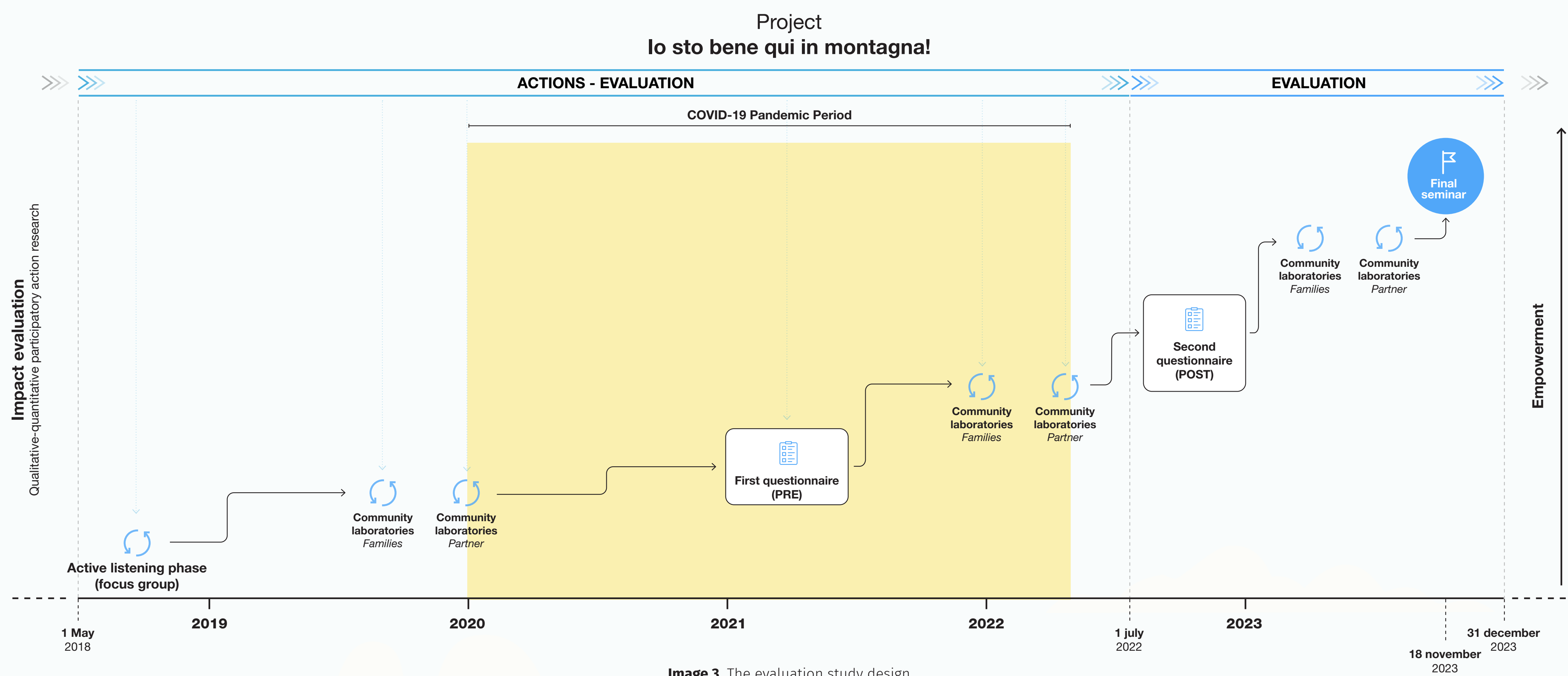


Image 3. The evaluation study design

Materials and methods

For this project, a **participated-action-research** with the **empowering evaluation approach**, including both quantitative and qualitative methods, was planned and conducted.

The research started with **focus groups** with families and **laboratories** with **families, professionals and the community stakeholders**, applying **Laverack domains approach** (2016), to respond families' needs, enhancing their resources (Image 1), and to initiate community empowerment programmes.

Then, with a **pre and post questionnaire** (Image 2), families were asked to evaluate the accessibility and the quality of 3 services and 3 well-being promotion activities. Between the two questionnaires and after the post one, **communities laboratories** to discuss and reflect about the main results with services' professionals were implemented.



Image 2. The questionnaire

Results

The project managed to make the services and the well-being activities better known, specially among families with a medium or low educational level.

The **evaluation of services was good**, with an **average of 8** on a scale from 1 to 10.

The families suggested some useful proposals:

to create more socializing and aggregation spaces

to organize more outdoor activities and to improve playgrounds

to enhance the communication and the promotion of the activities

to increase the opening hours of services

Conclusions

Families suggested many interesting and useful proposals that could be implemented by local policy makers.

The project improved the collaboration between different partners and childcare services and strengthened the importance of involving, since the first phases of the project, all the actors for the evaluation phase, that is not a final step, but it's an ongoing process.

Different strategies were used to contact the families, but it has been difficult involving them, specially the disadvantaged ones.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation, but probably also the methods used were not sufficient to meet the families.

Participative processes are fundamental to promote empowerment. Specific methods are needed to involve vulnerable families.