



Discussion Summary: A structured look at OM: Outcome Challenges and Progress Markers

Link to full discussion online: <http://www.outcomemapping.ca/forum/viewtopic.php?t=276>

Discussion on the OM Community Map

Selected highlights only, see below for full summary.

Simon Hearn, UK
Is there a relationship between behaviours and attitudes when formulating PMs?

Nicholas Najda, Canada
The relationship between attitudes and behaviours is complex and non-linear.

Mike O'Brien, Netherlands
The context of behaviour change is vital, the how and why questions need to be asked as well as what.

Ricardo Wilson-Grau, Netherlands
Building relationships is more important than comprehensive planning. More learning, less design

Andre Ling, India
It can be helpful to think about the type of behaviours that can be used as proxies for attitude.

Simon Hearn, UK
Is there a problem of power relations in Outcome Mapping?

Kyla Pennie, Canada
Can progress markers be developed in parallel with competency standards?

Steve Powell, Bosnia and Herzegovina
How about using questionnaires as a tool for measuring progress markers?

Javier Pacheco, Colombia
Building agreements with boundary partners helps prevent misunderstandings

Heidi Schaeffer, Canada
Perspective and participation are key to resolving power issues.

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Original Email

[Simon Hearn](#), UK
21st April 2008

Dear all,

We're starting a structured discussion today on Outcome Challenges and Progress Markers. The discussion will last for three weeks, which is actually not that long, so please contribute whatever you can, whenever you can. This could be a great opportunity for some of our newer members to probe the expertise of the wider community.

The discussion will be informal – no question is too simple and all comments or points of view are valuable – so please don't hold back. What I'll do is start with a question that will hopefully get the ball rolling, but please do ask your own questions if you have them.

Outcome Challenges and Progress Markers are all about behaviour change. They help us to visualise what our boundary partners will be doing differently if our programme were to be extremely successful. For some people this focus on behaviour could be a stumbling block as many people often think in terms of attitude. They could argue that a change in behaviour may not be sustainable and what actually counts is the resulting change in attitude. For example, a public servant can change their behaviour in a very superficial way in order to gain respect, by saying the right things in their speech for instance, but it's only when their attitude to a particular issue changes that a sustainable outcome can be obtained.

The question is; **has this conflict between behaviour and attitude come up in your conversations? In what contexts is it particularly critical?**

Feel free to reframe this question.

Cheers,

Simon

Responses were received, with many thanks, from:

1. [Robert K. Walker](#), Brazil
2. [Nicholas Najda](#), Canada
3. [Andre Ling](#), India
4. [Wouter Van Damme](#), Belgium
5. [Ricardo Wilson Grau](#), Netherlands
6. [Michael O'Brien](#), Netherlands
7. [Heidi Schaeffer](#), Canada
8. [Gonzalo Romero](#), Bolivia
9. [Javier Pacheco](#), Columbia
10. [Garth Graham](#), Canada
11. [Terri Willard](#), Canada
12. [Steve Powell](#), Bosnia and Herzegovina
13. [Julius Nyangaga](#), Kenya
14. [Abass Kabiru Olatubosun](#), Nigeria
15. [Kyla Pennie](#), Canada
16. [Sana Gul](#), Pakistan
17. [Andre Proctor](#), South Africa
18. [Weeraboon Wisartsakul](#), Thailand



Week one summary

After a very active first week of this discussion, a summary was made that tried to cover all the main points made:

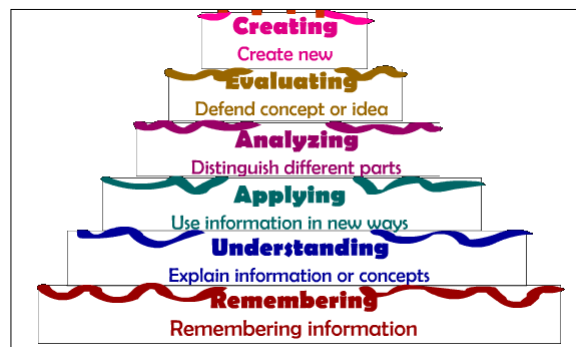
The question posed was one of attitudes versus behaviour in how we describe the changes we want to see in our Boundary Partners. Many of the contributions challenged this distinction. Our approach needs to have a 'dual compliance structure', taking into account both normative and utilitarian and recognising the spectrum of cognitive processes that are involved in any kind of social change. It has also been suggested that the relationship between attitude and behaviour is not always linear and positive – the two are distinct yet interconnected in a complex way. This highlights the need for grounding any kind of change in the context in which it is occurring; the question of how and why have to accompany what kind of change we are looking for.

In terms of how we measure change, we focus on behaviour as it gives a useful proxy of attitude, which is harder to measure. Perhaps a more robust proxy is intention based on i) attitude to behaviour, ii) subjective norms and iii) perceived behavioural control.

There is a resounding concern among the contributors that the language of OM implies a 'power' relationship between 'the programme' and 'the agent of change' which could be interpreted as patronising and controlling. Communication is key here: Softer language could be used (support, facilitate, assist instead of influence). A focus on modifying policies and practices rather than changing beliefs, thoughts, feelings or challenging competencies could be more constructive. The power problem becomes less of an issue if the perspective of the change is clarified, and if it is originating from the vision rather than the mission. Firm agreements can ensure the ownership of the change is clearly in the domain of the Boundary Partner rather than the programme.

Summary of individual responses

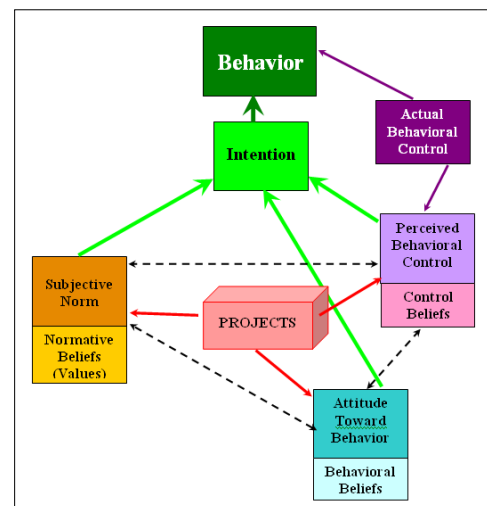
1. Robert Walker suggested that attitudes and behaviours often exist side by side in a dual compliance structure of normative and utilitarian outcomes. He highlighted the importance of identifying a project's strengths and weaknesses in terms of these two types of outcome.
2. Nicholas Najda reminded us of the complex, non-linear, relationship between attitude and behaviour and that often they are two independent entities with differing influences. He also brought up the question of power – to what extent can a system influence an individual's behaviour or attitude and to what extent can an individual act in accord with their attitudes while existing within the confines of the system they are living in?
3. Andre Ling reframed the question from one which conflicts attitudes and behaviours to one which asks what kind of behaviours can be considered as suitable proxies for attitude. He also raised the point that behaviours are more interesting to measure than attitude as they represent systemic transformation.
4. Wouter Van Damme pointed us to [Blooms taxonomy](#), which describes a spectrum of cognitive processes which can help us define what we mean by behaviour and attitude (see right).
5. Ricardo Wilson-Grau highlighted a few challenges he has faced in working with a large global network. The language used in OM was problematic for many non-English speakers. Particularly the use of the term 'influence' which implies a power relation. Softer words like facilitate, support and assist have been found to be friendlier. Focussing the outcome challenge on new or modified policies and





practices rather than on beliefs, opinions, feelings or competencies can also help to avoid the power problem. There is, though, always an unavoidable danger of patronising our boundary partners.

6. Mike O'Brien discussed the common temptation to treat progress markers as a simple checklist rather than a self-evaluation, reflection and learning tool. He suggested that a deeper understanding of the behaviour change processes could prevent this misuse. In particular, by considering behaviour change in the context in which it occurs and deepening our understanding by asking ourselves how and why the change takes place.
7. Ricardo Wilson-Grau posted again with a note about the balance between M&E design and M&E implementation. He suggested that there was a tendency to spend a lot of effort on the intentional design phase, planning in detail the changes sought rather than on the agents of change themselves. A light and imaginative intentional design will allow more time to be spent building relationships, ensuring participation and frequent monitoring, learning and adjustment of the strategy.
8. Heidi Schaeffer shared her experience with intentional design and the importance of perspective and strong participatory processes. She argued that the problem of power, and particularly the feeling of paternalism, shouldn't be an issue if the OCs and PMs are developed from the perspective of the partner and tied to the vision rather than the mission. And if strong participatory processes are in place to support the partner in articulating their beliefs, attitudes, and vision then the OC becomes a self-created picture for the partners to see where they are heading and the PMs become a road map of transformational change that will help direct the support of the programme.
9. Gonzalo Romero shared his thoughts on the 'economics of behavioural change' in a [short article](#). He suggests that *intention* could provide a more accurate proxy of behaviour. In his model (see right), intention is a function of three other influences: the attitude towards the behaviour, the subjective norms and the perceived control over the behaviour change.
10. Javier Pacheco contributed his thoughts on the necessity to build *agreements* among the boundary partners in order to proceed in a mutually convenient way and to support the changes envisioned by the partners. He emphasised the need for partners to own the direction of change and the strategies and to understand the relation between the two.
11. Garth Graham commented on the trend in the discussion so far to focus on behaviour change among individuals. He suggested that this didn't reflect the intention of Outcome Mapping, which is to measure how learning changes the collective behaviour of systems. He posed a new question to the community; what progress markers have boundary partners identified to indicate that shift from individual behaviour change to system behaviour change?
12. Terri Willard replied to Ricardo's first post with a comment about the difficulty for networks to identify boundary partners and progress markers. She suggests that this could be indicative of a wider problem that many networks get caught up in information sharing and networking can easily lose sight of how/why and organization might use the information or contacts as part of a broader development change process.
13. Mike O'Brien noted that many of the contributions had emphasised the importance of relational and reflexive activities such as partner engagement, connecting emotionally, inspiration, feelings, visioning and dialogue-based monitoring. He highlighted the fact that such activities require a lot of time and energy investment and are difficult to maintain. He asked what the limitations were and how they have been overcome. He also suggested that along with the too little of this type of activity, there could be too much and that a point of diminishing returns could be met.





14. Andre Ling contributed a number of points about learning in a social context. One of the strengths of Outcome Mapping, he states, is its evolutionary nature with built in multi-level feedback loops that stimulate a 'reflexive' culture. Performance evaluations, in relation to progress markers and vision, can help maintain the dynamic balance between reflection and action. But ultimately, if learning and reflection is built into the programme, as opposed to focussing on target-based programming, then the programme will be able to focus more on quality, innovation, creativity and partnerships.
15. Simon Hearn came back to the topic of power with the following post:

As we continue our discussion on Outcome Challenges and Progress Markers this week, I just wanted to throw a few things in.

Many of you touched on the issue of power last week and this has come up many times before in conversations and in workshops. I just wanted to explore this issue a bit further in the context of describing behaviour changes through OCs and PMs.

Do you agree that there is a problem of power relations? Either in the sense that OM engenders (or is perceived to engender) a paternalistic or controlling nature or that there's a risk of partners feeling patronised by the process.

Is this an issue of language as suggested by Ricardo? Perhaps OM needs to be contextualised and made more culturally sensitive. Or maybe, as Ricardo says, a certain amount of patronisation is inevitable.

Or is it a matter of perspective as suggested by Heidi? That there shouldn't be a risk of paternalism if we truly build the OCs and PMs from the perspective of the boundary partner, not from the perspective of the 'programme' and the interventions it is planning.

We all want to see our boundary partners changing, transforming, and developing in some way. And we recognise the need to describe these changes in order to focus and prioritise our efforts. But we also want to empower our partners by ensuring they have ownership over the changes. How can this balance best be achieved?

16. Garth Graham pointed out an important principle when talking about power, or empowering; that acculturation works in both directions. In a complex, dynamic, self-organising system, the programme is not external to the system but rather a part of it and therefore the ability of a programme to empower is imagined.
17. Andre Ling commented that power relations will always be a problem in some way in social change contexts and group processes. Many of the problems are enshrined in the identity, biases and preconceptions of the facilitators and the group members themselves. He reiterated the need for deep, open, inclusive and participative dialogue between the various partners about their own desired behaviour changes and their own visions. *'Thinking in terms of power 'with' rather than power 'to' or power 'over' probably makes for a more flexible and creative approach to modelling the change process which encourages the dissolution of the problem of power relations as engagement proceeds.'*
18. Mike O'Brien asked for a particular example of this type of 'problematizing'.
19. Ricardo Wilson-Grau states that it is only useful to identify boundary actors and formulate outcome challenges. The unpredictability of the environment in which they work, as well as their own complexity, openness and dynamism, means that going further to identify progress markers is an unhelpful intellectual and mechanical exercise.



Splinter conversations

Out of the above conversation two other discussions emerged.

A) Questionnaires as a tool for measuring progress markers

<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/forum/viewtopic.php?t=273>

1. Steve Powell described an approach he recently applied where he used likert-surveys to monitor the progress of the boundary partners in terms of the progress markers – how far along the road of behaviour change are they. He was interested in hearing any feedback about this approach and whether anyone has any similar experiences.
2. Julius provided some concrete examples of the type of questions that could be useful to track progress in terms on knowledge, attitude and practice.
3. Abass Kabiru Olatubosun mentioned that UNICEF Nigeria is doing a similar KAP survey for the evaluation of a hygiene promotion programme.

B) Progress markers versus competency based training

<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/forum/viewtopic.php?t=280>

1. Kyla Pennie shared an interesting problem she recently came up against when planning a capacity development programme for community development practitioners that sat alongside a formal, long-term training programme. There was a confusion between progress markers for behaviour change due to the wider programme versus competencies exhibited as a result of the training. She asked for advice on how to distinguish between the two and how best to graduate the progress markers while being sensitive to the mix of transformative changes and practical skill development.
2. Sana Gul replied with a similar experience and suggested that practical skill development markers were 'like to see' and the more transformative changes were 'love to see'.
3. Jan Van Ongevalle commented that clearly defined boundary partners – whom the programme aims to influence and is able to monitor – may clear up the confusions. He mentioned two instances where BP clarity has helped and he uploaded an [M&E plan](#) for a five-day life skills training event which features a set of progress markers to facilitate the monitoring of longer-term training outcomes.
4. Andre Proctor suggested that competency standards and progress markers are different things. The competency standard is simply a tool that you can use to measure whether the outcome has been achieved. The progress markers could include whether a certain level of competency has been reached but they could also include many other indicators such as constituency feedback.
5. Weeraboon Wisartsakul shared a similar experience he was involved in where the training workshops were seeking 'inner change'. This type of change was very hard to measure in terms of progressive behaviours. He asked whether anyone has a similar experience.
6. Andre Proctor added that in the case of community development practitioners, there is a need to build soft 'inner qualities' as well as hard competencies and skills. Good practitioners need to be effective animators, facilitators, mobilisers and drivers of new attitudes, understandings, behaviours and actions in others. But how can these qualities be certified? He suggests that practitioner effectiveness can be read in the relationships they build, the energy they mobilise in others, the creativity and innovation they inspire and in the real sustainable differences in community well-being that flow from these.



Concluding remarks and actions to take forward

- The question of attitudes versus behaviour stimulated a very interesting discussion. The contributors commented both on the difficulty to measure attitudes and unhelpfulness of attitudes when thinking about systemic transformation. There were also worries that explicitly aiming to influence attitudes could result in power problems and that partners would be more cooperative if the changes explicitly being sought were practical rather than fundamental.
- The contributors very quickly identified that the relationship between attitudes and behaviours is complex and non-linear and that they exist simultaneously as part of a more diverse spectrum of cognitive processes. Different projects have different needs in terms of the level of change they are trying to influence, but ultimately it is behaviours that need to be measured; often as proxies for deeper changes.
- The power problem raised some very good, and very practical points. Stronger agreements and participatory processes can help smooth partner relations. OCs and PMs that are from the partner's perspective and focussed on the vision should negate any paternalism. 'Programmes' have to recognise that they are part of the system and therefore are learning and interpreting from the 'partners' just as much as the other way round. Thinking in terms of power 'with' rather than power 'to' or 'over' should help to dissolve the problem of power.
- Points for further debate include:
 - What progress markers have boundary partners identified to indicate the shift from individual behaviour change to system behaviour change?
 - Are there any examples or cases where the power issue has been problematised in a project?
 - Are there any further thoughts or examples of using questionnaires to monitor progress markers?