



The Outcome Mapping Learning Community

is an informal group of over two thousand members from around the world. It acts largely as a dynamic platform for sharing knowledge and experiences relating to Outcome Mapping; a methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes, developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Members come together to solve problems, to showcase and trade their discoveries and good practices, and to support one another in applying Outcome Mapping.

www.outcomemapping.ca

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Outcome Mapping Learning Community newsletter, keeping you up to date with innovations, debates and life in the community. In this issue, I am confident that we have something for everyone.

Jan Van Ongevalle provides us with a summary of one of the most active discussions we've seen in the community for a long time, and it's on the popular topic of OM and LFA. Bob Williams presents the new book: Systems Concepts in Action, written by himself and Richard Hummelbrunner, which features OM as one of the methods reviewed.

We then have an extract from a brand new report about how the SAHA programme in Madagascar has adopted Outcome Mapping and some of the challenges they faced. We hear from Joseph Frederick, Jan Van Ongevalle and myself about some recent events on OM or closely related. Finally we ask two of our members, Cecilia Öman and Diego Palacios Jaramillo a few questions about their OM experiences.

If you would like to contribute to the next edition, contact s.hearn@odi.org.uk.



Feature: Our top OM resources

Are you new to OM? Here is a whirlwind tour of the resources you should look to first for an introduction to OM:

- 1) If you have a spare 20 minutes you should watch these videos of Sarah Earl presenting on OM (part 1: <http://is.gd/iUnMT>, part 2: <http://is.gd/iUnWd>, part 3: <http://is.gd/iUo3i>)
- 2) For something to read, the first place to visit should be the FAQs produced by IDRC's Evaluation Unit: <http://is.gd/jewlr>.
- 3) Next you should read this four page brief by Terry Smutylo: <http://is.gd/jewMG>.

- 4) If you are still hungry for more than I recommend this longer paper: <http://is.gd/jewQ8> or the full OM manual available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese: <http://is.gd/jewTe>.
- 5) The OM community library has over 300 resources which you can search through: <http://is.gd/jexan> and the forums contain over 1800 posts: <http://is.gd/jexdK>

Finally, There are plenty of people here who are more than willing to offer advice or assistance. Just email the mailing list at general@outcomemapping.ca. It is good practice to write a bit about yourself and your specific situation so that people can understand what you are looking for.

Highlight of the month: Our first webinar

On Wednesday 15th December we hosted our first community webinar. 66 members logged in to hear community steward, Ricardo Wilson-Grau, present his now famous fish soup development story. Veteran OM users and community stewards, Jan Van Ongevalle and Kaia Ambrose, posed their questions to Ricardo and sparked a discussion about light-touch intentional design and utilisation-focussed monitoring. Many of the audience were also able to ask their questions to Ricardo, Jan and Kaia. A full recording of the event can be found here: <http://is.gd/jiflZ>. The event was a great success judging by the participation and the feedback and we look forward to a series of similar events in 2011. Stay tuned!

OutcomeMapping
LEARNING COMMUNITY

Welcome to our first OM community webinar:

The fish soup development story

Host: Simon Hearn Presenter: Ricardo Wilson-Grau Discussants: Jan Van Ongevalle & Kaia Ambrose

We will be inviting participants to send their questions after the presentations. You can submit your question in the "Chat" window but please select "Send question to Staff" option in the drop down box – please don't send your question to 'All – Entire Audience.'

Please note that this is our first webinar and we are still testing the software and the process so do bear with us. If you have technical enquiries, please use the "Send question to Staff" option to alert us and we will do our best to assist you. Thank you for your understanding.

Also in this newsletter...

Discussion summary: OM and LFA



New book: System Concepts



OM report: Monitoring Empowerment



Recent event reports

Discussion: The end of the logframe's hegemony?



By Jan Van Ongevalle and Simon Hearn

The hegemony of the logical framework in international development cooperation is rather puzzling. But its hold seems to be loosening as its linear planning logic is becoming contested in certain cases. This is especially so in programmes that deal with complex processes of socio-economic and political change where the link between cause and effect is not predictable and at best only observable in retrospect. While something can indeed be said about the use and abuse of the logframe, more and more can be said about diversifying our pool of PME approaches so that we become more responsive towards customising the right approach or mix of approaches depending on the specific context in which we work.



Cartoon by Julie Smith, World Vision Australia

In this regard it is very refreshing to note how the debate around 'Outcome Mapping (OM) versus Logical framework analysis (LFA)' continues to spark interest among members of the outcome mapping learning community. Indeed, it has been a topic of interest since the very earliest discussions in 2006 and there have been consistent discussions

almost every year since. It is interesting to note how the conversation has progressed over time. The early discussions were about the differences and incompatibilities between OM and LFA and some theoretical ideas about working with them side by side. More recently the discussions have been about practical experiences of combining the two, and tried and tested methods for fusing them. But the latest discussions just go to show that even with demonstrated success of fusion the methodological debate is still very much open. See the box below for some of the outputs of these previous discussions. More recently there was a very active discussion on the topic and we provide a brief summary of that here.

Previous community discussions on the topic:

1. 2010 April – July discussion summary: <http://is.gd/jdwvA>
2. 2007 discussion summary (65-68): <http://is.gd/jdwMX>
3. 2006 discussion summary (P17-20): <http://is.gd/jdwJS>
4. 'Outcome Mapping and the Logical Framework Approach: Can they share a space?' <http://is.gd/jdwQL>
5. A conceptual fusion of the logical framework approach and outcome mapping (Daniel Roduner & Kaia Ambrose, 2009) <http://is.gd/jdwV7>

The recent discussion was sparked by the following question: 'What are the core values of outcome mapping that we cannot let go of when we try to integrate outcome mapping and logical framework approach?' A creative map of the discussion responses is available from our resource library: <http://is.gd/jdy9W>

The discussion highlighted the importance of making a distinction between the tools, concepts, processes, journals - the methodological components of a PME method and the set of 'core values' that defines the way a PME method sees development or processes of social change. The discussion also demonstrated the importance of clarifying the underlying principles of a tool or a method in order to assess its suitability for a given context or task. The table below shows the core values that were identified as underpinning outcome mapping. It is important to note, as we were reminded by one member, that these values are not unique to OM

and that there is a whole family of methods and approaches that would also claim these values.

Core values and principles of outcome mapping

1. The essence of social change is a process in which diverse social actors, over time, do things differently than they had been doing them before.
2. Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, actions or activities, and the policies and practices of social actors – individuals, groups, communities, organisations or institutions.
3. Generally, inputs, activities and outputs are controlled by the social change agent, but outcomes are solely influenced, usually partially, often indirectly and sometimes unintentionally.
4. A development intervention influences outcomes in the broad sense of the term: from inspiring and supporting and facilitating to persuading and pressuring and even forcing change.
5. In OM, the partner is not viewed as a mechanism/object of the intervention; he is properly considered as an agent of change
6. Change does not stop with the achievement of intended outcomes. Ethical or sustainable development interventions empower those who will live with the outcomes to assess and respond to needs and conditions that will continue to emerge.
7. Multiple perspectives are inevitable and valid even if contradictory. Sustainable relationships manage the differences and conflicts that exist or emerge.
8. The sphere of influence of a programme is naturally limited by resources, timing, credibility, knowledge, mandate, geography, politics etc. An intervention which recognizes the limits of its own influence as well as the influence the external context exerts on the (sub) system in which it functions can intervene strategically and report realistically on its results.
9. Because change is complex and a result of multiple actors acting simultaneously in a 'system', the focus of the intervention (and learning about results) in outcome mapping is on those who you can influence directly.
10. As change is non-linear, change is best described in terms of a non-linear progression towards an idealised behaviour.

The discussion also raised a number of challenging questions that may need to be answered during further discussion in order to deepen the OM-LFA debate and to draw lesson that can inform practice. Some of the key questions are listed below:

1. Can we think about linking LFA to OM so that the M&E information generated from the OM will complement those from LFA?
2. Unless, we have comparative analysis on the OM and LFA practices, the theoretical judgments about OM or LFA made here and there, can be very speculative.
3. What else could we think of doing to strengthen and build on "local ways of learning" as we try to cross-pollinate M&E ideas around the world?

We can clearly see the debate moving beyond a discussion about which approach is better than the other. As was pointed out by one member; it is important to clarify 'the intrinsic value of both the LFA and OM approach so that practitioners can determine which approach or combination of approaches is most suitable for use in their specific context.' The importance of a learning culture or a genuine interest to learn from project implementation was also pointed out in the discussion – particularly in working with 'local ways of learning' and learning to inform methodological decisions.

Whatever approach or combination of approaches we choose for our specific contexts, we remain with the challenge as practitioners to demonstrate how these approaches have contributed to more effective programming. This is a challenge we will have to address if we want to promote alternative PME approaches such as outcome mapping in contexts of complex social change.

New book: Systems Concepts in Action



By **Bob Williams**

Many evaluators, donors and stakeholders are uncomfortable with the ways in which development projects are managed and evaluated. Development projects often operate in fluid, unpredictable environments;

the concern is that they are managed and evaluated as if these contexts were stable, knowable and predictable.

Outcome Mapping was developed, in part, to address these concerns. Outcome Mapping is featured in the new book *Systems Concepts in Action – A Practitioner’s Toolkit*, by Bob Williams and Richard Hummelbrunner. This book brings together and demonstrates the use of a range of methods and techniques from the burgeoning systems field.

The systems field as we know it today developed from the need during the Second World War to intervene effectively on the basis of very little information. Since then the field has expanded into many different spheres, but its core mission remains the same; good quality decision-making in conditions of uncertainty.

Evaluation fundamentally poses questions about value and worth. These questions are relatively simple to explore in stable, known environments, but get tougher when those conditions are absent. And this is why many evaluators have turned in recent years to systems ideas for inspiration and practice.

But how helpful are the systems field’s methods to evaluators? What kinds of questions do they assist evaluators to address and how? There are big picture and small picture answers to those questions; the book ties both together in a unique way.

In terms of bigger picture, the book starts off by considering the questions posed by three key elements within any systemic inquiry; inter-relationships, perspectives and boundaries. The bigger picture questions have great power in even the smallest evaluation. In terms of the smaller picture, the book breaks these questions down into those addressed by specific systems methods and techniques.

The bigger picture

Inter-Relationships

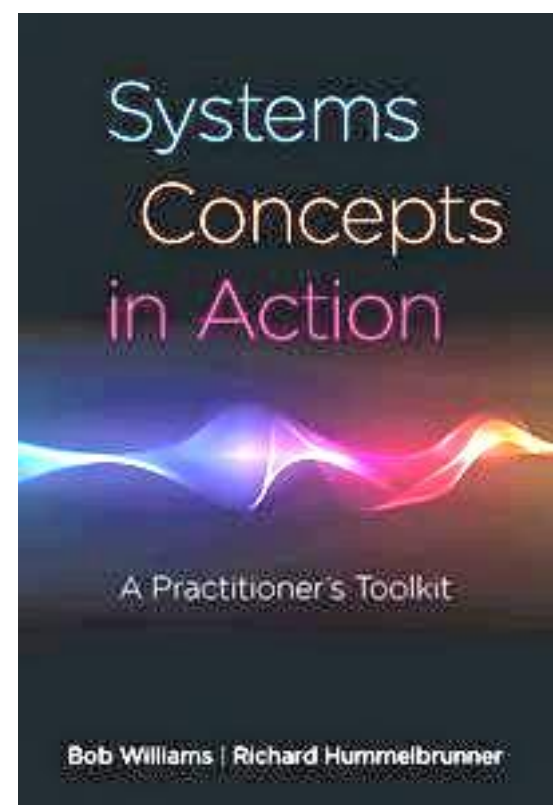
‘Inter-relationships’ is the most familiar systems concept, partly because it is also the oldest. How things are connected and with what consequence stems from the earliest thinking about systems. It is also the concept most strongly embedded in the popular imagination. When we talk about the filing system, or the health system, the image we have in our minds is of a set of objects and processes that are interconnected in some way.

The systems field draws on many methods that focus on inter-relationships. All tend to pose and address three main questions: What is the nature of the inter-relationships within a situation? What are the patterns that emerge from those interactions over time, with what consequences for whom? Why does this matter? To whom? In what context?

Perspectives

We cannot comprehend the behaviour of an intervention or program without identifying and understanding a wide range of perspectives. People participate in a project for many different reasons. Perspectives help to explain and predict unanticipated program behaviours because they give us a window into motivations. They also draw our attention to unplanned and unintended consequences. In reality people working within their own perspectives and motivations make programmes work, not some imagined ‘logic’ such as a LogFrame dreamed up by funding agencies. Thus it’s plausible that someone, somewhere really did plan and intend that “unintended” result.

The systems field draws on a number of approaches for untangling, exposing and exploring this net of perspectives, including asking: What are the different ways in which a situation can be understood? How are these different understandings going to affect the way in which people judge the success of an endeavour? How will it affect their behaviour, and thus the behaviour of the system, especially when things go wrong from their perspective? With what result and significance?



Boundaries

Boundaries have always been an important systems concept. No endeavour can do everything; every endeavour has to make a choice between what it includes and what it excludes. A boundary differentiates between what is deemed relevant and irrelevant; who benefits and who is disadvantaged; which perspectives are honoured and which perspectives are marginalised.

Boundaries are highly relevant to evaluation because decisions about boundaries are invariably value laden. These decisions are also the site of where power is revealed – just as the person with the magic marker controls what goes on the whiteboard, the person whose perspective dominates a project decides the boundaries. Therefore making boundary choices explicit and critiquing those choices is essential.

Some common boundary questions include: Whose interests are being served and whose interests should be served? Who controls what resources, and who should control what resources? What expertise is required and what expertise should be required? Whose interests are being excluded, marginalised or harmed by the way we are drawing the boundaries?

The smaller picture

The book takes these core questions and expands them on a method by method basis. This means evaluators can match the kinds of evaluation questions they are addressing to a specific systems approach. Or even better address more complex questions by combining several different approaches in novel ways.

The systems approaches in the book are:

- Causal Loop Diagrams
- System Dynamics
- Social Network Analysis
- Outcome Mapping
- Process Monitoring of Impacts
- Strategic Assumption Surfacing and Testing
- Strategic Area Assessment
- The CDE Model
- Assumption-Based Planning
- Cynefin
- Solution Focus
- Viable System Model
- Cultural Historical Activity Theory
- Soft Systems Methodology
- Dialectical Methods of Inquiry
- Scenario Technique
- Systemic Questioning
- Circular Dialogues
- Critical Systems Heuristics

Each chapter contains a detailed description of a method or technique, followed by a case example and then a discussion of its strengths, weaknesses and applicability.

The book is available in hard, paper and ebook formats. More details here: <http://is.gd/jexnX>.

Monitoring Empowerment: the experiences of SAHA in using Outcome Mapping - an extract



By Jane Carter, Ony Rasoloarison and Estelle Raharinaivosoa

In examining one particular experience of a rural development project in Madagascar (SAHA), this paper highlights some of the challenges and lessons learned in the use of OM, mainly from the perspective of the implementing agency. It also sets out a number of issues of wider relevance for monitoring and evaluation by development agencies. The paper is based on field interactions in Madagascar on two occasions (November 2009 and May 2010), field interviews conducted by a local consultant, and self-reflection on the part of the SAHA team. It is divided into three sections – a factual account of when, why and how Outcome Mapping was taken up by the programme SAHA; an analysis of this particular experience in terms of empowerment; and finally a broader discussion on the method, drawing on the lessons learned through SAHA.

SAHA project fact sheet

Key message: Empowering civil society to fight against poverty, with particular emphasis on good local governance and regional economic development

Agencies: Funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), implemented by Intercooperation, Swiss Foundation for Development and International Cooperation (IC) through its Madagascar office; the SAHA team comprises some 60 national staff (thematic experts, staff responsible for programme management and support staff).

Financial volume: Approx. CHF 4 million per annum

Location: 6 regions of Madagascar

Period of operation: 2001 – 2012 (in four phases)

The need for a new monitoring system

The first and second phases of SAHA focused at the local level, working with small farmer groups. However, for the third phase of the programme, the decision was taken to shift focus to a regional or meso level, in order to try to achieve greater impact. Those responsible for designing this phase realised that the most important aspect to monitor would be the development of the meso-level partner organisations in terms of their internal operations, activities, and external linkages. This fits closely with the logic of OM – that is, placing focus on monitoring and evaluating changes in the behaviour of the people involved in a given development intervention. At the time, OM was eliciting considerable interest in SDC headquarters. SDC therefore decided to replace SAHA's earlier monitoring system (of monitoring outputs and conducting detailed inquiries at household and community level) by OM. An external consultant specialised in the method provided considerable support in this process.

Practical challenges in introducing OM

Putting OM into practice is generally considered by SAHA staff to have been a major challenge. The system as currently followed has three main thrusts, designed to monitor:

- the changes in the behaviour of the direct (boundary) partners (self-assessment by the partners, cross-checked, discussed and finalised with the SAHA team)
- the quality of support offered by the SAHA team (self assessment by the team)
- changes in the context.

In addition, the programme collects information on the effects of the actions of the boundary partners on the programme's ultimate beneficiaries – that is, the most vulnerable rural citizens, especially women. This information is analysed by a thematic specialist in the team, using partner records as a base. This last thrust is made as an additional element, and is not strictly a part of the OM method itself.

Some of the particular challenges faced by SAHA in putting OM into practice are outlined below.

1. Diversity of partners

SAHA III had some 80 boundary partners, which the programme classified into five main categories. To monitor overall progress at programme level, a set of standard, broadly worded progress markers were worked out for each partner category, in an iterative process. The challenge was to combine the need for a strong sense of ownership within each boundary partner for its own planning, monitoring and evaluation with the need of the programme to monitor overall changes.



Lake fishing: SAHA is supporting fishing communities to work together in managing fish stocks and marketing their catch

2. Capacity building of staff members

Under previous phases, SAHA's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit functioned somewhat autonomously. The use of OM, by contrast, requires that everyone in the team participates in monitoring, and understands the procedure. In SAHA's case, the fact that the programme also works with (field-based) service providers gave an additional layer of people to be trained in the principles of OM. This was a logistical challenge, but resulted in considerable self-reflection, and ultimately in an increased awareness and understanding of the persons concerned.

3. Self-monitoring by the boundary partners

The use of the rather complex terminology of OM has been avoided as much as possible in the way it is used with and by partners – whilst keeping the essence of strategic planning, and self-defined progress markers.

4. Adoption and adaptation time

The introduction of OM took a considerable amount of time. Looking back, SAHA staff members consider that a period of five to seven months was needed for the team to truly master the method, followed by a longer period of continued learning and adaptation.

5. Ensuring programme learning

Before forwarding the consolidated results of partner self-assessments to the core monitoring team, an additional step is taken to promote feedback and learning within the SAHA team. This is a joint, cross-cutting discussion ("regard croisé") between operational and thematic staff, during which progress is considered by partner category, and by region.

6. Changing mindset

OM implicitly puts the partners at the forefront of determining their future, and requires the programme to step back; to facilitate and not to decide. This was not always easy for either team members or the partners to fully realise, and it took some time for them to internalise the changed dynamics.

The full report can be downloaded from the resource library at: <http://is.gd/jeZAb>.

Event reports

Many perspectives but one voice from South Asia on Evaluation: we have come of age



By Joseph Frederick, World Vision, India

The Evaluation Conclave 2010, which took place in October this year in Dehli, India, was the first of its kind in the south Asia region, bringing together 300 evaluators, practitioners, academicians and bureaucrats. The conclave was designed for participants to learn, build their capacity, share experiences and meet with new people; all in one go, under the same roof. It was a cocktail of presentations, panel discussions, workshops and coffee shops. Interestingly, 75% of the participants were from South Asia, 8% from the South East Asia and the rest (17%) were from the US, Europe and Africa.

Some of the key questions that were voiced during the conclave and the responses from the participants are presented below:

1) Whose evaluations and who evaluates whom? The evaluations are mostly donor driven to check on the efficiency, effectiveness and lessons learnt. There are multiple evaluation perceptions but few evaluation policies and standards. Therefore, the need of the hour is to drive for collective ownership of evaluations, and make evaluations a two way process – being accountable both to the funders and the communities they serve.

2) How inclusive is our evaluation? Not all stakeholders are included in selecting evaluators and setting the scope of the evaluations. The implementation hardly checks on the root causes, grassroots complexities, barriers and opportunities. Hence, the need of the hour is to engage all stakeholders in the evaluation process, integrate program and evaluation measures from the planning to phase out stage.

3) How are evaluations conducted? There is a compromise on the rigor of the methodology and data collection. Evaluation tools hardly open up the minds of the beneficiaries & intermediaries for learning. Building capacity on evaluation is not a priority area for govt and funders. Therefore, ensure a mixed method approach and

develop a clear ToR that spell out the purpose, methods, dissemination plan and use of evaluation.

4) Who uses the evaluation findings? Evaluation findings have limited dissemination, agencies are not willing to share evaluation reports, and evaluation reports are used or misused selectively for correction and continuity. There is a lack of use of evaluation for organization and policy making, hence, advocate wider dissemination and larger replicability of the evaluation findings.

The other important threads of discussion centred on: a) The focus of accountability has moved from financial credibility to delivering the program outcomes and results for learning; this has lead to an increased demand for evaluation among governments and donors. b) People come first: develop partnerships for accountability. c) Be sensitive to the fact that communities are not homogeneous and develop an understanding of gender and diversity. d) There is a need for professional capacity building on evaluation.

One other interesting session was with Roberts Chamber's key note address on "**Who should evaluation serve? And whose voice matters?**"

He started by saying he was angry about five things: they are 1) poverty 2) Abuse of the term participatory, (he encouraged the evaluator to study the power equations and relationships in the community and who participates in whose evaluation) 3) Paradigms shifts, neo-Newtonian practice vs adaptive pluralism (he encouraged the evaluators to study the dynamism, uncontrollability and unpredictability; fitting practices and a la carte combinations in evaluations) 4) Win-win participatory style (generate statistics using participatory methods) 5) Conservative donors who don't give a respectable time for conducting a good participatory evaluation.

Finally he requested the evaluators to follow his now famous principles **Ask the community and Shut up!**

Learning in London



By Simon Hearn, ODI

On 24th November 2010, 15 members of the OM community got together in London to learn from each other and initiate a local community of practice. This is a brief report of that event.

The initial idea for this event came from some members of the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC) who were witnessing a number of events around the world focused on OM and similar methods and were keen to see such an event in London. There was a suggestion to meet with fellow members in London to explore the possibility of organizing such an event or just to see what people were interested in. The suggestion was taken up by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), who volunteered to host the event, with a small contribution from the OMLC.

The agenda was very much decided by the participants. A pre-meeting email discussion highlighted some of the priorities for participants as well as things they can contribute. We settled on three emergent objectives: (1) to learn more about OM and see how it is used by other people (2) meet other people involved in similar work facing similar challenges and share our experiences and (3) decide on a set of actions we can take forward together.

I started the meeting with a very quick introduction to Outcome Mapping, including its background, the three key principles; spheres of influence, outcomes as behaviour change and boundary partners; and an overview of the steps involved. We then heard from three people about their different experiences of OM.

OM challenges M&E culture

Andre Ling (ALINe) shared a story of OM use in a project in India. The project was aimed at supporting village level learning centres in India. Outcome Mapping was introduced to the field staff as a way to monitor their performance after their previous system, based on a scoring method, was deemed insufficient. OM was chosen because it seemed to support their understanding of performance as being measured through the actions and interactions of stakeholders.

They adopted Progress Markers for defining the roles of the learning centre staff and gave journals to their field staff to record the behaviour changes. They organised monthly reflection meetings where, armed with their journals, the field workers would discuss the emerging patterns and make appropriate adjustments to their plans. They found the OM perspective to be very beneficial for the project because it helped to develop a shared understanding

among the stakeholders. Ultimately, it challenged the M&E culture of the project and all those involved.

Andre is now applying OM in different ways to his current work with the ALINE programme and is experimenting with creating hybrid OM models such as integrating Progress Markers with the balanced score cards approach.

OM by stealth at VSO

Caroline Guinard (VSO) described to us how the M&E approach adopted by VSO compares to OM. Rather than being a direct application of OM this is a case of realising some of the principles of OM in the existing M&E approach – this is sometimes referred to as applying OM by stealth. VSO works with a large variety of partners such as government ministries, CBOs and advocacy coalitions across many programme areas, including HIV and AIDS, Education and Disability. It primarily provides capacity development to these partners through volunteering.

The main similarities of their system with OM are: (1) it focuses on direct partners as key agents of change; (2) the appreciation of the limits of our influence; (3) outcome are focused at level of organisational change; (4) the commitment to participatory processes; (5) the focus on reflection and learning; and (6) the identification of common objectives and indicators of progress across programmes and countries

The main challenges they identified with OM were: (1) VSO doesn't distinguish boundary partners and strategic partners; (2) there is different terminology - partnership objectives rather than outcome challenges and milestones instead of progress markers; (3) the vision and mission are explored at two levels: programme and partnership; and (4) the demand for impact, which is not satisfied by OM, is integrated in their approach.

OM not quite right for Action Aid

Laurie Adams (ActionAid International) shared some of her experiences in re-designing ActionAid International's M&E system, in particular the consideration of OM as a principal methodology.

ActionAid have a fairly well established and thought out M&E approach called ALPS: Accountability, Learning and Planning System. It is, though, becoming increasingly difficult to work with. For example, it doesn't play well with the donor's increasing demand for 'results', it doesn't document sufficient evidence of impact and it is not compatible with the federated governance structure of the organisation; some country offices will be using it effectively while others won't. So what was needed was a clearer recipe.

Outcome Mapping was considered as a principal methodology since the principles of OM were very much aligned with the principles that ActionAid had developed for its M&E system. There were two major flaws in the OM approach though. Firstly, there was too much jargon and given that ActionAid works with over 2000 local partners there is a great need for flexibility in language of any system employed. One important decision that made was to scrap the results framework and rather than talk about inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts they just talk about change (they are in the process of developing a 'change frame'). The second main problem was aggregation of results and the fact that this task is very resource intensive with OM. They are still in the process of developing the system and trialling different approaches but at the moment they are looking towards a hybrid approach.

The final session of the meeting focussed on developing a set of actions to take forward as a group. Suggestions included:

- investigating the possibility of short OM training events
- continuing to meet as a group on and offline to share experiences and seek support from peers
- identify common interests and foster smaller working groups on particular issues or sectors
- engaging donors to take more interest in alternative methods including integrating OM with existing methods
- producing case studies.

Complexity-oriented Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation: From alternative to mainstream?



By Jan Van Ongevalle, HIVA, Belgium

Many organisations in the development sector are on the quest for alternative approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation. One such quest was undertaken over the past year by five organisations in the Netherlands and Belgium. In a joint action learning project, The Development Policy Review Network (DPRN), HIVA Research Institute for Work and Society, PSO Capacity Building in Developing Countries, the Flemish Office for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB), and Vredeseilanden/VECO explored the implementation of



various PME approaches such as Outcome Mapping, the Logical Framework and Most Significant Change in complex development programmes. The main activities of the project were a review of four learning histories and a survey of current PME policies of back donors. The results of this one-year project were presented during a public seminar on 10 November 2010 in The Hague. This article summarises the main findings of that event. The full report, together with

Too many PME options: How to choose? Photo by kudumomo; <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kudumomo/2354710896>

the project reports can be found here: <http://is.gd/jhP4b>.

'The emperor has no clothes'. That's how one of the keynote speakers described current PM&E practice during his keynote presentation at the DPRN seminar. Back donors still face problems receiving all the necessary information about concrete results and effectiveness from the programmes they fund. Actors in the field are faced by the limited relevance of PME approaches to support essential learning processes. This is especially the case in complex programmes with unpredictable outcomes and a multitude of actors and factors that contribute to the results. Internationally, there is a growing recognition of the possible need to combine traditional PME approaches, such as the logical framework approach, with other instruments for the PME of development programmes that work in complex social contexts.

So what is going wrong and what is the way forward? What are some of the lessons that we can learn from organisations that are trying to improve their PME practice? The seminar provided us with the following answers:

What's going wrong with our PME practice?

- The ongoing focus towards result based management is generally characterised by a linear planning logic with an emphasis on measurable results at an often overambitious impact level. This has methodological implications as evidenced by the continued hegemony of the logical framework approach, which by itself does not help organisations to set up learning centred PME systems

- The resulting PME frameworks are generally oriented towards accountability instead of learning and therefore less useful for dealing with complex development processes where ongoing learning is essential to deal with unpredictable outcomes
- There seems to be a lack of genuine dialogue and trust between donors and funded organisations and an increasing competition for funds
- We are sometimes asked to aggregate results that cannot be aggregated, e.g. aggregating impact across a range of work, carried out by different organisations in different sectors, in different countries. The result can be painful, and using one participant's words: "If you ask a stupid question, you get a stupid answer!"

What do we learn from organisations that are trying to improve their PME practice?

- No PME system can, by itself, guarantee learning to take place. The key towards a learning centred PME system is a 'learning culture' in the organisation. It requires people who are genuinely seeking to customise their PME system in such a way that it helps them to learn about their own adaptive capacity and the results they achieve
- PME systems characterised by methodological diversity can help organisations to deal with complex dimensions of social change
- Developing an actor centred theory of change is an essential step in the development of a learning centred PME system because it places the people or actors involved in the programme at the heart of your PME activities
- Within the current policy environment, organisations have more space at operational level to apply different PME approaches than is often assumed

What's the way forward? Recommendations for policy makers:

1. Make organisations accountable for their learning
2. Prioritise an open dialogue about the problem of impact
3. Avoid imposing one rigid format for PME
4. Ask organisations to justify their PME approach on the basis of their actor centred theory of change
5. Develop internal capacity (at the level of the back donor) around complexity oriented PME methodologies
6. Develop learning relationship with organisations that are supported
7. Support experimentation with alternative PME approaches

What's the way forward? Recommendations for NGOs

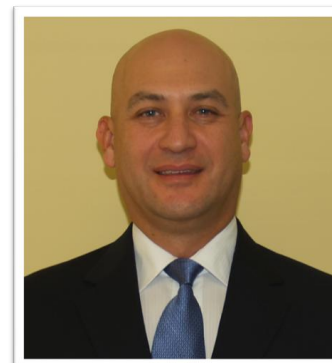
1. Stimulate critical dialogue with policy makers about the relevance and feasibility of long term detailed planning
2. Utilize the available space to implement alternative PME approaches more effectively
3. Northern NGOs should also lead by example in their PME demands towards their Southern partners
4. Showcase successful development results that were obtained through a variety of alternative PME approaches

The process is currently taken further by the PSO thematic learning programme 'PME of complex processes of social change' This action research project (2010-2012) involves 12 organisations who explore complexity oriented PME approaches. Further information about this project can be found here: <http://is.gd/jf1qj>.

OMLC member interviews

1) Who are you?

My name is **Diego Palacios Jaramillo**, I am the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative for Mexico and Country Director for Cuba and Dominican Republic. I have representational, technical and programmatic responsibilities for the UNFPA cooperation in these countries.



2) What first brought you to OM?

In 2007, I attended a brief OM training session in Bogotá, Colombia offered to government, NGOs and UN agencies. From the outset of the OM training I realized the impressive opportunities to use the methodology in UNFPA programming process and so we did.

3) How have you applied OM in your work?

OM was used for the formulation of the UNFPA Programme of Cooperation with the Government of Colombia in 2007. UNFPA officially adopted the Logical Framework in 1992 for its programme planning monitoring and evaluation, which is mandatory. My team in Colombia used the OM to complement the LF methodology with very promising results that certainly helped to strengthen the results based management of the programme. The OM was also welcomed by our national partners implementing the different projects and our national offices in Venezuela, Guatemala and Mexico.

4) What has been the biggest challenge in implementing OM, particularly in a logframe driven context?

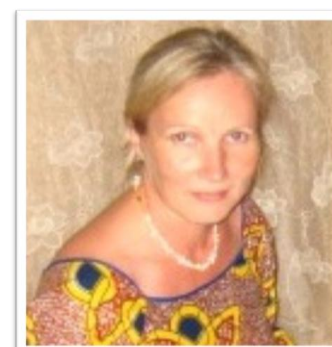
As always, the biggest challenge is to change the mind set of staff who were used to the logframe methodology. However, because OM was easy to understand, very practical and logical, colleagues promptly begin to think under the logic of the OM principles and perspectives.

5) If you could give one piece of advice to someone just starting out with OM ...

The advice would be to understand the logic behind OM and then to apply it in a concrete programming process. OM works very well with the LF and enhances PM&E processes.

1) Who are you?

Dr **Cecilia Öman**, Scientific program coordinator for Water Resources at the International Foundation for Science (IFS) and Associate Professor at Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Department for Land and Water Resources



2) What was your experience of OM training?

The outcome mapping training was crucial for a deeper understanding of the method. In my experience OM goes beyond words and actually seeks to increase our understanding of how humans think and act. We have to be able to understand the concepts behind the method if we are to overcome problems we face in practice, problems that cannot be foreseen in a manual. For example, OM addresses change in behavior; I usually spend time when working in Africa to ensure that the behavior of people in Africa isn't changed to a style identified in Europe or America, but to provide the resources necessary for us together to be able to do what we jointly identify as necessary to achieve our goal. The OM web-site, the ongoing discussions and sharing of knowledge in the OM network as well as the possibility to call in professional trainers, significantly increase the usefulness of the method in actual practice.

3) How have you applied OM for your work?

I have, for example, used OM in an African study addressing access to scientific equipment. In a stakeholder meeting in 2009 with 50 participants we structured the project frame with OM: vision, mission, boundary partners and outcome challenges. I tried to guide the group through the steps. Then we worked along those lines for one year. In 2010 Ziad Moussa, a consultant and an OM community steward, guided us through the steps again and significantly improved what we had done and added progress markers. Thereafter we visited 6 scientific organisations in Africa and together with 100 stakeholders we measured the progress markers. We also used progress markers to identify the baseline. OM helped us to identify a large number of success stories. The reason for this is that we managed to have ownership in the project. With OM we could define outcomes and separate them from outputs, which helped us encourage and identify success stories. Through OM, Ziad Moussa and the way of thinking beyond outputs it was also possible to introduce Story Telling, which we recognised as a powerful complement to quantitative scientific results.

4) What has been the biggest challenge in implementing OM?

The biggest challenge is to raise money for a project design phase with OM. The method benefits from inputs from many stakeholders and face-to-face meetings which obviously is time and money consuming in the beginning. But for sure, it pays off as the project is running. It can also be challenging to convince a few stakeholders about of the usefulness of including M&E in project design.

5) If you could give one piece of advice to someone just starting out with OM ...

Enjoy, focus on the positives and ensure ownership and equal partnership in the process!

Community News

OM training and other events

Outcome Mapping training

Date: Tue 15 Feb — Thu 17 Feb 2011
Location: Jaipur, India
Summary: ODI and CUTS are hosting a 3-day workshop in Jaipur, India to introduce the basic principles of Outcome Mapping, with particular emphasis on their application to the planning phase of development projects and programmes.
Contact: e.cardoso@odi.org.uk

Expert seminar: Developmental Evaluation – new kid on the evaluation block

Date: Date: 29th March 2011
Location: Wageningen, Netherlands
Summary: The widely respected evaluation expert Michael Quinn Patton will illustrate how to conduct evaluations within a developmental evaluation framework. He will share a range of interesting insights in developmental evaluation during the morning. This is followed by a more practical afternoon where the practical application of developmental evaluation in the development sector is tested in specific case groups.
Contact: ingrid.poolman@wur.nl

New resources in the community library

Outcome Mapping Glossary in Khmer

A translation of key OM terminology in Khmer

<http://is.gd/jexC6>

English Definition	Khmer Translation	Khmer Term	Khmer Definition
Outcome A result or achievement that is expected to occur as a result of a program or project.	លទ្ធផល	លទ្ធផល	លទ្ធផល គឺជា លទ្ធផល ដែល បាន មក ពី ការ អនុវត្ត កម្មវិធី ឬ គម្រោង ណាមួយ ។
Impact A long-term change in the well-being of people or communities.	ឥទ្ធិពល	ឥទ្ធិពល	ឥទ្ធិពល គឺជា ការ ផ្លាស់ ប្តូរ យូរ ពេល វេលា ក្នុង ជីវភាព រស់នៅ របស់ មនុស្ស ឬ ក្រុម មនុស្ស ។
Outcome Mapping A process of identifying, describing, and measuring the outcomes of a program or project.	ការ តាម ដាន លទ្ធផល	ការ តាម ដាន លទ្ធផល	ការ តាម ដាន លទ្ធផល គឺជា ដំណើរ ការ កំណត់ រក លទ្ធផល ដែល បាន មក ពី ការ អនុវត្ត កម្មវិធី ឬ គម្រោង ណាមួយ ។
Developmental Evaluation The ongoing stage of learning through which a program or project is adapted to meet the needs of the community.	ការ វាយ តម្លៃ វិស័យ អភិវឌ្ឍន៍	ការ វាយ តម្លៃ វិស័យ អភិវឌ្ឍន៍	ការ វាយ តម្លៃ វិស័យ អភិវឌ្ឍន៍ គឺជា ដំណើរ ការ តាម ដាន លទ្ធផល ដែល បាន មក ពី ការ អនុវត្ត កម្មវិធី ឬ គម្រោង ណាមួយ ។

Show me your impact: Evaluating historic memory & racism in Guatemala

An overview of a case study application of OM and the challenges encountered in its application

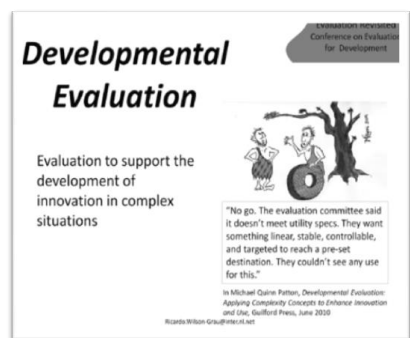
<http://is.gd/jexM3>



Notes on Developmental Evaluation

A power point presentation and notes on this emerging field in evaluation, a complement to formative and summative evaluation models.

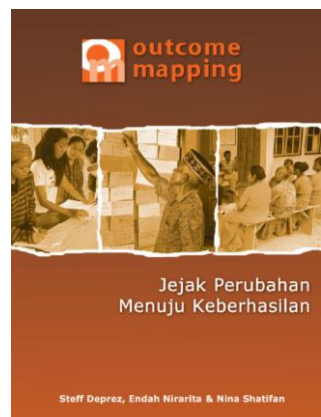
<http://is.gd/jev85>



Indonesian Outcome Mapping Manual

A translation of the OM manual in Indonesia.

<http://is.gd/jevfy>



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