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DEVELOPMENT OF A PLANNING, LEARNING & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN INDONESIA

OUTCOME MAPPING IN ACTION

Abstract

Planning, monitoring & evaluation (M&E) are important management processes of development programmes. Although M&E is often associated with accountability and reporting processes, there is a growing awareness that the M&E process can improve the planning and management systems and act as a vehicle for organisational learning. VECO Indonesia, the Indonesian country office of the Belgian NGO Vredeseilanden, aims to contribute to viable livelihoods for organized family farmers in Eastern Indonesia through partnerships with local organizations supporting the development of sustainable agriculture chains (SACD). For its new country programme 2008-2013 VECO Indonesia committed itself to develop a learning-oriented planning, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in support of its programme and partners. It decided to use the Outcome Mapping (OM) approach to guide the design of the programme and the respective M&E system, referred to as the *Planning, Learning & Accountability* system (PLA). The paper highlights the different stages of Outcome Mapping and explains how it was 'customised' for VECO Indonesia's programme as well as the action research development of the PLA system in VECO Indonesia.

1   Introduction

The content of this paper is part of the action research (2007-2008) development of the *Planning, Learning and Accountabilty* system (PLA), based on Outcome Mapping, for the country programme VECO Indonesia 2008-2013.

The research is grounded in the emerging awareness that many M&E processes in development programmes are to a large extent carried out to provide information for funding agencies and to meet external accountability requirements (Horton, 2003:83). Studying four development case-studies, Watson (2006:3-7) confirms that M&E is mainly used for control, accountability and symbolic protection and relies on formal result-based approaches which emphasise 'measurement' of results, in a form defined by, and acceptable to, the external funding agencies. The information provided by M&E processes seldom influence planning or decision-making before and during the implementation of development programmes (Britton, 2005:11).

Based on an analysis of the M&E process of its previous programme, Vredeseilanden's recognised similar dynamics and practices with regard to its existing M&E processes (Vredeseilanden, 2007). Therefore it deliberately chose to develop a planning, learning & accountability (PLA) system as important strategy for one of its core objectives, i.e. becoming a learning organisation.

This paper starts with a literature study which including an analysis of the main purposes of M&E with a particular focus on *planning, learning & accountability* as they reflect the key aspirations for the development of the M&E framework of VECO Indonesia. Furthermore, there is an introduction to the Outcome Mapping, the underlying framework of the country programme – and how the intentional design stage (re-) structured the programme set-up and logic.

Furthermore, it highlights the guiding principles and the gradual steps of the action research development process of the M&E framework with inclusion of the intermediate results and lessons learned.

2   Context

2.1   VECO Indonesia

VECO Indonesia is the Indonesian country office of the international NGO Vredeseilanden (Belgium). Vredeseilanden aims to contribute to viable livelihoods for organized family farmers through improved income from sustainable agriculture. VECO Indonesia aims to strengthen family farmers in Eastern Indonesia through the development of sustainable agricultural chains (SACD). The support strategies of VECO Indonesia are directed towards providing (organisational) capacity building and funding of important chain actors in Eastern Indonesia as well as facilitating multi-stakeholder processes with partners and government for chain development and policy influence.

2.2   Towards a new M&E approach

For the last decade, VECO Indonesia applied a project cycle management (PCM) approach - a cyclical process of identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – centered around the *logic framework approach* (LFA or logframe). The main characteristics of this 'hard systems' tool derived from the military & engineering sector (Morgan, 2005) are:

- breaking up a social problem into components, and analysing and optimising the parts individually;

- a focus on planning, control, order, efficiency and prediction;
- planning of activities that are simple, sequential and linear.

Alltough commonly used, many practitioners highlight some weaknesses of this management tool. Perhaps the most fundamental is the nature of development work itself. Any attempt to 'measure' development is hampered by the complexity of what must be assessed. Using the logframe often leads to a tendency to over-simplify how change or 'development' occurs (Starling, 2003) .

Furthermore, using measurement-focused frameworks often increases the pressure to show everything that has been done in a positive light and therefore hinder the possibility of learning from practice (Taylor & Soal; 2003). Chambers and Pettit (2001) argue that the practice of such procedures are often used in a top-down manner and used rather ritualistically which may lead to the loss of a valuable process of discussion and debate with primary stakeholders.

In addition, logframe tends to respond to the needs of management in the development hierarchy which maintains the existing power imbalances in the aid relationships (Eade, 2003). Huyse & Deprez (2006) indicate that the logframe under-rates the importance of relationships and human dynamics in the development programmes as it does not highlight the relations, roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders.

3   Purposes of M&E in development programmes

The issues above make clear that there is an increasing awareness that M&E should not only cover the needs for *accountability, control and assessment of results* but also embrace additional purposes such as *learning,   programme improvement, future planning and increasing capacity*.

M&E does not end with data collection and reporting. The process of reflecting and analyzing the results, using the findings for action, improvement and change, assessing the process, recognizing and celebrating accomplishments made are equally important (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997:37). They present six main purposes for M&E in development programmes:

1. Impact Assessment
2. Project Planning & Management
3. Organisational Strengthening & Institutional Learning
4. Understanding & negotiating stakeholder perspective
5. Accountability
6. Policy formulation

Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UF-E) (Patton, 1997: 63-113) – specifically focusing on the intended use of evaluation exercises - distinguishes three main types of evaluations related to the use of its results, i.e. judgement-oriented evaluation, improvement-oriented evaluation and knowledge-creating oriented evaluation.

In addition, UF-E highlights the *process use* of an M&E process referring to the fact that the application of evaluative thinking and being engaged in the process of M&E can be useful in itself such as enhanced shared understandings, supporting & reinforcing the programme intervention, increasing engagement, self-determination & ownership and organizational development.

Defining and discussing the purpose of the M&E is a crucial step in the development of an M&E system. It will directly influence the usefulness of the collected data but also the required M&E approach, the people involved, methods for data collection & analysis and

timeframes. In addition, a reflection on the possible uses fosters new perspectives which can avoid that the M&E process and mechanisms solely focus on the accountability needs.

Acknowledging these extended view on M&E, Vredeseilanden decided, although initially rather intuitively, to rename the monitoring and evaluation system for its programme and organisational processes in *Planning, Learning and Accountability (PLA) system,* exactly to highlight that the M&E needs for VECO go further then the conventional needs of M&E processes towards improved planning & learning processes.

In the next part, I will further explore these three general M&E purposes as it is the backbone for this action research.

4   Planning, Learning & Accountability in/for development

4.1   Planning

4.1.1   Embracing complexity

Planning, designing and implementing development programmes are not linear and predictable and far more complex than the often assumed connections between 'inputs' and 'outputs' (Kaplan, 1999:11-12). Snowden & Boone (2007) state that the nature of the relationship between cause and effect can be four-fold: simple, complicated, complex and in many cases chaotic. In fact, '*development agencies are operating in a mess, …characterized by no clear agreement about exactly what the problem is, uncertainty and ambiguity as to how improvements might be made and being unbounded in terms of the time and resources it could absorb*' (Eyben, 2004:18).

However in reality, planning continues as though it were a predictable process free of internal unpredictable interactions between stakeholders, were certain inputs produce set results to specified time frames (Hinton, 2004). Mintzberg and Quinn (in Britton, 2005:43) confirm that the strategies which are actually realised (implemented) by a development programme are rarely what was originally intended (planned). Outcome Mapping (Earl et al.,2001) introduces therefore the term *Intentional Design* for its planning stage.

It becomes apparent that there is need for planning & management systems which embrace and engage with the real world of mess and paradox (Eyben, 2004:18). The process of a development programme should be no longer a set of activities to be implemented according to a predetermined plan but an evolutionary process consisting of continuous cycles of action, reflection and adaptation (Den Heyer, 2003). This practice resonates with the principles of *adaptive management* (Engel et al., 2006;Loveridge, 2007) in which the M&E process is aimed at '*… developing enabling structures and processes to regularly reassess desired outcomes and learn what strategies work and do not work. These processes shall emphasise collecting and analysing information and reflecting on people's action, interactions and reactions so that capacity development within developing country systems may be better understood'* (Loverigde, 2007:3).

If developed and applied well, M&E has the potential to become the support mechanism to adjust to evolving conditions whereby fine-tuning is no longer perceived as a weakness in planning, but rather as an effective way of responding to change (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003:11). It implies that M&E processes are integrated into the organisation's planning and management cycles (Earl et al., 2001; Horton, 2003; Kaplan, 1999; Ubels et al, 2005). It is suggested that the M&E plan does not only include a logic model - describing the cause-effect hypothesis - but also spells out how the progress towards outputs and outcomes will be measured, which information is required to inform decisions (Rugh, 2007) and which operational procedures & systems are in place to ensure that lessons learned are integrated into the planning cycles (Britton, 1998).

4

4.2 Learning

4.2.1 Learning at the heart of capacity development

According to Britton (2005:8-12), learning mechanisms integrated into M&E processes are the key *to close the gap between M&E and planning.* However, it should not be left to chance (Senge, 1994) and reflective practices promoting self-learning, critical thinking, team building, action planning and experimentation (Horton, 2003; Morgan, 2005:24) should be fostered and seen as an essential feature of adaptive management practice.

It is also grounded in the believe that (organizational) learning – which concepts and practices are developed in the private sector – is leading to an *increased organizational effectiveness* (Britton, 2005:9), *organizational strengthening* through the enhancement of capacities of the participating organisations (Morgan, 2005:24) and *building healthier organizations* (Britton, 2005:11). In addition, learning processes improve the communication and participation among partners which will enhance trust and transparency and ultimately leads towards *stronger partnerships in/for development* (Horton, 2003).

Not only should learning be an essential feature of the M&E process, it also has the potential to provide a framework (Preskill and Torres, 1999) and to be 'the carrier' (Morgan, 2005) for individual and organisational learning.

Many authors state that systematic collection of information is crucial to enhance learning. However, it is all too easy to assume that by gathering information, storing it and making it accessible that we have somehow increased our knowledge and learning (Britton, 2005:9).

It is important that the collected information is useful and relevant for the users (Patton, 1997; Earl et al., 2001). In addition, the programma has to create time, space and mechanisms to facilitate interpretation, analysis, reflection and decision-making (Earl et al., 2001) as well as ensure the necessary conditions and competences to apply the learning mechanisms adequately (Britton, 2005;IFAD, 2002)

Learning can be enhanced by focusing on the *process use* of M&E (Patton, 1997). Process use claims that through their involvement in the M&E process participants acquired new knowledge, developed new skills and changed their attitudes (Horton, 2003:113)

4.2.2 The learning organisation

M&E and learning can not be dealt with in isolation from the organization practice and culture. According to Engel et al. (2006:4), learning in programmes happens at three interlinked levels: individual level, at the level of work processes and learning which touches the core of the organisation, affecting the institutional values and principles.

Therefore, organisational learning and M&E processes should be embedded in the theory and practice of *the Learning Organisation, i.e.* an organisational ideal where learning is maximised (Pasteur, 2004) which can be defined as *' an organization that builds and improves its own practice by consciously and continually devising and developing the means to draw learning from its own (and other's) experience'* (Taylor; 1998:1).

Both Senge (1990, 1994) and Britton (1998, 2005) present three interlinked pillars for developing learning organisations (see table 1) which initiate a strategic approach to learning directly creating the conditions and foundations for an effective and learning-oriented M&E process.

CREATING MOTIVES *Guiding Ideas*	CREATING MEANS *Theory, methods & tools*	CREATING OPPORTUNITIES *Innovations in infrastructure*
1. Support from leadership 2. Develop culture of learning	1. Individual learning competences 2. Guiding conceptual models 3. Methods and tools 4. Specialist support 5. Adequate financial resources	1. OL as a strategic goal 2. Integrating learning into PM&E 3. Knowledge Management Infrastructure 4. Building relationships of trust

Table 1: three building blocks of the learning organisation architecture

4.3 Accountability

4.3.1 Two-way accountability

In the development sector, accountability is probably the most common purpose and use of M&E processes and is associated with reporting systems, justification / control of funds and (impact) measurement. This is enforced by the fact that development agencies are also increasingly under pressure to 'measure' their performance and the results of their development. Anderson (2000) argues that the giving side of the aid relationship is primarily accountable to communities and powers *outside* the development programmes such as donors (upward accountability) and only secondarily, if at all, to insiders and the people who receive aid (downward accountability)

Johnson (2001:8) state two reasons why this is an 'unhealthy' situation: first, the need to maintain funding may create a situation in which development programmes are designed in a way that reflects the needs and preferences of donors, not the beneficiaries. Second, beneficiaries and partners may be placed in a position in which their ability to influence inappropriate or undesirable interventions is limited which undermines efficacy and sustainability.

Blagescu (2006) concludes that the development arena is not characterized by unaccountable organizations, but by organizations that are either accountable to the wrong set of stakeholders or focus their accountability on one stakeholder at the expense of others. Therefore, there is need for a development practice based on *two-way accountability systems (IDS, 2001),* moving away from '*unilateral control to performance measurement and mutual accountability based on agreed standards and collective results*' (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003:86).

A reviewed definition of accountability is suggested (Blagescu et al, 2006) as:

'*the processes through which an organisation makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and activities, and delivers against this commitment'*.

In terms of M&E for acccountability, Lopes and Theisohn (2003: 85) suggest to divide accountability into two main areas: *programmatic* (content, goals,…) and *financial* accountability. And, Starling (2003:12) suggests to give up the fantasy of total control and promotes '*intelligent accountability'* i.e. to identify and recognise what it is most important to monitor because '*at the end of the day, it is better to have approximate information about*

important issues, rather than to have precise data on those that may be irrelevant to human development' (Lopes and Theisohn (2003: 86).

4.4   Conclusion

It becomes clear that the M&E practice is a continuous challenging and balancing act of basically two parallel processes (based on Huyse, 2006) (see figure 1):

1. Ensuring adequate accountability to all relevant stakeholders at all levels, i.e by a *control & 'prove' oriented monitoring loop* in reporting and feedback between different – often vertical - levels of the organisation's system.

2. On the other hand, facilitating learning and improved planning in order to enhance the quality and impact of the work, i.e by a *learning and 'improve' oriented monitoring loop,* mostly within the same organisational level of the programme
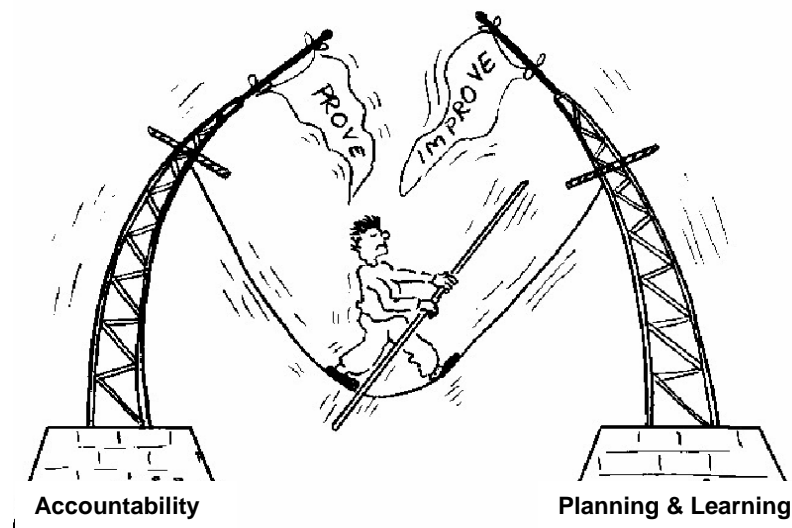

Accountability   **Planning & Learning**

Figure 1: M&E: balancing act (adapted from Earl et al., 2001)

5   Outcome Mapping

Outcome Mapping (OM) is a planning, monitoring & evaluation approach developed by the *International Development Research Centre* (IDRC) in Canada and is designed as an alternative and/or complementary model to the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) with an emphasis on building reflection and learning into (development) programmes.

5.1   Core principles

5.1.1 Boundary Partners

An important assumption underlying OM is that local actors control change. External agents, like development organizations '*only facilitate the process by providing access to new resources, ideas, or opportunities for a certain period of time*' (Earl et al, 2001). Crucial actors in OM framework are the *boundary partners: these are* individuals, groups, or

organisations with whom the programme interacts *directly* and with whom it anticipates *opportunities for influence*. It is assumed that the vision of a programme is achieved through the actions of the boundary partners and the influence they have on the *beneficiaries* - e.g. local farmers. The development organisation - *the implementation team* - facilitates the process by providing access to new resources, ideas or opportunities.

5.1.2 Sphere of influence

Outcome Mapping acknowledges that the desired changes at impact level (=level of the beneficiaries) are not caused by a single intervention or series of interventions by a programme. Figure 2 illustrates the kind of relationship that can be developed between the different actors:

- the programme implementation team has *direct control* over the inputs, activities,... in working with the boundary partners, *but* it can *not control* change at level of its boundary partners and the beneficiairies. The ultimate responsibility rest with the people affected.

- However, it hopes to have *direct influence to or contribute* to changes at the level of its boundary partners, and

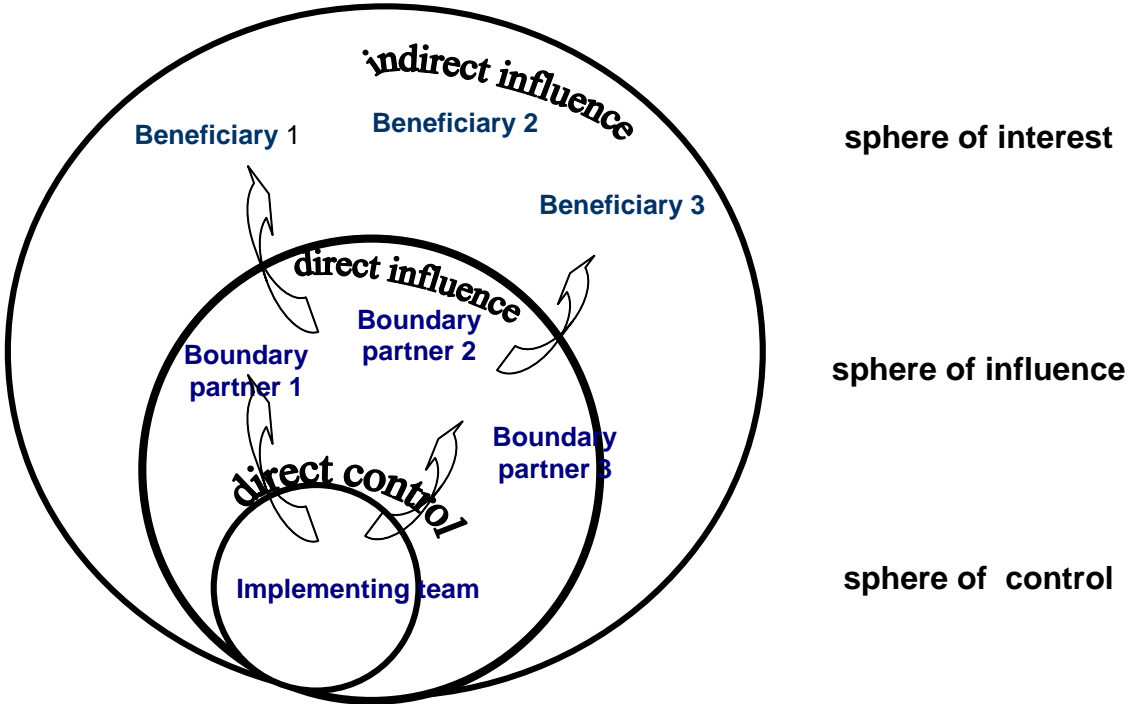- it can only *indirectly influence* change at the level of ultimate beneficiaries (impact)

Figure 2: Circles of influence (source: Montague, 2001) and the sphere of interest, influence and control of the implementing team (source: ODI, 2007)

5.1.3 Focus on Behavioural changes

Another dominant assumption inspiring OM is the idea that development is essentially about people relating to each other and their environments, hence the focus should therefore be on people. It argues that for each change in state, there are correlating changes in behaviour and therefore it is better to plan for and assess their contributions to development by focusing on the changes in behaviour. OM is particularly focusing on one specific type of results, *outcomes as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, actions of people, groups, and organisations with whom the programme works directly*.

In addition, it is inspired by the idea that assessing changes in state (impact) - as in the logframe - not necessarily provide the kind of information and feedback that programmes require to improve their performance and relevance. This is claimed to be particularly true for programmes that focus on capacity building such as VECO Indonesia.

5.1.4 Attribution versus contribution

Outcome Mapping does not attribute outcomes to a single intervention or series of interventions, but looks at the logical links between interventions and behavioural change and how a programme is contributing to that process. OM is not based on a causal framework, rather, it recognises that multiple, non-linear events lead to change. Following this ideas implies that the programme will have to change during the course of an initiative and has to think of itself as a dynamic organisation whose goals, methods, and relationships with partners need to be reconsidered and adjusted regularly (Earl et al., 2001:1-15).

The focus of M&E is therefore on assessing the contributions of a programme to the achievement of outcomes, rather than trying to attribute results to any particular intervention. In this way, the programme takes credit for contributions to the achievement of outcomes, can show progress towards outcomes and obtains feedback about its efforts in order to improve its performance

These ideas have influenced the design of Outcome Mapping. The programme *planning* is done in relation to the broader development context but when it comes to *assessment*, it is focusing on the changes *within the sphere of (direct) influence* of the programme, i.e. M&E focuses at the changes at the level of its boundary partners. "*The intended impact of the program is its guiding light and directional beacon, test of its relevance – it is not the yardstick against which performance is measured*" (Earl et al, 2001:?)

5.2   Outcome Mapping logic and framework

The OM programme framework has three stages (figure 3): the intentional design, the outcome & performance monitoring and the evaluation planning.
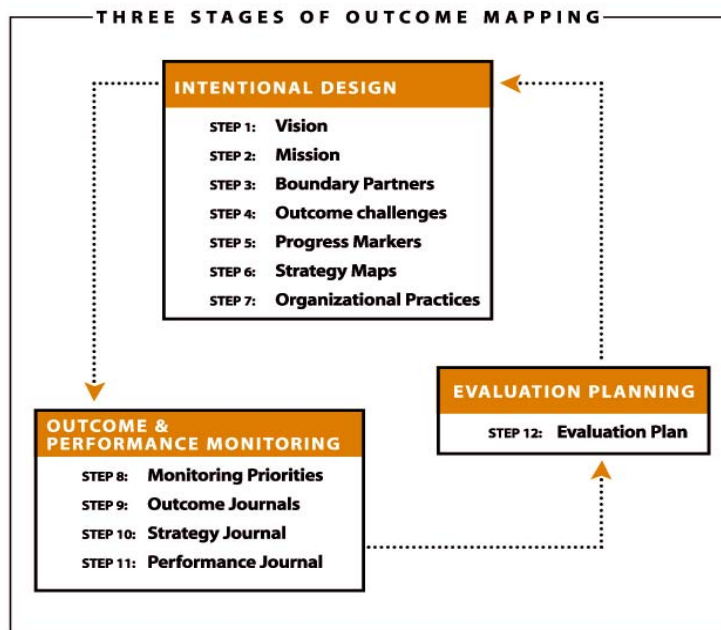
Figure 3: Three stages of Outcome Mapping (source:Earl et al., 2003:4)

5.2.1 Planning – Intentional Design

The planning stage in OM is different from the conventional logframe approach in a number of areas. Planning always starts with a dialogue on the development of a shared vision and a mission for the programme, followed by a stakeholder analysis and an identification of the boundary partners, which forms the basis for the development of outcomes and strategies. The OM programme framework is centered around the behavioral changes – described as an outcome challenge and progress markers - of the boundary partners, and not as such around the desired final change of state (e.g. improved services, products, or infrastructure). By thinking in terms of influencing local actors (boundary partners), instead of replacing them with parallel project units, OM integrates sustainability thinking and capacity development processes directly into the design of the programme. A linear cause and effect relationship, is replaced in OM by a view of development as a complex process that occurs in open systems.

5.2.2 Outcome & performance monitoring

M&E in OM is based on the principles of participatory M&E and utilization-focused evaluation. Outcome Mapping moves away from the notion that M&E is done to a programme, instead it suggest to actively engage the programme team and stakeholders in the design of the M&E framework and promotes self-assessment (Earl et al., 2001:1-15)

Outcome Mapping provides a programme with a continuous system for thinking holistically and strategically about how it intends to achieve results and unites M&E of both the process and outcomes of the programme. E.g. by focusing M&E on the programme's boundary partners, it is possible to obtain useful feedback about the programme's performance and results within its sphere of influence. On the other hand, it monitors and evaluates whether a programme has contributed to changes in behaviours in a way that would be logically consistent with supporting development changes in the future. Therefore, programs get credit not only for being present when a major development change occurs, but for their ongoing contributions to that change (Earl et al., 2001:1-15).

The monitoring process is centered around a ongoing and systematic information collection around three key areas of the programme:

1. Changes in behaviour of the boundary partners

2. The strategies of the programme implementing team

3. The organisational performance/functioning of the programme team

5.2.3 Evaluation Planning

The third step helps the programme identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan. It outlines the evaluation issue, the ways findings will be used, the questions, the information sources, the evaluation methods, the evaluation team, the timeframe and costs (Earl et al., 2001:115). Although evaluation is primarily done to meet accountability needs, Outcome Mapping suggests that evaluation exercises should be used to generate new knowledge, support learning, question assumptions, plan and motivate future activities, or build the analytical capacity of the actors involved.

6   Intentional Design

In line with the aspiration of Vredeseilanden to apply a more learning-oriented planning and M&E system - integrated into the management processes of the organisation and its programme - it was decided (January 2007) to use Outcome Mapping as the guiding approach for the development of the new programme 2008-2013 and its M&E process.

6.1   Excitement and confusion

The intentional design stage was facilitated by a series of activities involving different actors such as a strategic planning workshop, an OM training, two OM workshops for programme & management staff, a donor meeting, an OM workshop with partner organisations, management team meetings, ongoing support from a regional OM consultant and coordination from the programme management unit at head office. It resulted in a programme proposal document – based on OM - for the VECO Indonesia programme 2008-2013 (August 2007)

During the intentional design process, following aspects required an in-depth analysis and decision-taking.

First - as the OM manual clearly - OM is best applied once the strategic directions of the programme are set. VECO Indonesia already launched a strategic trajectory in 2006 during which the major strategic choices were taken (clear focus on SACD and advocacy, working through local partnerships, an improved and more focused partner-mix and becoming a learning organisation). The strategic trajectory was concluded with a final strategic planning workshop which kick-started the intentional design and which set the necessary strategic boundaries within which the OM programmatic framework could be developed. Some VECO offices embarked on the OM process without prior or insufficient strategic direction setting. However, very early in the process, i.e. during the formulation of the vision, the mission and the identification of the boundary partners, participants were trapped in basic strategic questions. This lead to less focused & coherent outputs for the first stages of the intentional design, fast-track strategic decision-taking as well as confusing dynamics and often heated debates.

During the last decade, VECO Indonesia supported mainly local NGO's in Indonesia towards improved livelihoods for organised family farmers. Because of the new directions of the

programme, VECO realised that new types of partner organisation should enter the partner-mix. OM turned out to be very helpful through its concept of boundary partners as crucial actors in the programme framework and resulted in the selection of new partners and an *improved partner-mix* (see later) for VECO.

Although VECO Indonesia has worked through partners for a long time, its initial logframe-based planning and M&E process was mainly focusing on the changes at the level of the organised farmers (e.g. 30% of total farmer households adopt LEISA techniques & innovations in their agricultural practices). Accordingly, the main support interventions of VECO were directed towards achieving these changes *together* with the partner in which the roles & responsibilities of both VECO and the partner were not clearly defined. However, in the later stages of the previous programme, VECO changed the programme framework, including M&E, by defining expected results at the level of the local NGO's (e.g. successfully facilitate farmer groups, develop as effective organisations, establish and build alliances, …). This emerging approach resonated well with Outcome Mapping and the focus on the behavioural changes of the boundary partners. It resulted in a rather smooth process of defining outcome challenges and progress markers, in a first stage formulated by programme officer, later negotiated and adapted together with representatives of the different boundary partners.

The idea of *'planning for the broader development context, but assess within the sphere of influence'* led to some discussions related to impact, measurement, downward accountability and concerns about loosing contact with the grass-roots and fears of moving away from our core business, i.e. improving the life of organised farmers. The fact that the desired changes were not clearly described as objectives, results and indicators made many people in the organisation uncomfortable. Hence, Vredeseilanden decided that proving and communicating about the changes in the life of organised farmers as an intended result of VECO's work, was a crucial element for its internal and public accountability. In a later stage, this was reinforced by the fact that the main donor – through the imposed logframe-based proposal format – also expected an inclusion of this level of changes.

Furthermore, the reflection, analysis and decisions about the new role of VECO Indonesia as supporter of specific partner organisations, will probably lead to the biggest changes in the organisation and future programme. First of all, an analysis of the existing strategies (VECO Indonesia, 2007a; VECO Indonesia, 2007b) spelled out that VECO Indonesia's major strategies are: providing funds, facilitating training and workshop for partner organisations (on e.g. LEISA, marketing, OSID, …) and assist partners in organising their programme activities for organised farmers. However, by reflecting on a wider scope of strategies for capacity development of partner organisation - based on the framework for strategy maps provided by OM – VECO realised that more strategies might be needed in support of the new programme. Additional strategies which are seen as crucial for the new programme are *facilitating multi-stakeholder processes, facilitate market chain assessments, generate and document evidence and lessons learned, tailor-made capacity building, provision of market information and networking.*

Additional roles and strategies require additional competencies and organisational conditions (staff, organisational structure, procedures, infrastructure…). Again, OM was very instrumental in bringing up and making VECO aware of the necessary challenges as well as in providing input in the organisational change process.

Over-all, OM was chosen as the guiding framework to design the new VECO Indonesia programme. However, because of its particular logic and set-up it initially facilitated critical self-reflection on the previous and existing programme objectives, approach, structure and assumptions on which the programme was based. This is itself was already a valuable process and clearly shows the potential of OM to be used as assessment tool in addition to programme design.

OM is emphasising other & new aspects in programme management (focus on actors and behavioural changes, more process & learning- oriented, un-packing the capacity

development process, …). In fact, OM is built on another paradigm. If adopted as a guiding framework, it is not just a 'panel beating' job but more of an 'engine overhaul' which requires not only a mind-shift of the people involved but also induces changes at organisational and operational level such as the programme management approach, the M&E process, operational planning, budgeting, programme structures & procedures, job profiles, etc. Therefore, it became clear in VECO Indonesia and Vredeseilanden that it is crucial to install OM champions in the organisation, provide specialist support, create space to continuously communicate and internally promote the OM logic and move step by step into the integration process.

6.2   Twisting the models

Outcome Mapping, to my knowledge, is seldom applied in its pure form as presented in the manual. Programmes seriously considering to apply OM, mostly go through a phase of 'customising' the methodology to fit the specific context and to comply with internal and external requirements.

In the case of VECO Indonesia, the most important factor is the donor requirement to use a logframe-based format for the programme proposal and future reporting. However, as Vredeseilanden made the strategic choice to develop a more learning-oriented programme management approach, it decided to continue in developing an OM-based programme framework. This induced an intensive process of 'bricolage' to integrate two models which seemingly have some unmatchable elements in their design:

- The underlying paradigms between the two models are very different;
- The language used is different with hardly any resonance in the meaning of the terms used;
- The programme logic and structure of the two frameworks do not match;
- The focus on changes at beneficiaries level vs changes at boundary partners;
- The focus on specific objective & intermediate results vs the focus on actors and respective behavioural changes;
- The use of progress markers vs the use of indicators.

Three major factors assisted in succeeding to develop a pragmatic and workable integrated model, although it resulted in a twisted version of the logframe and OM framework (see figure 4).

1. The donor requirement that the specific objective level in the logframe should focus on the changes of the beneficiaries (impact) while the intermediate results should describe the desired results at the level of the partner organisations;

2. The OM framework is build around the 4 core focus areas of Vredeseilanden translated in the logframe as the specific objectives. The specific objectives describe the changes at the level of the beneficiaries with respective indicators. In this way the measurement of impact is integrated in the OM framework through the M&E process.

3. The decision to develop an OM framework for each of the 4 objectives implied that each of the intermediate results per respective objectives (in the logframe) relates to the outcome challenge of a specific boundary partner (for that objective). The respective indicators are added to the list of progress markers as to guarantee inclusion in the data collection process and M&E process for future reporting.
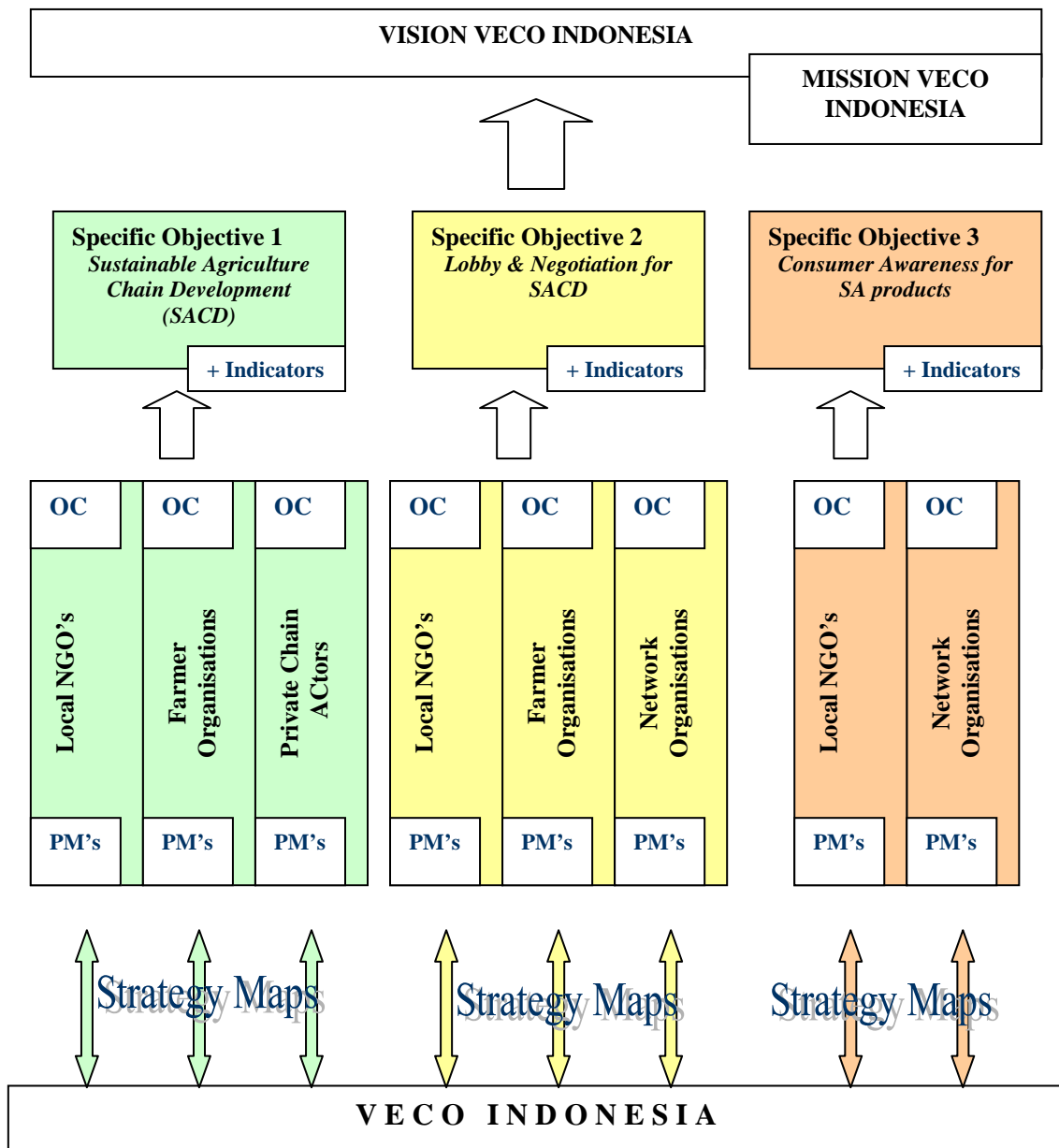
Figure 4: Outcome Mapping Programme Framework VECO Indonesia

It might appear that VECO Indonesia is seemingly using two programme models for the same programme which might lead to a 'schizophrenic' planning and M&E practice. However, VECO Indonesia takes a pragmatic approach to this and views the OM framework as the core framework on which the management of the programme will be based while the logframe is only viewed as the compulsory reporting format to the donor and not as the basis for the planning and M&E process.

6.3   Organisational practices as progress markers

Vredeseilanden aims to integrate learning into VECO's organisational practice and culture which is planned for and described in objective 4 of the programme framework. It reflects the developmental process of VECO Indonesia and its partners towards becoming a learning organisation. In OM, these elements are normally integrated in the organisational practices of the programme team. However, as Vredeseilanden integrated it as one of its core objectives, a respective OM framework was developed. This implied an outcome challenge describing the ideal changes for VECO Indonesia with respective progress markers.

6.4   Outcome Mapping logic for the wider organisation

The OM approach did not only provide a framework for the management of the different country programmes of Vredeseilanden. It also inspired the over-all management of programmes by head office and the relation with the management and support services. Figure 5 shows the different relations and connections in Vredeseilanden (based on OM logic).
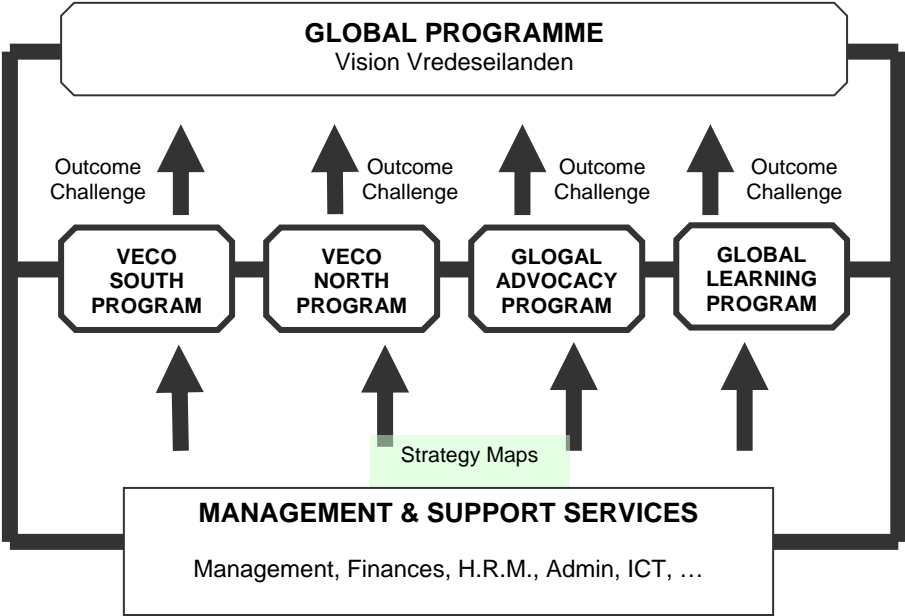

Figure 5: Outcome Mapping framework of Vredeseilanden

7 Developing a PLA system for VECO Indonesia

VECO Indonesia chose OM as a guiding framework as it has through its particular design the potential of developing a more learning-oriented planning and M&E process. Therefore VECO Indonesia invests in developing a practical and useful - OM-based - M&E framework which supports the *planning & management process* of VECO Indonesia, facilitates the organisational *learning processes* of VECO Indonesia and fulfills the *accountability requirements* of VECO Indonesia.

7.1 An action-research approach

VECO Indonesia took an action learning/research approach for the development of this PLA system. i.e. a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by VECO Indonesia in order to improve the rationality of practitioners' own practices, the understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:162).

This action research process is built up around the 7 gradual steps which guide the design of the PLA system and will be carried out in a period of approximately 10 months. Throughout the process different actors participate at relevant times: the staff of the Learning & Information Management Section (coordinating the development process), Programme Officers, Management staff of VECO Indonesia, representatives of VECO's partner organisations and staff from Vredeseilanden Head Office.

The inquiry & reflection process, drawing conclusions and the adjustment of the process and the M&E framework are integrated into the existing planning & management activities at VECO level such as planning meetings, bi-annual reflection moments, budget meetings, management and section meetings. In addition, specific events were organised such as M&E workshops, focus group discussion, a global VECO PLA workshop and a Community of Practice - *PLA Forum VECO* – for VECO staff worldwide. In addition, furter data is generated through observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

7.2 Guiding M&E frameworks & approaches

It is commonly accepted by OM practitioners that the M&E part of the Outcome Mapping methodlogy - compared to the intentional design stage - is less developed. However, as Outcome Mapping is based on the principles of *Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation* (PM&E) and *Utilization-focused evaluation* (UF-E) (Earl et al., 2001), VECO Indonesia drew from the theory and practice of these M&E approaches. In addition, it included ideas presented and discussed during an OM workshop exploring new directions for M&E in OM (Guijt & Ortiz, 2007).

7.2.1 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)

In a response to conventional M&E approaches, PM&E has emerged to make M&E more responsive and appropriate to people's needs and real life contexts. PM&E aims to incorporate beneficiaries and project participants in the M&E process itself. The emphasis is shifted away from externally controlled data-seeking programmes towards the recognition of locally relevant processes for gathering, analyzing and using information. The key principles guiding PM&E are *participation, learning, negotiation and flexibility* (Estrella & Gaventa:16-27)*.* Figure 6 shows the key differences between conventional and participatory M&E. The latter clearly resonating with the aspirations of an OM-based M&E process.

	Box 3.2 Differences between conventional and participatory evaluation	
	Conventional	**Participatory**
Who	External experts	Community members, project staff, facilitator
What	Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs	People identify their own indicators of success, which may include production outputs
How	Focus on 'scientific objectivity'; distancing of evaluators from other participants; uniform, complex procedures; delayed, limited access to results	Self-evaluation; simple methods adapted to local culture; open, immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation processes
When	Usually upon completion of project/programme; sometimes also mid-term	More frequent, small-scale evaluations
Why	Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues	To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action

Source: Narayan-Parker 1993: 12

Figure 6: Differences between conventional and participatory evaluation

7.2.2 Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UF-E)

UF-E (Patton, 1997) begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. *Use* concerns how real people in the real world apply M&E findings and experience the M&E process. Therefore the focus in UF-E is on *the intended use by intended users.* Often decision makers, program officers, and evaluators devote little or no attention to intended uses prior to data collection. In contrast, UF-E works with intended users to determine priority uses early in the evaluation process. The agreed-on, intended uses then become the basis for subsequent design decisions (Patton, 1997:64).

7.2.3 Organisational spaces and rhythms

'*We should ensure that M&E becomes a ribbon of rhythm drawn through organisational learning processes. Such a rhythm should be natural to the culture, systems, procedures, structures and processes of organisations*' (CDRA, 2006:31)

Guijt &Ortiz (2007) proposed a 2nd generation OM approach which specifically emphasises on the learning dimension of M&E. They argue that data as such is not the starting point of the M&E system. In line with UF-E, its starts with the identification of the learning purposes (or M&E purposes) of the intended M&E process and the respective *'spaces & rhythms' of the organisation* or programme which are key for learning, sharing, debate and decision-making. The spaces are defined as the formal and informal meetings & events which bring organisations and programmes to life. Rhythms are patterns in time, the regular activities or processes which provide a structure-in-time, through which it can direct, mobilise and regulate its efforts, i.e. the regular weekly, monthly, annual activities that mark tempo of organisational functioning (Reeler, 2001 in Guijt & Ortiz, 2007).

7.3   Seven steps to build an M&E framework

Based on the practice of PM&E (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997; Guijt, 1998; Horton et al., 2003; IFAD, 2002) and the Utilisation-Focused Evaluation flow chart (Patton, 1997:380) as well as discussions at an OM workshop (Guijt & Ortix, 2007), a seven step model is used to facilitate the inquiry and development process of the M&E framework. The seven steps - each consisting of a set of guiding questions - are:

1. Defining the purposes and the scope of the M&E process

2. Identify the spaces & rhythms of the organisation

3. Identify M&E questions and respective information needs

4. Plan for data collection, storing & synthesis

5. Plan for analysis, critical reflection and decision-making

6. Plan for documenting, reporting and sharing M&E results

7. Assess and plan for necessary capacities and organisational conditions

Although a 'one-step-at-the-time' logic might be assumed, in reality the process is seldom linear nor simple (Patton, 1997:380) and unfolds through different, often simultaneous, inquiry and reflection processes. As Kemmis & McTaggart (2000: 567) argue, this is typical for action research and the criteria of success is not whether the participants have followed the steps faithfully but whether they have an authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings of their practices and the situations in which they practice.

8 Intermediate results & lessons learned

This part emphasises at the intermediate results and lessons learned of the first three steps of the action research development process.

8.1 M&E purposes & uses

As planning, learning & accountability are seen as the key M&E purposes of VECO Indonesia, the discussions and reflections on the use and users was centred aorund these three elements. A first focus group discussion (August 2007) with VECO Indonesia programme and management staff kick-started the process and resulted in a consensus on the main M&E purposes and key intended uses as well as the respective users (table 3)

By focusing on the over-all uses and their respective users, the team also realised that the scope of the PLA system and its respective M&E framework moved beyond the typical programme monitoring as proposed by Outcome Mapping.

Additonal aspects which entered the PLA system were the more systematic monitoring and evaluation of:

- Financial management, services and budget;

- Quality of the VECO partnerships;

- Management & organisational proceses such as structures, procedures, staff, communication and systems.

In addition, it included an organisational learning trajectory (action learning process) focusing on some specific topics such as SACD, adocacy, gender mainstreaming and facilitating multi-stakeholder processes in cooperation with VECO Vietnam and VECO Laos.

8.2 Organisational spaces and rhythms

If M&E is to foster and facilitate organisational learning in the programme –as intended by VECO Indonesia - its process has to be embedded in these organisational spaces & rhythms which are key for debate, sharing, learning and decision-making (Guijt & Ortiz, 2007). It implies that M&E processes are built into the regular organisational processes as to become integral to the thinking and doing of the organisation and which create spaces that allow for

people to express themselves and shape their experiences in way that can be shared (CDRA:24-25, 2006).

An analysis of the existing organisational spaces (events) and rhythms (frequency) in VECO Indonesia - related to the main M&E purposes - was carried out (see table 3). However, a further investigation on the efficiency of the events (spaces) and the timeframes (rhythm) is required. There are different reasons why the existing organisational spaces and rhythms might change: the aspirations of the new PLA system, limitations & timeframe of the data collection process and other external factors such as deadlines donors and new emerging spaces & rhythms at Vredeseilanden global level.

8.3   Information needs

A next and crucial step in the development of the M&E framework is the identification of the information needs, i.e. what are the M&E questions and the respective specific infornation needs? (IFAD,2002). The OM logic and framework provide directions. Its M&E process is focusing on the programme's boundary partners - through outcome journals/progress markers - to obtain useful feedback about the programme's performance and results within its sphere of influence. In addition, it focuses on how the programme has contributed - through the strategy journal/strategy maps - to the changes in behaviour and also looks at the functioning (vialbility and relevance) of the programme team - through performance journal/organisational practices (Earl et al., 2001:1-15) (see figure 7).
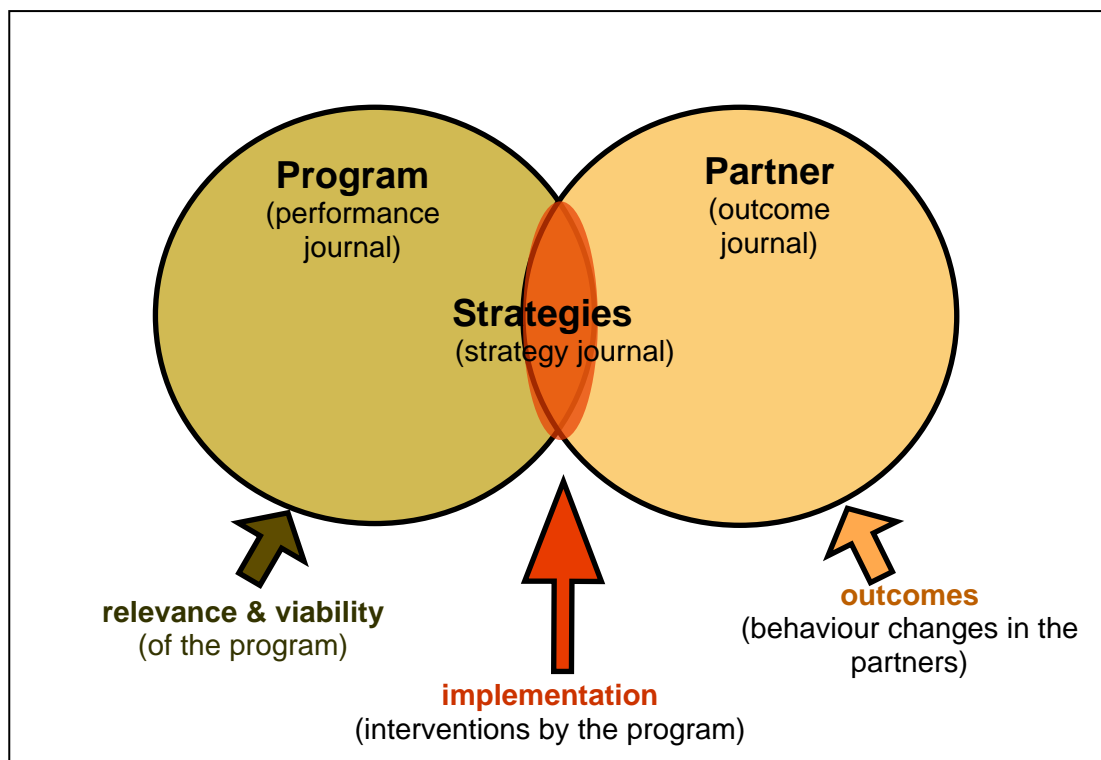

Figure 7: core elements of M&E in Ouctome Mapping (source:ODI (2007))

The M&E questions which reflect what the users want to know are, in my opinion, reflected by the progress markers (PM's) and strategy maps (SM's) developed in the intentional design[1]. However, for effective collection of data that generates useful and relevant information to reflect upon, it is recommended to discuss and identify the specific information needs for the PM's and SM's (see table 2). In addition, in the case of VECO Indonesia, the

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[1] VECO Indonesia did not formulate organisational practices since its elements are included in objective 4 of the VECO Indonesia programme framework.

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programme framework is built around 4 objectives with respective indicators (logframe) which also induce specific information needs to be included in the M&E process.

PROGRESS MARKER *VECO Indonesia expects to see local NGO's…*	SPECIFIC INFORMATION NEED
1. Facilitate local farmers to get organized in platforms, fora or farmer organizations at village, inter-village and district level.	1.1. How many organized farmersgroups (platsforms, fora, ...) and farmer organizations are facilitated by the local NGO's per VECO Indonesia working area?
	1.2 How many members have these organised farmer group (platforms, fora, …) and farmer organisations?
	1.3 At which level are the organised farmers and farmer organisations working (village, inter-village or district)?
2. Become active member in relevant existing local NGO networks	2.1 In which local NGO/CSO networks is the local NGO involved? Number of networks local NGO is involved in?
3. Establish and maintain relationship with government	3.1 With which local government departments/people do local NGO's have good and regular contacts
	3.2 What are the forms of cooperation between the local NGO's and local government?

Table 2: extract of progress markers of local NGO's supporting the advocacy programme of VECO

As it became clear that the identification and formulation of progress markers and strategy maps is heavily affecting the further M&E process, VECO Indonesia organised a PLA/OM workshop with representatives from the different boundary partners in order to clarify and agree upon the programme objectives and mutual expectations, reflected in the PM's and SM's. As a result, PM's and SM's were revised and prioritised further. In addition, participants identified the specific information needs for the prioritised PM's and SM's which asssisted in keeping focus, clarifying expectations and screening whether it was actually possible – and how easy it was - to collect the required data.

As Outcome Mapping (Earl et al., 2001) argues that the PM's and SM's will evolve over time and can be adjusted during the implementation of the programme to ensure relevancy of the programme efforts (as opposed to indicators in the logframe), implies that this process will not only take place during the planning stage but will be included in the ongoing M&E process.

Allthough this prioritsation process was succesful and useful, there was still a tendency to monitor all the remaining PM's and SM's. However, participants agreed that this would lead to a heavy data collection process which might undermine the usefulness and the learning process. It seemed that participants found it difficult to prioritise 'must-know' from 'nice-to-know' PM's and SM's. One of reasons was that the prioritisation process was disconnected from the previous step - organisational spaces and rhythms – whereby the identification of information needs was divorced from its actual use.

Guijt & Ortiz (2007) argue that linking the key organisational events with the respective information needs will lead to a more focused and use-oriented data collection process. In some cases a general sense of the patterns of behaviours might be sufficient (a macro view), for example for general learning and decision-making. In other cases a detailed understanding on specific behaviours is required (micro view), for example for contractual requirements, quantitative data, deepening the understanding or in the case of VECO Indonesia, for non-negotiable progress markers such as those linked to the indicators in the logframe.

Therefore, in conclusion of step 3 of the process, there was a review of each M&E purpose/use to identify when and where which type and which level of information is required (table 3a,3b and 3c), which will lead to a selection of the relevant PM's and SM's and the

depth of data collection. Furthermore, this step also assured the inclusion of necessary information requirements which are not generated by the OM process.

8.4 Further steps

Based on this important 'groundwork', a detailed plan for data collection, reflection & analysis, documenting, sharing results and ensuring necessary organisational and staff capacities (step 4 to 6) will be developed in a collective 'action-research mode'. The process will be concluded with focus group and personal interviews to generate further 'learnings' as well as to assess the potential of the M&E framework to develop as an effective and useful planning, learning and accountability system.

PLANNING				
INTENDED USE	**MAIN USERS**	**ORGANISATIONAL SPACES**	**RHYTHM**	**TYPE OF INFORMATION NEEDED**
<u>Programme management & short-term planning</u> ▪ To assist operational planning and budgetting ▪ To adjust short-term planning ▪ To support operational programmatic decision-taking	Management team Programme Section Finance section	Management team meetings Programme section meetings Operational planning & budget meetings Budget control & review meetings	monthly monthly 1x/year Every 3 months	Detailed plan strategy maps + activities per objective, per field office and per boundary partner Detailed overview expenditure per objective, per field office and per boundary partner
<u>Strategic planning</u> ▪ strategic planning and direction setting	Vredeseilanden Headoffice Management Team Partner Organisations	Executive meeting Vredeseilanden (global) Management team meetings	1x/year monthly	General changes at level boundary partners General pattern of main support strategies General overview main achievements & progress Over-all lessons learned

Table 3a: M&E for planning: intended uses, users, spaces, rhythms and information needs VECO Indonesia (draft)

LEARNING				
INTENDED USE	**MAIN USERS**	**ORGANISATIONAL SPACES**	**RHYTHM**	**TYPE OF INFORMATION NEEDED**
<u>Programme improvement</u> ▪ To understand the strenghts and weaknesses of the programme and VECO Indonesia ▪ To develop and improve programme strategies & interventions	Programme Section Partner Organisations Beneificiaries	Programme section meetings Partner meetings at district level National partner meetings Learning & reflection week (B3) Management team meeting Executive meeting Vredeseilanden (global)	Monthly 1x/year 1x/year 2x/year 1x/year Monthly	Over-all programme changes: - main changes/challenges at the level of boundary partners (OC's-PM's) - main intervention strategies VECO Indonesia (SM's) - main changes/challenges at level of VECO) Indonesia (OC-PM's VECO Indonesia)
<u>Organisational learning & knowledge creation</u> ▪ To gain understanding and knowledge about SACD, advocacy, gender mainstreaming, multi-stakeholder processes, partnerships, ... ▪ To document and share knowledge internally and externally ▪ Policy formulation at VECO level ▪ To gather information/knowledge for evidence building of the advocacy programme ▪	Management team Programme section Partner Organisations Publication/document ation team	Learning & reflection week (B3) National partner meetings Executive meeting Publication meetings & process Regional Learning Initiative (ReLi - Asia) Global Advocacy Programme Learning Alliance Programme (global) on alternative business models	2x/year 1x/year 1x/year Ongoing Not known yet Not known yet Not known yet	Data/experiences/evidence/stories from the field Data/experiences/evidence/stories in relation to the respective regional or global programme
<u>Enhanced understanding & negotiation partners</u>	Programme Section Partner Organisations	Partner meetings at district level National partner meetings	2x/year 1x/year	Main changes/challenges at the level of boundary partners (OC's-PM's) Main intervention strategies VECO Indonesia (SM's)

Table 3b: M&E for learning: intended uses, users, spaces, rhythms and information needs VECO Indonesia (draft)

ACCOUNTABILITY				
INTENDED USE	**MAIN USERS**	**ORGANISATIONAL SPACES**	**RHYTHM**	**TYPE OF INFORMATION NEEDED**
Progammatic accountability ▪ To measure the results of the ▪ programme in relation to the desired ▪ objectives ▪ to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact of VECO indonesia's programme & interventions ▪ To document & report on progress & results to donors, partners, pubic, government, ...	Vredeseilanden Head Office Management Team Programme Section Partner Organisations Beneficiaries (farmers)	Partner proposal assessment process Partner activity reporting process End of year programme & management team meeting Annual report (logframe) process to donors Annual (popular) report process to public, partners, government, ... External impact assessment & studies	1x/year 2x/year 1x/year 1x/year 1x/year Every 3 year	Over-all plan + detailed action plan (PM's) partners Detailed report on activities partners Over-all overview of main achievements & progress (based on detailed information indicators objectives & results logframe =non-nogotiable PM's as well as macro view on selected PM's/SM's) Detailed information about non-negotiable progress markers linked to indicators logframe Over-all overview of main achievements & progress Information needs in line with TOR assessment or study
Financial accountability ▪ To prove sound financial management ▪ To compile donor reports ▪ To compile annual report for partners, public, government, ...	Vredeseilanden Head office Management team Finance team Programme Section Publication/document ation team	Partner proposal assessment process Expenditure reporting partners Management team meetings External Financial audit Financial reporting process to donors Annual (popular) reporting process to partners, pubic, government	1x/year monthly monthly 1x/year 1x/year 1x/year	Detailed financial information - Action plan + budget + expenditures partners - Operational programme costs per objective, per field office, , per strategy, per partner, ... - Management & overhead costs ...

Table 3c: M&E for learning: intended uses, users, spaces, rhythms and information needs VECO Indonesia (draft)

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