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1. Definitions of an M&E System

The 'M&E System' is a commonly used term- can it be broken down to provide a better understanding of an M&E system is? The fact that we use the term system means there are critical parts or constituents, which individually would not function effectively but when put together achieves what the system was set up for. If you agree with me on this assumption, then what is an M&E system? What are the constituents of this system?

Tito Matafeni

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As you've rightly stated, a system is a set of components that form a 'whole'.

The important construct in systems thinking is that these same components when they do form this 'whole' then display properties which are of the 'whole' rather than the sum of the properties of the individual components.

In my view, in M&E the critical focus is on a system that 'acquires information for decision-making'.

Again, in my view, the following will form the key family of components in any M&E system:

- people (producers and users of information, as well as organizational structures)
- procedures (rules/know-how/practices that facilitate information gathering, processing and dissemination)
- data (meaningful items of explicit and implicit knowledge)
- technology (hardware/software/communications/infrastructure/journals/publication formats).

As such, one may define an M&E system as a collection of people, procedures, data and technology that interact to provide timely information for authorized decision-makers.

This definition is a modification of the definition IT professionals will give for an information system. It isn't perfect but it's adequate.

Dan Onyeje

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For me, the M&E system means:

- a Logframe (or a similar doc) having clearly defined OVIs and MOV
- tools for data collection
- database for data storage and management e.g. relational access-based database
- guidelines and plan for data collection and data analysis
- reporting system for reflection and learning

Tri Ha

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I see an M&E system as a type of what I call 'outcomes system' - there are many of these systems with different names (e.g. performance management system, results management system, accountability system, managing for outcomes, etc.)

There are five 'building-blocks' of such systems all good systems should have, which are:

1. An outcomes model - (a logic model, logframe, results chain etc which set out what it is that you think will affect what to achieve results)
2. Tracking measurements of the things within the outcomes model (which can be measured)
 - their mere measurement does not mean that that proves that a particular program

- improved them (called not-necessarily demonstrable indicators (also called state or environmental indicators some times).
3. Demonstrable indicators which by being measured are taken as having been caused by a particular program (often down at the outputs level).
 4. Outcome/impact evaluations which are more one-off evaluations which attempt to prove that a particular program improved high-level outcomes
 5. Non-outcome/impact evaluation which does not try to prove that a particular program improved high-level outcomes but just attempts to describe programs (process evaluation) or improve programs (formative evaluation).

This is all set out in the article here:

<http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/the-five-building-blocks-of-outcomes/2m7zd68aaz774/27>

In particular look at the five 'building-blocks' diagram in the article.

Paul Duignan

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Describing a system is an exercise in modelling (especially for the less tangible elements). In systems thinking you have to be certain whether you're describing a 'dynamic complexity' (involving relationships) or a 'detail complexity' (concerning only structure or anatomy).

For instance, if I were talking about "mobility/transport system", I'd be as interested in the qualifications and behaviour of the driver as I would be in the anatomy of the vehicle. Why? Because such a system has dynamic complexity. The driver's input or ability to make inputs has overriding influence on outcome. So also an M&E system (the human element is overriding).

A description of an M&E system that focuses only on the tools and approaches used by M&E workers does not fully represent a functioning M&E system in terms of dynamic complexity.

I have always maintained that the elements (people, procedures, data and technology/tools) of the M&E system as I described below is only a minimum set. But it is a minimum set that is almost complete. A significant omission is MONEY (which I always include when my audience includes top managers or political office holders).

An alternative approach to describing an M&E system is to list all those elements you would give a critical look when asked to assess an M&E system. For example, Health Metrics Network (a WHO-based NGO) lists the following elements when assessing a health-based M&E system: information system resources (policies, personnel, leadership, budget and equipment), indicators, data sources, data management, information products, information dissemination & use [in the order listed!].

However I consider this to be merely an elaboration of the definition I had given earlier.
Dan Onyeje

2. M&E Online Training

There are a number of free on line classes here:

<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/training.html>

Some of these are short, one time classes, but a few are semester long, like this one Areol, action research and evaluation:

<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/areol/areolhome.html>

Gene Shackman

Some additional M&E Resources

M&E Short Cuts and Field Friendly Modules

CRS (Catholic Relief Services) and American Red Cross recently completed a series entitled M&E Short Cuts. Each edition is a few pages in length, and is available in English, French and Spanish.

The topics covered are designed to respond to field identified needs

for specific guidance and tools that did not appear to be readily available in existing publications. Program managers as well as M&E specialists are the intended audience.

The Short Cuts series provides a ready reference tool for people who may have used the full modules (French and Spanish versions to be posted shortly), those who simply need a refresher in the subject, or those who want to fast-track particular skills.

The topics covered include:

- 1 Preparing for an Evaluation
- 2 Managing and Implementing an Evaluation
- 3 Reporting and Communicating on an Evaluation
- 4 Writing Human Interest Stories for M&E
- 5 Monitoring and Evaluation Planning
- 6 Using Indicator Performance Tracking Tables
- 7 Hiring M&E Staff
- 8 M&E and Ethics
- 9 Capacity-Building Guidance
- 10 M&E Planning

Both the modules and the Short Cuts series can be found at:

<http://crs.org/publications/list.cfm?sector=19>

and

<http://www.redcross.org>

Both the Short Cuts series and the longer modules were produced under the respective USAID/Food for Peace Institutional Capacity Building Grants to CRS and American Red Cross. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the USAID or FFP. Although both the Short Cuts series and longer modules focus on Title II programming, it is hoped that the both will have value beyond just the food-security realm.

Reflective Peacebuilding: Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit
CRS and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies has also produced a toolkit on M&E for those engaged in peacebuilding initiatives.

This is available at:

<http://crs.org/publications/list.cfm?sector=8>.

Undertaking M&E-related activity in a consortium

As a collaborative initiative, The Consortium Alignment Framework for Excellence (CAFE) assists agencies to improve their ability to form strong consortium that respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and meet donor requirements while strengthening the relationship between them. The focus of CAFE is to make the managerial, financial, and administrative functions of a consortium effective, efficient, and supportive of project goals, community needs, and donor intent. CRS staff and partners working in consortium, with input from headquarters staff with consortium responsibilities developed CAFE.

This document is available at:

<http://crs.org/publications/list.cfm?sector=23>

Kind regards,
Guy Sharrock

3. UCP/V Analysis

In its move from the traditional project based intervention to program approach, CARE International in Ethiopia has identified three impact groups. The next step is to conduct a UCP/V

analysis to understand more the root causes of the problems of these groups and ultimately define our programme/s. "UCP/V analysis" stands for Underlying Causes of Poverty/Vulnerability

There are a number of qualitative and quantitative methods/tools that will help us to make the assessment. What I would like to ask the group is, from the practical point of view, which tools are more effective for the purpose? What caution do we need to take to get reliable info? Some colleagues are suggesting balancing the qualitative and quantitative data collection. Some are bias towards the qualitative one (I am one of them). What is your thought in this regard?

Asnakew Assefa

~

Your questions to all regarding assessment to find out the root cause seems simple but it is tricky to answer it. As we all know that there are different schools of thought in relation to how/what can be collected data that are close to the truth.

What I believe that there is not concrete rule and regulation that can be solely applied in the field. Coming to your question, I would suggest to use qualitative study using Focus Group Discussion, in depth Interviews and few observation. It helps to dig up the root causes and these three combinations also help to triangulate the information which is often neglected.

After qualitative study, if you feel to have some information to support specific findings, you can conduct quantitative study. I am also supporting the balance of qualitative and quantitative study but I am more focusing on qualitative because so far I understand, the study will be focused on certain beneficiaries than whole population.

Sanjay Rijal

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To my experiences, there are pros and cons of both methods. What types of method you would use will depend on what types of data you want to collect. If you want to collect "why, how and cause and effects" types of information, it would be good to use qualitative methods. If you need to collect, on the other hand, information on quantitative indicators, and generalise your findings to a district or region or for certain groups of beneficiaries, it would be good to use quantitative techniques. I personally do not see the need to be biased to any, which is often the case with many of us development professionals, as both methods are complementary to each other. I would suggest using a balance approach depending on the nature of information you would like to collect. For UCP analysis, (if i am not mistaken, does this refer to underlying causes of poverty model which the CARE often uses?) , MAY BE you may need to use more qualitative methods.

Dinesh

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Actually qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are not two distinct schools of thoughts! Both should be complimentary to each other.

While considering your objective, that is, finding out the root cause of the problems, I think you have to concentrate more on qualitative techniques. To support or confirm your results you can make use of quantitative data.

But while collecting data through qualitative methods you have to be more cautious to get away from the possible errors.

Sunitha Thampi

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With regard the qualitative tools aspect of your question I would recommend to look up PRA/PLA techniques. Also borrowing from LFA, a problem tree in all its variants brings you to the heart of your question; what does your group see as the root causes. in following steps you might look into ranking of causes.

In addition tools used in Participatory Poverty Assessments could give you some inspiration on how to asses or opening up the dialogue on policies, governance or rights.

Some sources to start your search

<http://www.fao.org/Participation/>

http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_toolbox.html

<http://www.eldis.org/participation/index.htm>

I do like the care's Program Quality Digital Library Under the program design, monitoring and evaluation:

<http://pqdl.care.org/practice/Design%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Jozef Serneels

4. Discussion on Alternatives to the Logical Framework Approach

Rick Davies' views on the alternative to LogFrames (and most linear logic models):

- Replace artificial distinctions between events over time (a.k.a. activity, output, outcome, impact) with a chain of actors located within a wider network. This chain can be as long or short as needed
- View relationships between these actors as the main causal mechanisms
- If-and-then logic can be re-cast in terms of actors and their relationships e.g. If we do ... to help actor x, and their relationship with actor y remains as supportive as it is, then actor x will be able to be more ... in their relationship with actor z
- Use "Assumptions" to describe how the wider set of actors are expected to interact/affect the actors in the chain
- You can still use a simple LogFrame type table to describe a chain of actors: each row describes an actor, and those before and after them in the chain are located in the rows below and above

You can still make use of indicators and assumptions, to detail the expected behaviour of each actor in the chain. They will be much easier to specify because you are talking about identifiable actors, rather than more abstract processes of change.

<http://mande.co.uk/2008/topic-bibliographies/logframe/the-logical-framework-a-list-of-useful-documents/>

PIFA (Planning and Implementation Framework Analysis).

<http://www.mande.co.uk/logframe.htm#Alternatives>

PIPA Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis created by Boru Douthwaite from the CIAT/CGIAR. This methodology is being developed by the Andean Change Alliance to evaluate the use of participatory approaches. The PIPA main advantage is involving all stakeholders in the construction of the change theory, especially stakeholders from executor institutions and rural organizations. <http://boru.pbwiki.com/>

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As a practitioner of log frame, I have heard comments like - it's difficult to understand for general people, has limitation in terms of indicators/ outputs, it usually 'locks' the practitioners even the context is changed - been "lock frame" not "log frame" Does not provide space for flexibility and opportunities for innovations etc. etc.; and we can overcome them.

I am working for a 10 year DFID programme and now we are in its 8th year. During eight years, we've had a lot of changes in Nepal (conflict, post conflict, emergencies etc.) and it was difficult to follow the same log frame. Therefore, we agreed to use the log frame as a live document and reviewed this four times during the period. Now, DFID consider the programme as one of the most innovative programmes in Nepal, with a lot of impact on rural areas (where conflict was in high in last 12 years) and the project log frame had given the 'opportunity' to innovate.

Binod Chapagain

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Most of the criticisms about logframe usually refer to people not filling it in or not writing the indicators properly, etc. it is rarely about the actual logframe itself. I have not come across a method that is so efficient, flexible, comprehensive, participatory, communicative, and simple to use and understand as the logframe.

The logframe can be used to design, appraise, implement, monitor and evaluate projects and programmes, but, I think, if the right people, the people who know and understand the issues, are involved in filling in the logframe it is as easy as falling off a log. It is essential for the right stakeholders to be involved at the right stages of the project cycle when working on the logframe.

Freer Spreckley

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I have been working for a long time with IFAD and have used the LFWs a lot with periodic updating for some projects. While it is good in tracking the project progress and extracting the work plans and so forth, it should be used together with a comprehensive M&E framework to have a complete picture on the M&E and project performances. As an alternative, the World Bank is using instead a Results Framework which is going online with the Results-based M&E and Management approaches.

Abdulgadir Turkawi

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It seems to me that a lot of the confusion about LFA has to do with distinguishing between the top level (goal) and the second level (purpose). If there is no clear distinction, there is, in principle, no reason not to fuse the two.

In international development, the top level usually seems to refer to impact (an important or lasting difference in people's lives or the environment), while the second level usually refers to capacity development and other expressions of collective learning (typically called an "outcome").

If the only difference were the time frame (achieve the goal in the long term and the purpose during the lifetime of the project, for example), I would see no point in maintaining the difference - since we can specify each respective time frame in the indicator column (or a separate column for targets).

Likewise, I don't think we can afford to be arbitrary about the idea that assessing the accomplishment of the impact is necessarily complex, expensive and impractical. I have seen too many projects wasted on nothing but deceptive "institutional strengthening," without ever accomplishing anything for the people or the planet. This is very important, both to the funders and to the beneficiaries.

Robert Walker

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(Logic) models are tools. Tools are devices that enable us to do things easier, more effectively, more efficiently than would be possible without their use. If a tool makes a task harder, not easier, then you are using the wrong tool. Tools, be they language, spanners, bicycles or conceptual frameworks, are usually context specific. As we become transfixed by the power of a tool learned in one context, we forget to ask ourselves just how appropriate it is in another. Evaluation is a context.

If we agree that we should at least strive to match the tool to the situation then we should be first asking ourselves, "what kinds of tools do we need to help us evaluate this situation?" rather than "how can we modify our evaluations to fit Logframe?" The current debate is somewhere between these two statements.

So for me the basic question is not fundamentally about alternatives to Logframe but whether models that help frame our understanding or engagement with situations are useful in a particular evaluation context. And if so, which kinds of models will be useful in that context. There are dozens to choose from, and few if any fit every context.

Bob Williams

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One way in which I attempt to decide what planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) tool is most appropriate is by asking does the organisation operate primarily in simple, complicated or complex circumstances? Here are three simple examples of situations requiring different tools considering organisations with different contexts.

If you are a builder of rural provincial schools, the challenge of building a new school is relatively SIMPLE because the relationships of cause and effect are KNOWN. You can plan activities and outputs with relative certainty that you will be able to act on them. With information at your disposal about what has happened with other similar schools, you can formulate reasonable outcomes and indicators. Logical Framework Analysis should work well here as your PME tool.

In contrast, if your work is building the first separate boys' and girls' latrines for all the rural schools in the province, the challenge is partially "simple" – the building of the latrines – but above all COMPLICATED. The greater number and diversity of actors and factors involved means that the many of the relationships of cause and effect are not known. Nonetheless, they are KNOWABLE. In this case the PME tool will have to be much more flexible, such as Outcome Mapping.

A third case is if you are an advocacy organisation that campaigns to create public support for girls' schooling. The challenges you face are of another order. They are COMPLEX because the relationship between what you will do and its effects is UNKNOWN. Because of this, formulating multi-annual and even annual outcomes and indicators tends to be an exercise in pseudo-planning, in predicting the unpredictable.

Furthermore, frequently critical causal relationships are not replicable because your organisation and the environment have changed in the course of your intervention. In these situations, on-going monitoring and adapting is what is required and I am finding that an appropriate tool is Michael Quinn Patton's Developmental Evaluation.

Ricardo Wilson-Grau

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That's a good system of categories. For your third case, it may be more appropriate to talk about impact monitoring, as inconsistent as that may seem. (It is somewhat inconsistent because in the absence of attribution, we can't really say what an impact of what is.) For this, available data related to goals and targets like the Millennium Development Goals are appropriate - if more or less reliable and not too time consuming to compile.

It's important to keep our eyes on the prize.

In Brazil and internationally, there are several sets of goals and targets related to children and adolescents. Civil society is fairly well organized for advocacy. But it is pretty complicated to actually compile the data and confront them with targets. Maybe there is even a hidden agenda, to give the appearance of transparency but complicate the matter so much even researchers have a hard time following it, in order to avoid real accountability.

When I write a terminal or ex post evaluation report, I do report these trends as much as possible. The degree to which the local capacity development or advocacy project could plausibly have some relationship to these trends is, I think, relevant.

Robert Walker

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For the time being, I use the logframe mostly as just that - a framework, in conjunction with the DAC criteria, which are increasingly in demand. So, to my simplistic way of thinking, the goal or development objective has to do with positive impact, defined as important or lasting improvement in people's lives or the environment. The purpose or immediate objective is basically collective learning (roughly corresponding to effectiveness, if the client agrees). The details are expressed in indicators and targets, which can be numerous. (Relevance and sustainability are related topics.

Outputs and activities can easily be detailed and monitored using PMBOK software like MS Project or free online tools, and also widely available database software. These reflect efficiency. So, for my purposes as an evaluator (and in monitoring), I haven't generally found a pressing need for innovative software for detailed programming.

IMO, the main problem with the way LFA is currently applied is not so much a lack of a technology of representation as it is a conceptual problem. Mainly, we need to clearly differentiate between the goal and the purpose levels, or else fuse them. I would prefer the former, for reasons I have presented many times.

Robert Walker

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I have finally finished preparing an article examining the theory behind what I call outcomes models (these are the outcomes hierarchies which Bob refers to).

This attempts to go beyond the traditional received conventions about logic models which I think are usually unexamined in 'how to' books about logic models (hence leading to frustration by people like Bob).

The essence of my argument is that:

1. There are six possible purposes for outcomes models - the first being to provide a picture of 'what it is believed causes what to happen' - what I call a 'full' model.
2. Because people attempt to also use models to indicate measurability and demonstrability (attribution of changes in high-level steps and outcomes to a program) they end up truncating their models so much (limiting them to the measurable or the demonstrable) that they fail to achieve the first purpose of creating a picture of a 'full' model. Measurement and demonstrability (attribution) should be done after the moment has been built.
3. Most 'technologies of representation' - tables, single page diagrams etc - are hopeless at representing anything like a 'full' model of the causality behind a program. Hence they attract attacks as inadequate representations of programs.
4. Models should be drawn in software so as to be able to represent full models (as large as they need to be, anything linked to anything else) and then measurement and demonstrability (attribution) mapped back onto them. This means they can achieve the purposes of the traditional conventions without having their limitations.

If you have a moment, check out the article, any feedback appreciated. It is at:
<http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/what-are-outcomes-models-program-logic/2m7zd68aaz774/22>

Paul Duignan

~

When an outcomes model (the pathway of causality from a project or intervention to higher-level outcomes) is represented in a table format suitable for printing on paper, as is usually done in a logframe, this 'technology of representation' introduces severe constraints on the richness of the causal model that can be represented.

To my knowledge the only person who's talked about this consistently over time is Doug Fraser in Australia. Some years ago he wrote up the ideas in an edition of the Evaluation Journal of Australasia called Visualising Program Logic; Two New Graphic Conventions.
http://www.aes.asn.au/publications/Vol1No2/visualising_program_logic.pdf.

It is similar in concept if not in technology to the kind of conventions that Paul is developing. Despite promoting it around the traps for a year or so, it never gained any traction. Pity and I hope that Paul's attempts are more successful.

Bob Williams

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I recently read The Logic Model Guidebook: **Better Strategies for Great Results** by Lisa Wyatt Knowlton and Cynthia C. Phillips, published by Sage 2009. I recommend it to those interested in learning about a variety of ways to develop and use logic models.

Jim Rugh

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I've rather mixed views about this book, which I'll admit I've only read in part, so any errors in the following comments are entirely mine. My apologies to the authors if this is the case.

I've glanced through the book several times. I was very excited by the early chapters I became very excited about the ground that was about to be covered. However, as the book progressed I began to realise that this is yet another book about a particular form of logic modelling - essentially the Kellogg/United Way four box model.

Its references to other forms of logic modelling (including LogFrame if my memory serves me correct) are not given much of a mention. Especially worrying for a book that has some claims to be definitive there is only a short un-illustrated reference to non-linear logic models such as causal loop diagrams and system dynamic simulations.

As a guide to the ideas behind logic modelling and constructing basic variations on the 4 box version then the book is, in my view, superior to both the Kellogg and United Way publications that cover broadly the same territory. But the breakthrough Guidebook to logic modelling has yet to be written.

Bob Williams

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In very general terms I use the same kind of Cynefin informed framework (simple, complicated, complex) to make decisions about which kind of logic model I might use in what circumstances.

The classic four box logic model (of which LogFrame is a sophisticated example) tends to fit "simple" situations best. This is, as Ricardo explains, where the relationship between cause and effect is relatively tight and the assumptions that underpin the movement towards effect are explicit, observable and controllable.

In the complicated zone, I tend to use logic models either drawn from the systems field ... system dynamics influenced models maybe, and certainly models drawn from the soft systems and critical systems field. These bear little or no resemblance to the kind of logic models discussed here - in many cases they are more heuristics than models, but they do seek to expose the "logic" of the intervention in some way. The closest to the logic model familiar to evaluators would be the outcome hierarchy - common in Australia and New Zealand - which as Paul Duignan alludes to tend to expose the steps in the results chain (and the attendant assumptions and activities necessary to move from one "result" to the next level of result).

The role of "logic" in the complex zone is trickier since what we observe in that area is by definition apparently illogical. I've not yet seen a logic model that really works in that space, although some of the logic models that emerge from some of the more esoteric regions of the systems field (eg activity systems, human systems dynamics) or the action research field (eg force field analysis).

Sorry Rick if this is still too general for you. All I can encourage people to do is to contact me directly if they are interested in any particular aspect of a situation and I'm happy to refer them on to people who know more than I do.

Meantime I really do encourage people to follow the Cynefin thread indicated by Ricardo - I think it has a lot of potential in the development field. In fact, its the area that this framework seems to be gaining most traction.

Here are two references :

<http://www.mpiweb.org/CMS/uploadedFiles/Article%20for%20Marketing%20-%20Mary%20Boone.pdf>

<http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj/423/kurtz.html>

Bob Williams

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I was assuming there may be some other types of logical model that were not highly specific in their suitability, and by comparing these with the LogFrame we (all on the list) might extend our understanding of what is possible in the way of alternatives (that have some general applicability).

From reading what you have written below, it sounds like "the outcome hierarchy - common in Australia and New Zealand" might fall into this category. If so, how does it differ from the LogFrame and what difference do these differences make?

On "The role of "logic" in the complex zone, I think there is a place, so long as you think of individual actors and their relationships. They can each make plans, about how their actions might affect others, and make assumptions about what is necessary for those actions to be effective (i.e. they use

an "if...and...then..". social logic). What is less predictable by individuals, is the aggregate result of all those local decisions, and even more so, how these will change in the light of each others' responses. Simple network analysis surveys can shed light on aggregate outcomes of one iteration of individual decisions, or organisational decisions. E.g of different NGOs decisions about which issue coalitions they will engage with over the next year. I think they are a useful small step in the direction of developing models which capture the complicated and the complex better than linear logic models. For some they are not complex enough, but for many they look too complex.

Rick Davies

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Following up on Rick's request to Bob to look at specific models which could be alternatives to logframes, I have posted on the web a DoView model of a regional economic grants and skills development program. <http://www.outcomesmodels.org/projects/regionaleconomicv1.html>

It is a fairly basic model at the moment. It does not include indicators or evaluation questions which could be put on it (for an example of a model with indicators and evaluation questions see <http://www.outcomesmodels.org/models/communitycentral31.html>,

What I would like would be if anyone wants to throw any elaborations at this model - and we can see how far it can be elaborated to accommodate whatever people throw at it - that is, see how much complication the model can visualize.

So if anyone wants to, just post in text format to this list any elaborations on the model (e.g. what is happening within individual firms) and I will see if they can be visually modelled into it. I will amend it and put the amended version up on the web again so you can judge whether it capturing the elaborations.

If anyone wants to play with the model themselves you can just download and install a trial version of DoView (<http://www.doview.com/download.html>) and then click Download the DoView file option in the Options bar at the bottom of the model to download and edit a copy of it.

At the moment, I would like us to keep the modelling reasonably traditional as in normal logic modelling in the sense of modelling steps and outcomes rather than just modelling stakeholders since that is conceptually a different type of modelling (an interesting approach which I think merits much consideration). We can obviously model things that we want stakeholders to do, no problem.

Paul Duignan

5. Group Facilitation Method for Analysing M&E Data

The M&E framework I use has been designed in a participatory process with the organization and other stakeholders, and wherever possible I involve my colleagues in the data collection and provide regular updates on my progress. There have been several discussions within the organization about the data collection, and I have been open to this discussion to establish the trustworthiness and validity of the information with everyone. I paid a lot of attention to questions like: *"What do we need to know? Does the data accurately reflect changes in our processes and outcomes? Can the data be analyzed in a useful way?"*

Now I would like to move on and discuss in the organization (e.g. staff meetings) the information that the data provides and what implications we can draw from it for our work, e.g. questions like "What does the information tell us about the outcomes of our work? How can we use this knowledge to improve our contribution to our partners?"

In the first group discussion on this topic, the participants in the discussion had a strong tendency to go back to the data collection itself and discuss the methodology instead of taking the plunge into discussing the content.

If anyone here in the group has made similar experiences and can provide some advice for a group facilitation method that makes it easy to focus on content, that would be much appreciated.

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If the M&E data is numeric, or produces answers of one discrete kind vs. another, then I have a suggestion that has worked for me when trying to encourage the participatory analysis (interpretation) of impact assessment data.

- You introduce to participants a section of the report/survey: the questions that was asked
- You ask the participants present to guess the aggregate response to this question, and to say why they are making that particular prediction
- You then show the participants the actual aggregate data
- You then get a discussion going around any differences between people's predictions and the actual data/responses. Why is the gap there, was the hypothesis wrong or was the data gathering method wrong? And what is the evidence or argument for either?

This can generate some quite animated discussions. It can help get people into the habit of thinking in terms of testable hypotheses.

But it depends on being able to hold back the data until you have the event. If they have seen the data already it won't work.

Rick Davies

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I conducted a couple of similar processes with a group of staff that had varying levels of theoretical understanding of development and M&E. Many had not finished high school. Other more senior staff had a university education. This was in Afghanistan. So this may seem over-simplified but it could be spruced up for a more highly educated, articulate team.

Here is what I did:

Step one was to explain the whole analysis process to the team.

Second, I separated the staff into focus-groups by area, because in the end we wanted geographical analysis of the data. We also separated men and women because we wanted gender analysis of the data, and in some cases, teams who had worked on different sectoral projects worked together. All in all we had five geographical groups who each did their analysis separately so they didn't have to travel to the central base, and each group had about three to five groups of say, women income-generating projects, men income-generating projects, women's education, men's education, and children's development, or whatever.

Third, we explained to the teams (all in one room for each geographical area) how we were going to look at the numbers and put it all together into one big story. Then, we were going to look at two things: answers to specific questions (how many, how much, how, what, etc.) and then look at the general topics that our beneficiaries talked about in their stories (in that order). Each sub-step of that process (creating a narrative, answering questions we asked at the beginning of the evaluation, and identifying themes) would take a special session.

For the narrative, the group was to take their various data from individuals (how many chickens did you get, how many do you have now, how much money did you make, blah blah) and add the numbers together and do an average. We actually had to teach them to take averages and calculate percentages- hopefully in Belgium that will not be necessary, hah, hah. Since each group only had about three quantitative questions for 50 or so people this was possible to do. Then they were to describe, based on the stories each beneficiary had told them, what happened to most beneficiaries and what they did, i.e. an average story. So each group ended up with a small chart with sums, averages, and percentages.

Then we all got together again and looked at the questions we had asked at the beginning of the evaluation: Did this benefit people? How? Who benefited most? Did we meet our goal of 50% having a raise in income? Did women benefit equally? Etc.

Finally, after writing that down, we took a look at the stories (we called them "success stories" but that was a little optimistic in some cases) and looked for common themes. We also chose the stories that we thought were the most interesting, people who had exceptionally terrible problems or achievements, and so on. Each focus-group chose three themes or topics that came up the most,

e.g. being able to buy medicine, being able to send children to school, the group members lending to one another, and two stories to be submitted for the final report.

Then we all reported back to the group. Each report was only one page (hand-written) and one page of stories so this was not too mind-numbing.

The whole group voted on the most inspirational and representative stories for the final report. The group also decided who would do all of the sums for the quantitative data, and the rest of the team worked together to prepare a summary of overall results under the leadership of someone who was good at writing.

By the end of our three-day workshop (one at each base, actually) each group of local staff had their own complete analysis in the local language. It seemed really simple at first but when we compiled them it was actually the most thorough report headquarters had gotten from our country, and the staff had their own little reports that they had done themselves. So it was a real achievement for us.

This probably seems very over-simplified for your team but hopefully the overall process is helpful and those who are working in rural areas with less sophisticated staff can use it too.

Elizabeth

~

This sounds like a good idea, though people might complain that you are withholding data for your own purposes.

I wonder if there are deeper psychological reasons behind that (says he, just studying a course which includes organisational psychoanalysis). It is possible that the results of the studies, particularly if they are not as good as people dreamed of, could be seen as threatening - and people always have huge anxieties about change. So focusing on the methodology is kind of a psychological defence mechanism to avoid feeling the anxiety that might come with change, be it major or minor. Wilfried (sp?) Bion would call this the 'fight/flight' basic assumption of group work - so they are fighting the data.

I wonder if before people had agreed the data collection methodology? That would strengthen your case, and the group could be managed quite firmly.

I also wonder if Rick's approach would not also be useful in terms of non-quantitative data, eg when you ask the group eg focus group questions and get their ideas (in psychoanalytic terms they would call it 'fantasies' but let's not go there) of what the responses might be, and then present them with the actual responses, following Rick's steps?

Beat Gross

~

"What does the information tell us about the outcomes of our work?"

The question can be a bit limiting, in that it implies that we know how our work is related to the outcomes. I would rather start by asking what the tendencies are concerning important impact questions like people's well being, equity and the environment. If possible, present available data, and ask the people to relate it to their own experience. Then ask about outcomes per se, i.e. to what degree people are learning to work together to solve their problems. Only then can we ask people's opinions about the actual or potential relationship between the two (what I would call outcomes and impacts). Here, of course, we get into questions of scope: the local initiative may seem insignificant in the big picture. But perhaps there lessons learned that could be disseminated and applied elsewhere, or they might want to try advocacy to promote political change.

We need to avoid two extremes: setting overly ambitious and irrelevant project "targets" like meeting the overall MDG's or eliminating poverty in the city as the result of a limited local initiative, or forgetting impact altogether because it is supposedly out of reach and not measurable.

Even if we can't establish any plausible link between our limited activities and major impact goals, it is worthwhile to keep our eyes on the prize, rather than burying our heads in the sand by only looking at "capacity development."

Robert Walker

6. Measuring Capacity

I am doing a research on capacity development initiatives in Afghanistan and want to propose some M&E tools for the measurement of capacities as part of my recommendations. The capacity development initiatives that I am looking at contain theoretical trainings (delivered as formal training workshops), on the job coaching (employment of technical advisors within the organization/government institutions), provision of work related equipment (computers, office furniture), delivery of reading material/resources etc. I would like to know some tools for:

- Setting up baseline for capacities on any of the above
- Measuring the capacity at the end of the provision of theoretical training as well as after a longer period to see the overall impact
- Measuring the affect of presence of a formal coach
- -Measuring the change in capacities

Mushtaq Rahim

~

UNDP's "Capacity Assessment Tool" is very useful for generating the baseline data, for measuring the change over time as well as for finding out the underlying capacity constraints and solutions. Please find attached herewith a copy. I hope it will be useful to you.

Singh Bhandari

~

I would like to add on in your query.

First, is develop an M & E conceptual framework (or sub-system, if it is one of the components of a bigger project) on the hierarchy - i.e. trainee (pre and post training evaluation, institutional level - organization (indicators based on the training objectives) and client level (impact at the communities). This would also include peer and supervisor level.

Second, is have an M & E matrix - based on the mandated and demand driven training. This can be add on based on evaluation of gaps, in capacities. I would suggest that a capacity needs assessment be conducted as the basis of the M & E matrix.

Third, is that the basis of M & E questions, be based on the training objectives conducted including frequency, basis of also the action plan after the training. On Technical advisors' it is based on KRAs. The outcome is linked with the project development objectives.

On measuring changes in capacities at institutional level - it is very good to have a simple performance measurement system.

Ann Lily Marie O. Uvero

~

Counterpart International implements Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS) in Afghanistan for the last five years. Purpose of this program is to build the capacity of local Afghan civil society organizations usually know as Organizational Development (OD). Counterpart has been implementing similar program in Central Asian states for the last 13 years. When we talk of capacity building then its tailor-made developmental intervention and multi-tiered integrated approach focusing on areas such as but not limited to vision, mission, goal, objectives of organizations, planning and implementation process and strategies, financial sustainability and policies, administration and management, need identification and assessment, program planning and design, monitoring and evaluation, gender, etc...

A developmental intervention contains all of them or some of them in order to build the capacity of a given organization. These interventions are tailor-made based on the need identification/action plan to help the organization grow in such areas.

In order to measure the change in capacity, there must be baseline data available on the capacity. This will help to measure any change in the capacity after a period of time.

We provide integrated capacity building assistance to the target organizations through direct trainings, technical assistance, consultancies and capacity building tours for target partners. This includes training to staff of partner organizations on strategic planning, appreciative community appraisal and planning, advocacy, adult methodology, monitoring and evaluation, gender and gender analysis framework, civil society organization and community, media, administration and human resource etc.

We establish a team of three employees who have usually more direct contacts and interaction with respective organizations throughout the period in which capacity building interventions been provided to target organizations. This team goes and interviews 3-5 key staff members of the organization. During this interview, key aspects of the organizational development are discussed and information is collected. These aspects include but not limited to the areas mentioned above. Each surveyor has a capacity assessment scale checklists and each of them rank the organization based on their best judgment in the light of the information and documents presented by the key staff.

After the survey, the three members survey team sits together and discusses their feedback, conclusions and finally fills in a single capacity assessment scale checklist for a said organization. The single capacity assessment scale is the final capacity assessment measure. This then goes into the database. Each year, the last capacity assessment scale is compared with the baseline scale and change is identified against the benchmark.

Hope this adds to the other information provided by the group. Below is the capacity assessment checklist for your information. You may need to contextualize it based on your capacity building interventions.

Dad Mohammed Hamdard

~

Further to Mustaq Rahim's query on organizational assessment tools, does anyone have tools adapted to governmental departments and organizations? Particularly police forces and other judicial entities?

Terence Fitzgerald

~

Here is one that we use – adopted from Pact, Inc's Organizational Assessment tool. Baseline info is done out of initial assessment. A final assessment is done after the interventions – most of which include the ones you mention; trainings (delivered as formal training workshops), on the job coaching, mentoring, systems development/review, oversight during implementation of capacity building plans, provision of work related equipment (computers, office furniture), delivery of reading material/resources, accompaniment etc. I have included a sample one here

Titus Syengo

~

Most of what has been shared has been organizational. Is there anything that you have where the unit is the individual – i.e., how do we assess capacity of individual people?

Richard Margoluis

~

If I remember it right, the process which I co-facilitated several batches of Capacity needs assessment was:

1. Review of the mission/vision of the organization/ project development objectives (logframe)/performance measurement of the unit/organization (sort of ISO). Compare it with the job description/ TOR of each individual
2. Conduct of SWOT analysis
3. Delineate the difference between capacity building needs and organizational issues - equipments, enabling environment - incentives, other HR issues, etc.
4. Cluster the needs
5. Prioritize, schedule and identify modalities - practicum, field visit, formal training, on-line sites, mentoring/coaching, or a mixture of it, access to toolkits, etc.

This was on staff working on the following sectors: environment, governance, sustainable agriculture, micro-finance and micro-enterprise development. This was linked to improved service delivery. This was also linked to the timely delivery of capacity needs including the project cycle strategy.

Ann Lily Marie O. Uvero

~

I see you have received a handful of technical advice from the network members already and those are quite helpful. I just like to add that you may also want to adopt and adapt a standardized Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT). This tool is very useful as it itemizes the key elements and scoring parameters of an organisation's technical and administrative capacity in an easy-to-use matrix format. It also allows u to set performance targets for the applicable key capacity elements in the form of observable milestones and benchmarks that then becomes the basis for performance assessments and capacity evaluations.

By the way, I had the privilege of working in Kabul as M&E officer for the Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project (APAP) and I will be happy to lend you a helping hand where possible.

Emmanuel Uche

~

I am extremely thankful for the amount of knowledge I have gained from your responses. The provided info is a huge wealth for me. However, as one of the colleagues has asked, will it be possible/are there tools that could look at individuals too? In addition, I would seek an opinion on utilization of Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) surveys that are usually used for health sector trainings. Don't you think this could be adopted for the capacity assessment in the other areas while measuring change in the capacity of organizations as well as individuals? I am proposing this because most of the times we see that people are trained but they only join the sessions and go as they had come with little change in their capacity level while we keep reporting of people trained. I mean they really don't learn or focus on learning. There are also people who do learn but the addition to new knowledge don't really change their attitude towards performing their job. For example, there have been hundreds of trainings on participatory management in Afghanistan but little has changed in this regard. Furthermore, people also do believe in what they learn but due to not being used to, don't really practice it.

Hence, I would like to:

Have a technical view on KAP surveys as well as the tools/formats used for the same,
Hear on measuring the capacity of individuals,

Mushtaq Rahim

~

Capacity must be looked at individual level too. UNDP's capacity assessment tool attached to my previous email clearly states that the capacity resides in three regimes:

1. Individual level
2. Organizational level
3. Enabling environment

KAP assessment of the trained people could be good but the application of knowledge again depends on three main factors as mentioned above. I hope the following website will be helpful for more information on performance assessment at individual levels.

<http://careercompass.berkeley.edu/perfmgmt/resources/evalforms.html>

Bhandari

7. M&E News Summary January 2009

1) Alternatives to the logical framework approach (LFA)

PIFA (Planning and Implementation Framework Analysis).

<http://www.mande.co.uk/logframe.htm#Alternatives>

PIPA Participatory Impact Pathways Analysis created by Boru Douthwaite from the CIAT/CGIAR. This methodology is being developed by the Andean Change Alliance to evaluate the use of participatory approaches. The PIPA main advantage is involving all stakeholders in the construction of the change theory, especially stakeholders from executor institutions and rural organizations. <http://boru.pbwiki.com/>

~

<http://mande.co.uk/2008/topic-bibliographies/logframe/the-logical-framework-a-list-of-useful-documents/>

My own views on the alternative to LogFrames (and most linear logic models):

- Replace artificial distinctions between events over time (a.k.a. activity, output, outcome, impact) with a chain of actors located within a wider network. This chain can be as long or short as needed
- View relationships between these actors as the main causal mechanisms
- If-and-then logic can be re-cast in terms of actors and their relationships e.g. If we do ... to help actor x, and their relationship with actor y remains as supportive as it is, then actor x will be able to be more ... in their relationship with actor z
- Use "Assumptions" to describe how the wider set of actors are expected to interact/affect the actors in the chain
- You can still use a simple LogFrame type table to describe a chain of actors: each row describes an actor, and those before and after them in the chain are located in the rows below and above
- You can still make use of indicators and assumptions, to detail the expected behaviour of each actor in the chain. They will be much easier to specify because you are talking about identifiable actors, rather than more abstract processes of change

Rick Davies

~

As a practitioner of log frame, I have heard comments like - it's difficult to understand for general people, has limitation in terms of indicators/ outputs, it usually 'locks' the practitioners even the context is changed - been "lock frame" not "log frame" Does not provide space for flexibility and opportunities for innovations etc. etc.; and we can overcome them.

I am working for a 10 year DFID programme and now we are in its 8th year. During eight years, we've had a lot of changes in Nepal (conflict, post conflict, emergencies etc.) and it was difficult to follow the same log frame. Therefore, we agreed to use the log frame as a live document and reviewed this four times during the period. Now, DFID consider the programme as one of the most innovative programmes in Nepal, with a lot of impact on rural areas (where conflict was in high in last 12 years) and the project log frame had given the 'opportunity' to innovate.

Binod Chapagain

~

Most of the criticisms about logframe usually refer to people not filling it in or not writing the indicators properly, etc. it is rarely about the actual logframe itself. I have not come across a method that is so efficient, flexible, comprehensive, participatory, communicative, and simple to use and understand as the logframe.

The logframe can be used to design, appraise, implement, monitor and evaluate projects and programmes, but, I think, if the right people, the people who know and understand the issues, are involved in filling in the logframe it is as easy as falling off a log. It is essential for the right stakeholders to be involved at the right stages of the project cycle when working on the logframe.

Freer Spreckley

~

I have been working for a long time with IFAD and have used the LFWs a lot with periodic updating for some projects. While it is good in tracking the project progress and extracting the work plans and so forth, it should be used together with a comprehensive M&E framework to have a complete picture on the M&E and project performances. As an alternative, the World Bank is using instead a Results Framework which is going online with the Results-based M&E and Management approaches.

Abdulgadir Turkawi

~

It seems to me that a lot of the confusion about LFA has to do with distinguishing between the top level (goal) and the second level (purpose). If there is no clear distinction, there is, in principle, no reason not to fuse the two.

In international development, the top level usually seems to refer to impact (an important or lasting difference in people's lives or the environment), while the second level usually refers to capacity development and other expressions of collective learning (typically called an "outcome").

If the only difference were the time frame (achieve the goal in the long term and the purpose during the lifetime of the project, for example), I would see no point in maintaining the difference - since we can specify each respective time frame in the indicator column (or a separate column for targets).

Likewise, I don't think we can afford to be arbitrary about the idea that assessing the accomplishment of the impact is necessarily complex, expensive and impractical. I have seen too many projects wasted on nothing but deceptive "institutional strengthening," without ever accomplishing anything for the people or the planet. This is very important, both to the funders and to the beneficiaries.

Robert Walker

~

(Logic) models are tools. Tools are devices that enable us to do things easier, more effectively, more efficiently than would be possible without their use. If a tool makes a task harder, not easier, then you are using the wrong tool. Tools, be they language, spanners, bicycles or conceptual frameworks, are usually context specific. As we become transfixed by the power of a tool learned in one context, we forget to ask ourselves just how appropriate it is in another. Evaluation is a context.

If we agree that we should at least strive to match the tool to the situation then we should be first asking ourselves, "what kinds of tools do we need to help us evaluate this situation?" rather than "how can we modify our evaluations to fit Logframe?" The current debate is somewhere between these two statements.

So for me the basic question is not fundamentally about alternatives to Logframe but whether models that help frame our understanding or engagement with situations are useful in a particular evaluation context. And if so, which kinds of models will be useful in that context. There are dozens to choose from, and few if any fit every context.

Bob Williams

~

One way in which I attempt to decide what planning, monitoring and evaluation (PME) tool is most appropriate is by asking does the organisation operate primarily in simple, complicated or complex circumstances? Here are three simple examples of situations requiring different tools considering organisations with different contexts.

If you are a builder of rural provincial schools, the challenge of building a new school is relatively SIMPLE because the relationships of cause and effect are KNOWN. You can plan activities and outputs with relative certainty that you will be able to act on them. With information at your disposal about what has happened with other similar schools, you can formulate reasonable outcomes and indicators. Logical Framework Analysis should work well here as your PME tool.

In contrast, if your work is building the first separate boys' and girls' latrines for all the rural schools in the province, the challenge is partially "simple" - the building of the latrines - but above all COMPLICATED. The greater number and diversity of actors and factors involved means that the many of the relationships of cause and effect are not known. Nonetheless, they are KNOWABLE. In this case the PME tool will have to be much more flexible, such as Outcome Mapping.

A third case is if you are an advocacy organisation that campaigns to create public support for girls' schooling. The challenges you face are of another order. They are COMPLEX because the relationship between what you will do and its effects is UNKNOWN. Because of this, formulating multi-annual and even annual outcomes and indicators tends to be an exercise in pseudo-planning, in predicting the unpredictable.

Furthermore, frequently critical causal relationships are not replicable because your organisation and the environment have changed in the course of your intervention. In these situations, on-going monitoring and adapting is what is required and I am finding that an appropriate tool is Michael Quinn Patton's Developmental Evaluation.

Ricardo Wilson-Grau

~

That's a good system of categories. For your third case, it may be more appropriate to talk about impact monitoring, as inconsistent as that may seem. (It is somewhat inconsistent because in the absence of attribution, we can't really say what an impact of what is.) For this, available data related to goals and targets like the Millennium Development Goals are appropriate - if more or less reliable and not too time consuming to compile.

It's important to keep our eyes on the prize.

In Brazil and internationally, there are several sets of goals and targets related to children and adolescents. Civil society is fairly well organized for advocacy. But it is pretty complicated to actually compile the data and confront them with targets. Maybe there is even a hidden agenda, to give the appearance of transparency but complicate the matter so much even researchers have a hard time following it, in order to avoid real accountability.

When I write a terminal or ex post evaluation report, I do report these trends as much as possible. The degree to which the local capacity development or advocacy project could plausibly have some relationship to these trends is, I think, relevant.

Robert Walker

~

For the time being, I use the logframe mostly as just that - a framework, in conjunction with the DAC criteria, which are increasingly in demand. So, to my simplistic way of thinking, the goal or development objective has to do with positive impact, defined as important or lasting improvement in people's lives or the environment. The purpose or immediate objective is basically collective learning (roughly corresponding to effectiveness, if the client agrees). The details are expressed in indicators and targets, which can be numerous. (Relevance and sustainability are related topics.

Outputs and activities can easily be detailed and monitored using PMBOK software like MS Project or free online tools, and also widely available database software. These reflect efficiency.

So, for my purposes as an evaluator (and in monitoring), I haven't generally found a pressing need for innovative software for detailed programming.

IMO, the main problem with the way LFA is currently applied is not so much a lack of a technology of representation as it is a conceptual problem. Mainly, we need to clearly differentiate between the goal and the purpose levels, or else fuse them. I would prefer the former, for reasons I have presented many times.

Robert Walker

~

I have finally finished preparing an article examining the theory behind what I call outcomes models (these are the outcomes hierarchies which Bob refers to).

This attempts to go beyond the traditional received conventions about logic models which I think are usually unexamined in 'how to' books about logic models (hence leading to frustration by people like Bob).

The essence of my argument is that:

5. There are six possible purposes for outcomes models - the first being to provide a picture of 'what it is believed causes what to happen' - what I call a 'full' model.
6. Because people attempt to also use models to indicate measurability and demonstrability (attribution of changes in high-level steps and outcomes to a program) they end up truncating their models so much (limiting them to the measurable or the demonstrable) that they fail to achieve the first purpose of creating a picture of a 'full' model. Measurement and demonstrability (attribution) should be done after the moment has been built.
7. Most 'technologies of representation' - tables, single page diagrams etc - are hopeless at representing anything like a 'full' model of the causality behind a program. Hence they attract attacks as inadequate representations of programs.
8. Models should be drawn in software so as to be able to represent full models (as large as they need to be, anything linked to anything else) and then measurement and demonstrability (attribution) mapped back onto them. This means they can achieve the purposes of the traditional conventions without having their limitations.

If you have a moment, check out the article, any feedback appreciated. It is at:
<http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/what-are-outcomes-models-program-logic/2m7zd68aaz774/22>

Soon I will post an example of an outcomes model as an example in response to Rick's question of Bob for an example of a richer type of model.

Paul Duignan

~

When an outcomes model (the pathway of causality from a project or intervention to higher-level outcomes) is represented in a table format suitable for printing on paper, as is usually done in a logframe, this 'technology of representation' introduces severe constraints on the richness of the causal model that can be represented.

To my knowledge the only person who's talked about this consistently over time is Doug Fraser in Australia. Some years ago he wrote up the ideas in an edition of the Evaluation Journal of Australasia called Visualising Program Logic; Two New Graphic Conventions.

http://www.aes.asn.au/publications/Vol1No2/visualising_program_logic.pdf.

It is similar in concept if not in technology to the kind of conventions that Paul is developing. Despite promoting it around the traps for a year or so, it never gained any traction. Pity and I hope that Paul's attempts are more successful.

I've a long plane trip coming up and will respond to Rick's request during the flight. However, in short my response is almost identical to the one outlined by Ricardo Wilson-Grau. In fact, when his note came in I was preparing a workshop for a client based on these Cynefin sourced ideas.

Bob Williams

~

I recently read The Logic Model Guidebook: Better Strategies for Great Results by Lisa Wyatt Knowlton and Cynthia C. Phillips, published by Sage 2009. I recommend it to those interested in learning about a variety of ways to develop and use logic models.

Jim Rugh

~

I've rather mixed views about this book, which I'll admit I've only read in part, so any errors in the following comments are entirely mine. My apologies to the authors if this is the case.

I've glanced through the book several times. I was very excited by the early chapters I became very excited about the ground that was about to be covered. However, as the book progressed I began to realise that this is yet another book about a particular form of logic modelling - essentially the Kellogg/United Way four box model.

Its references to other forms of logic modelling (including LogFrame if my memory serves me correct) are not given much of a mention. Especially worrying for a book that has some claims to be definitive there is only a short un-illustrated reference to non-linear logic models such as causal loop diagrams and system dynamic simulations.

As a guide to the ideas behind logic modelling and constructing basic variations on the 4 box version then the book is, in my view, superior to both the Kellogg and United Way publications that cover broadly the same territory. But the breakthrough Guidebook to logic modelling has yet to be written.

Bob Williams

~

Given your knowledge in this area, you could help others on this email list by identifying one or two other types of logic models that you think are not very context specific in their use, and which offer an interesting alternative to the Logical Framework. Could you describe these in some detail, and how they differ?

Rick Davies

I was assuming there may be some other types of logical model that were not highly specific in their suitability, and by comparing these with the LogFrame we (all on the list) might extend our understanding of what is possible in the way of alternatives (that have some general applicability).

From reading what you have written below, it sounds like "the outcome hierarchy - common in Australia and New Zealand" might fall into this category. If so, how does it differ from the LogFrame and what difference do these differences make?

On "The role of "logic" in the complex zone, I think there is a place, so long as you think of individual actors and their relationships. They can each make plans, about how their actions might affect others, and make assumptions about what is necessary for those actions to be effective (i.e. they use an "if...and...then..". social logic). What is less predictable by individuals, is the aggregate result of all those local decisions, and even more so, how these will change in the light of each others' responses. Simple network analysis surveys can shed light on aggregate outcomes of one iteration of individual decisions, or organisational decisions. E.g. of different NGOs decisions about which issue coalitions they will engage with over the next year. I think they are a useful small step in the direction of developing models which capture the complicated and the complex better than linear logic models. For some they are not complex enough, but for many they look too complex.

Rick Davies

~

Rick challenged me to share with MandE some of my collection of logic models. I must say I was a bit stumped by the request since I don't use all those in my collection and without the kinds of examples that Ricardo gave it is difficult to give a picture of what I use when.

However in very general terms I use the same kind of Cynefin informed framework (simple, complicated, complex) to make decisions about which kind of logic model I might use in what circumstances.

The classic four box logic model (of which LogFrame is a sophisticated example) tends to fit "simple" situations best. This is, as Ricardo explains, where the relationship between cause and effect is relatively tight and the assumptions that underpin the movement towards effect are explicit, observable and controllable.

In the complicated zone, I tend to use logic models either drawn from the systems field ... system dynamics influenced models maybe, and certainly models drawn from the soft systems and critical

systems field. These bear little or no resemblance to the kind of logic models discussed here - in many cases they are more heuristics than models, but they do seek to expose the "logic" of the intervention in some way. The closest to the logic model familiar to evaluators would be the outcome hierarchy - common in Australia and New Zealand - which as Paul Duignan alludes to tend to expose the steps in the results chain (and the attendant assumptions and activities necessary to move from one "result" to the next level of result).

The role of "logic" in the complex zone is trickier since what we observe in that area is by definition apparently illogical. I've not yet seen a logic model that really works in that space, although some of the logic models that emerge from some of the more esoteric regions of the systems field (eg activity systems, human systems dynamics) or the action research field (eg force field analysis).

Sorry Rick if this is still too general for you. All I can encourage people to do is to contact me directly if they are interested in any particular aspect of a situation and I'm happy to refer them on to people who know more than I do.

Meantime I really do encourage people to follow the Cynefin thread indicated by Ricardo - I think it has a lot of potential in the development field. In fact, its the area that this framework seems to be gaining most traction.

Here are two references :

<http://www.mpiweb.org/CMS/uploadedFiles/Article%20for%20Marketing%20-%20Mary%20Boone.pdf>

<http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj/423/kurtz.html>

Bob Williams

~

Following up on Rick's request to Bob to look at specific models which could be alternatives to logframes, I have posted on the web a DoView model of a regional economic grants and skills development program. It is at:

<http://www.outcomesmodels.org/projects/regionaleconomicv1.html>

To navigate around the model just click on the small triangles in the bottom right-hand corner of the coloured boxes.

It is a fairly basic model at the moment. It does not include indicators or evaluation questions which could be put on it (for an example of a model with indicators and evaluation questions see <http://www.outcomesmodels.org/models/communitycentral31.html>,

What I would like would be if anyone wants to throw any elaborations at this model - and we can see how far it can be elaborated to accommodate whatever people throw at it - that is, see how much complication the model can visualize.

So if anyone wants to, just post in text format to this list any elaborations on the model (e.g. what is happening within individual firms) and I will see if they can be visually modelled into it. I will amend it and put the amended version up on the web again so you can judge whether it capturing the elaborations.

If anyone wants to play with the model themselves you can just download and install a trial version of DoView (<http://www.doview.com/download.html>) and then click Download the DoView file option in the Options bar at the bottom of the model to download and edit a copy of it.

At the moment Rick, I would like us to keep the modelling reasonably traditional as in normal logic modelling in the sense of modelling steps and outcomes rather than just modelling stakeholders since that is conceptually a different type of modelling (an interesting approach which I think merits much consideration). We can obviously model things that we want stakeholders to do, no problem.
Paul Duignan

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2) DFID evaluation policy

I agree with Rick's point that reviews of the findings from (and approaches used in) existing DFID evaluations would be a useful work stream - noting however, that such evaluations *are* drawn on when an agency performs a sector or country-level review.

In the context of synthetic reviews I would like to draw your attention to (1) the Campbell Collaboration colloquium in May which will focus on development interventions - the call for proposals closes on January 15 (<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/>); and (2) 3ie's support for synthetic reviews. 3ie will shortly be announcing its first awards to conduct reviews, and putting out another call for proposals during January.

Howard White

~

Howard's email has prompted me to clarify what I was saying.

I would distinguish between meta-evaluation, and synthesis studies/reviews, of past evaluations. In my view a meta-evaluation is an evaluation of the evaluation processes that have been used, whereas a review or synthesis study would be more concerned with analysing and aggregating judgements about the findings from a set of evaluations. The latter is what the Campbell Collaboration (and others like it) are all about, as far as I understand. I am not recommending more of these, useful as they are.

My recommendation was for a meta-evaluation. If you plan to decentralise evaluations, and then provide support for this process, then there must be some form of theory-of-change (tacit or explicit) about what is then supposed to happen e.g. about the subsequent quantity, quality, relevance, ownership, etc of the evaluations that are decentralised. As far as I know DFID EvD have not yet carried out this type of evaluation, yet decentralised evaluations are a major part of their evaluation strategy.

Rick Davies

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Meta evaluations # synthesis studies

While undertaking the study "Mapping of NGO Monitoring and Evaluation Practices" (2008) among Danish Development NGO for Danida, I found that evaluation of evaluation practices have generally not been much explored among governmental and non-governmental actors alike, nor are there many guiding frameworks in this field.

The study may be downloaded from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark (www.um.dk) and search for title.

Hanne Lund Madsen

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Meta-analysis

I need help regarding a meta-analysis study that I have commissioned. I am in charge of evaluating a big programme where I work. Many provinces and departments that report to this programme have done their own evaluation studies on the programme.

I then want to commission a study that will consolidate all these reports and inform me what they have found, how many of them were of good quality, how many of them are poor. Of those that are of good quality, what were their findings about the programme?

What kind of study is appropriate? Is it a meta-analysis or meta-review? is there a difference? I will appreciate any help and any material that I can read on the subject.

KG

~

"How many of them were of good quality, how many of them are poor. Of those that are of good quality, what were their findings about the programme?"

Meta analysis is a method of statistically combining the results of good studies. I'm not sure it is a method of telling which studies are the good ones. Meta-review seems to be a review of reviews (see below).

However, it kind of sounds like you are looking for researchers who are very good, who can review the evaluations and tell you which are good, not good, and what the good ones say.

So I don't know that you need a 'study' but rather a review.

Gene Shackman

~~

3) Group Facilitation Method for Analyzing M&E Data

I'm an M&E officer in a public health NGO in The Hague, the Netherlands.

I have enjoyed reading mails to this group a lot in the past few months and have benefited greatly from the questions and information that have been exchanged on this list. It is like a coffee break with colleagues from a virtual unit. :)

Now I have a question myself:

The M&E framework I use has been designed in a participatory process with the organization and other stakeholders, and wherever possible I involve my colleagues in the data collection and provide regular updates on my progress. There have been several discussions within the organization about the data collection, and I have been open to this discussion to establish the trustworthiness and validity of the information with everyone. I paid a lot of attention to questions like: "What do we need to know? Does the data accurately reflect changes in our processes and outcomes? Can the data be analyzed in a useful way?"

Now I would like to move on and discuss in the organization (e.g. staff meetings) the information that the data provides and what implications we can draw from it for our work, e.g. questions like "What does the information tell us about the outcomes of our work? How can we use this knowledge to improve our contribution to our partners?"

In the first group discussion on this topic, the participants in the discussion had a strong tendency to go back to the data collection itself and discuss the methodology instead of taking the plunge into discussing the content.

If anyone here in the group has made similar experiences and can provide some advice for a group facilitation method that makes it easy to focus on content, that would be much appreciated.

Friederike Römer

~

If the M&E data is numeric, or produces answers of one discrete kind vs. another, then I have a suggestion that has worked for me when trying to encourage the participatory analysis (interpretation) of impact assessment data.

- You introduce to participants a section of the report/survey: the questions that was asked
- You ask the participants present to guess the aggregate response to this question, and to say why they are making that particular prediction
- You then show the participants the actual aggregate data
- You then get a discussion going around any differences between people's predictions and the actual data/responses. Why is the gap there, was the hypothesis wrong or was the data gathering method wrong? And what is the evidence or argument for either?

This can generate some quite animated discussions. It can help get people into the habit of thinking in terms of testable hypotheses.

But it depends on being able to hold back the data until you have the event. If they have seen the data already it won't work.

Rick Davies

~

I conducted a couple of similar processes with a group of staff that had varying levels of theoretical understanding of development and M&E. Many had not finished high school. Other more senior staff had a university education. This was in Afghanistan. So this may seem over-simplified but it could be spruced up for a more highly educated, articulate team.

Here is what I did.

Step one was to explain the whole analysis process to the team.

Second, I separated the staff into focus-groups by area, because in the end we wanted geographical analysis of the data. We also separated men and women because we wanted gender analysis of the data, and in some cases, teams who had worked on different sectoral projects worked together. All in all we had five geographical groups who each did their analysis separately so they didn't have to travel to the central base, and each group had about three to five groups of say, women income-generating projects, men income-generating projects, women's education, men's education, and children's development, or whatever.

Third, we explained to the teams (all in one room for each geographical area) how we were going to look at the numbers and put it all together into one big story. Then, we were going to look at two things: answers to specific questions (how many, how much, how, what, etc.) and then look at the general topics that our beneficiaries talked about in their stories (in that order). Each sub-step of that process (creating a narrative, answering questions we asked at the beginning of the evaluation, and identifying themes) would take a special session.

For the narrative, the group was to take their various data from individuals (how many chickens did you get, how many do you have now, how much money did you make, blah blah) and add the numbers together and do an average. We actually had to teach them to take averages and calculate percentages- hopefully in Belgium that will not be necessary, hah, hah. Since each group only had about three quantitative questions for 50 or so people this was possible to do. Then they were to describe, based on the stories each beneficiary had told them, what happened to most beneficiaries and what they did, i.e. an average story. So each group ended up with a small chart with sums, averages, and percentages.

Then we all got together again and looked at the questions we had asked at the beginning of the evaluation: Did this benefit people? How? Who benefited most? Did we meet our goal of 50% having a raise in income? Did women benefit equally? Etc.

Finally, after writing that down, we took a look at the stories (we called them "success stories" but that was a little optimistic in some cases) and looked for common themes. We also chose the stories that we thought were the most interesting, people who had exceptionally terrible problems or achievements, and so on. Each focus-group chose three themes or topics that came up the most, e.g. being able to buy medicine, being able to send children to school, the group members lending to one another, and two stories to be submitted for the final report.

Then we all reported back to the group. Each report was only one page (hand-written) and one page of stories so this was not too mind-numbing.

The whole group voted on the most inspirational and representative stories for the final report. The group also decided who would do all of the sums for the quantitative data, and the rest of the team worked together to prepare a summary of overall results under the leadership of someone who was good at writing.

By the end of our three-day workshop (one at each base, actually) each group of local staff had their own complete analysis in the local language. It seemed really simple at first but when we compiled them it was actually the most thorough report headquarters had gotten from our country, and the staff had their own little reports that they had done themselves. So it was a real achievement for us.

This probably seems very over-simplified for your team but hopefully the overall process is helpful and those who are working in rural areas with less sophisticated staff can use it too.
Elizabeth

~

This sounds like a good idea, though people might complain that you are withholding data for your own purposes.

I wonder if there are deeper psychological reasons behind that (says he, just studying a course which includes organisational psychoanalysis). It is possible that the results of the studies, particularly if they are not as good as people dreamed of, could be seen as threatening - and people always have huge anxieties about change. So focusing on the methodology is kind of a psychological defence mechanism to avoid feeling the anxiety that might come with change, be it major or minor. Wilfried (sp?) Bion would call this the 'fight/flight' basic assumption of group work - so they are fighting the data.

I wonder if before people had agreed the data collection methodology? That would strengthen your case, and the group could be managed quite firmly.

I also wonder if Rick's approach would not also be useful in terms of non-quantitative data, eg when you ask the group eg focus group questions and get their ideas (in psychoanalytic terms they would call it 'fantasies' but let's not go there) of what the responses might be, and then present them with the actual responses, following Rick's steps?

Beat Gross

~

"What does the information tell us about the outcomes of our work?"

The question can be a bit limiting, in that it implies that we know how our work is related to the outcomes. I would rather start by asking what the tendencies are concerning important impact questions like people's well being, equity and the environment. If possible, present available data, and ask the people to relate it to their own experience. Then ask about outcomes per se, i.e. to what degree people are learning to work together to solve their problems. Only then can we ask people's opinions about the actual or potential relationship between the two (what I would call outcomes and impacts). Here, of course, we get into questions of scope: the local initiative may seem insignificant in the big picture. But perhaps there lessons learned that could be disseminated and applied elsewhere, or they might want to try advocacy to promote political change.

We need to avoid two extremes: setting overly ambitious and irrelevant project "targets" like meeting the overall MDG's or eliminating poverty in the city as the result of a limited local initiative, or forgetting impact altogether because it is supposedly out of reach and not measurable.

Even if we can't establish any plausible link between our limited activities and major impact goals, it is worthwhile to keep our eyes on the prize, rather than burying our heads in the sand by only looking at "capacity development."

Robert Walker

~

4) What is your definition of an M&E System?

Many a times we here this term being used in our organisations. Can someone break it down for me what their understanding of an M&E system is?

The fact that we use the term system means there are critical parts or constituents, which

individually would not function effectively but when put together achieves what the system was set up for.

If you agree with me on this assumption, then what is an M&E system? What are the constituents of this system?

Tito Matafeni

~

As you've rightly stated, a system is a set of components that form a 'whole'.

The important construct in systems thinking is that these same components when they do form this 'whole' then display properties which are of the 'whole' rather than the sum of the properties of the individual components.

In my view, in M&E the critical focus is on a system that 'acquires information for decision-making'.

Again, in my view, the following will form the key family of components in any M&E system:

- people (producers and users of information, as well as organizational structures)
- procedures (rules/know-how/practices that facilitate information gathering, processing and dissemination)
- data (meaningful items of explicit and implicit knowledge)
- technology (hardware/software/communications infrastructure/journals/publication formats).

As such, one may define an M&E system as a collection of people, procedures, data and technology that interact to provide timely information for authorized decision-makers.

This definition is a modification of the definition IT professionals will give for an information system. It isn't perfect but it's adequate.

Dan Onyeje

~

For me, the M&E system means:

- a logframe (or a similar doc) having clearly defined OVIs and MOV
- tools for data collection
- database for data storage and management e.g. relational access-based database
- guidelines and plan for data collection and data analysis
- reporting system for reflection and learning

Tri Ha

~

I see an M&E system as a type of what I call 'outcomes system' - there are many of these systems with different names (e.g. performance management system, results management system, accountability system, managing for outcomes, etc.)

There are five 'building-blocks' of such systems all good systems should have, which are:

6. An outcomes model - (a logic model, logframe, results chain etc which set out what it is that you think will affect what to achieve results)
7. Tracking measurements of the things within the outcomes model (which can be measured) - their mere measurement does not mean that that proves that a particular program improved them (called not-necessarily demonstrable indicators (also called state or environmental indicators some times).
8. Demonstrable indicators which by being measured are taken as having been caused by a particular program (often down at the outputs level).
9. Outcome/impact evaluations which are more one-off evaluations which attempt to prove that a particular program improved high-level outcomes
10. Non-outcome/impact evaluation which does not try to prove that a particular program improved high-level outcomes but just attempts to describe programs (process evaluation) or improve programs (formative evaluation).

This is all set out in the article here:

<http://knol.google.com/k/paul-duignan-phd/the-five-building-blocks-of-outcomes/2m7zd68aaz774/27>

In particular look at the five 'building-blocks' diagram in the article.

Paul Duignan

~

Describing a system is an exercise in modelling (especially for the less tangible elements). In systems thinking you have to be certain whether you're describing a 'dynamic complexity' (involving relationships) or a 'detail complexity' (concerning only structure or anatomy).

For instance, if I were talking about "mobility/transport system", I'd be as interested in the qualifications and behaviour of the driver as I would be in the anatomy of the vehicle. Why? Because such a system has dynamic complexity. The driver's input or ability to make inputs has overriding influence on outcome. So also an M&E system (the human element is overriding).

A description of an M&E system that focuses only on the tools and approaches used by M&E workers does not fully represent a functioning M&E system in terms of dynamic complexity.

I have always maintained that the elements (people, procedures, data and technology/tools) of the M&E system as I described below is only a minimum set. But it is a minimum set that is almost complete. A significant omission is MONEY (which I always include when my audience includes top managers or political office holders).

An alternative approach to describing an M&E system is to list all those elements you would give a critical look when asked to assess an M&E system. For example, Health Metrics Network (a WHO-based NGO) lists the following elements when assessing a health-based M&E system: information system resources (policies, personnel, leadership, budget and equipment), indicators, data sources, data management, information products, information dissemination & use [in the order listed!].

However I consider this to be merely an elaboration of the definition I had given earlier.

Dan Onyeje

~~

5) Measuring Capacity

I am doing a research on capacity development initiatives in Afghanistan and want to propose some M&E tools for the measurement of capacities as part of my recommendations. The capacity development initiatives that I am looking at contain theoretical trainings (delivered as formal training workshops), on the job coaching (employment of technical advisors within the organization/government institutions), provision of work related equipment (computers, office furniture), delivery of reading material/resources etc. I would like to know some tools for:

- Setting up baseline for capacities on any of the above
- Measuring the capacity at the end of the provision of theoretical training as well as after a longer period to see the overall impact
- Measuring the affect of presence of a formal coach
- -Measuring the change in capacities

Mushtaq Rahim

~

(attachments)

UNDP's "Capacity Assessment Tool" is very useful for generating the baseline data, for measuring the change over time as well as for finding out the underlying capacity constraints and solutions. Please find attached herewith a copy. I hope it will be useful to you.

Singh Bhandari

~

I would like to add on in your query.

First, is develop an M & E conceptual framework (or sub-system, if it is one of the components of a bigger project) on the hierarchy - i.e. trainee (pre and post training evaluation, institutional level - organization (indicators based on the training objectives) and client level (impact at the communities). This would also include peer and supervisor level.

Second, is have an M & E matrix - based on the mandated and demand driven training. This can be add on based on evaluation of gaps, in capacities. I would suggest that a capacity needs assessment be conducted as the basis of the M & E matrix.

Third, is that the basis of M & E questions, be based on the training objectives conducted including frequency, basis of also the action plan after the training. On Technical advisors' it is based on KRAs. The outcome is linked with the project development objectives.

On measuring changes in capacities at institutional level - it is very good to have a simple performance measurement system.

Ann Lily Marie O. Uvero

~

Counterpart International implements Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS) in Afghanistan for the last five years. Purpose of this program is to build the capacity of local Afghan civil society organizations usually know as Organizational Development (OD). Counterpart has been implementing similar program in Central Asian states for the last 13 years. When we talk of capacity building then its tailor-made developmental intervention and multi-tiered integrated approach focusing on areas such as but not limited to vision, mission, goal, objectives of organizations, planning and implementation process and strategies, financial sustainability and policies, administration and management, need identification and assessment, program planning and design, monitoring and evaluation, gender, etc...

A developmental intervention contains all of them or some of them in order to build the capacity of a given organization. These interventions are tailor-made based on the need identification/action plan to help the organization grow in such areas.

In order to measure the change in capacity, their must be baseline data available on the capacity. This will help to measure any change in the capacity after a period of time.

We provide integrated capacity building assistance to the target organizations through direct trainings, technical assistance, consultancies and capacity building tours for target partners. This includes training to staff of partner organizations on strategic planning, appreciative community appraisal and planning, advocacy, adult methodology, monitoring and evaluation, gender and gender analysis framework, civil society organization and community, media, administration and human resource etc.

We establish a team of three employees who have usually more direct contacts and interaction with respective organizations throughout the period in which capacity building interventions been provided to target organizations. This team goes and interviews 3-5 key staff members of the organization. During this interview, key aspects of the organizational development are discussed and information is collected. These aspects include but not limited to the areas mentioned above. Each surveyor has a capacity assessment scale checklists and each of them rank the organization based on their best judgment in the light of the information and documents presented by the key staff.

After the survey, the three members• survey team sits together and discusses their feedback, conclusions and finally fills in a single capacity assessment scale checklist for a said organization. The single capacity assessment scale is the final capacity assessment measure. This then goes into the database. Each year, the last capacity assessment scale is compared with the baseline scale and change is identified against the benchmark.

Hope this adds to the other information provided by the group. Below is the capacity assessment checklist for your information. You may need to contextualize it based on your capacity building interventions.

Dad Mohammed Hamdard

~

Further to Mustaq Rahim's query on organizational assessment tools, does anyone have tools adapted to governmental departments and organizations? Particularly police forces and other judicial entities?

Terence Fitzgerald

~

(attachments)

Here is one that we use – adopted from Pact, Inc's Organizational Assessment tool. Baseline info is done out of initial assessment. A final assessment is done after the interventions – most of which include the ones you mention; trainings (delivered as formal training workshops), on the job coaching, mentoring, systems development/review, oversight during implementation of capacity building plans, provision of work related equipment (computers, office furniture), delivery of reading material/resources, accompaniment etc. I have included a sample one here

Titus Syengo

~

Most of what has been shared has been organizational. Is there anything that you have where the unit is the individual – i.e., how do we assess capacity of individual people?

Richard Margoluis

~

If I remember it right, the process which I co-facilitated several batches of Capacity needs assessment was:

6. Review of the mission/vision of the organization/ project development objectives (logframe)/performance measurement of the unit/organization (sort of ISO). Compare it with the job description/ TOR of each individual
7. Conduct of SWOT analysis
8. Delineate the difference between capacity building needs and organizational issues - equipments, enabling environment - incentives, other HR issues, etc.
9. Cluster the needs
10. Prioritize, schedule and identify modalities - practicum, field visit, formal training, on-line sites, mentoring/coaching, or a mixture of it, access to toolkits, etc.

This was on staff working on the following sectors: environment, governance, sustainable agriculture, micro-finance and micro-enterprise development. This was linked to improved service delivery.

This was also linked to the timely delivery of capacity needs including the project cycle strategy.

Ann Lily Marie O. Uvero

~

I see you have received a handful of technical advice from the network members already and those are quite helpful. I just like to add that you may also want to adopt and adapt a standardized Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT). This tool is very useful as it itemizes the key elements and scoring parameters of an organisation's technical and administrative capacity in an easy-to-use matrix format. It also allows u to set performance targets for the applicable key capacity elements in the form of observable milestones and benchmarks that then becomes the basis for performance assessments and capacity evaluations.

By the way, I had the privilege of working in Kabul as M&E officer for the Afghanistan Parliamentary Assistance Project (APAP) and I will be happy to lend you a helping hand where possible.
Emmanuel Uche

~

I am extremely thankful for the amount of knowledge I have gained from your responses. The provided info is a huge wealth for me. However, as one of the colleagues has asked, will it be possible/are there tools that could look at individuals too? In addition, I would seek an opinion on utilization of Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) surveys that are usually used for health sector trainings. Don't you think this could be adopted for the capacity assessment in the other areas while measuring change in the capacity of organizations as well as individuals? I am proposing this because most of the times we see that people are trained but they only join the sessions and go as they had come with little change in their capacity level while we keep reporting of people trained. I mean they really don't learn or focus on learning. There are also people who do learn but the addition to new knowledge don't really change their attitude towards performing their job. For example, there have been hundreds of trainings on participatory management in Afghanistan but little has changed in this regard. Furthermore, people also do believe in what they learn but due to not being used to, don't really practice it.

Hence, I would like to:

Have a technical view on KAP surveys as well as the tools/formats used for the same,
Hear on measuring the capacity of individuals,
Mushtaq Rahim

~~

7) UCP/V analysis

In its move from the traditional project based intervention to program approach, CARE International in Ethiopia has identified three impact groups. The next step is to conduct a UCP/V analysis to understand more the root causes of the problems of these groups and ultimately define our programme/s. "UCP/V analysis" stands for Underlying Causes of Poverty/Vulnerability

There are a number of qualitative and quantitative methods/tools that will help us to make the assessment. What I would like to ask the group is, from the practical point of view, which tools are more effective for the purpose? What caution do we need to take to get reliable info? Some colleagues are suggesting balancing the qualitative and quantitative data collection. Some are bias towards the qualitative one (I am one of them). What is your thought in this regard?
Asnakew Assefa

~

Your questions to all regarding assessment to find out the root cause seems simple but it is tricky to answer it. As we all know that there are different schools of thought in relation to how/what can be collected data that are close to the truth.

What I believe that there is not concrete rule and regulation that can be solely applied in the field. Coming to your question, I would suggest to use qualitative study using Focus Group Discussion, in depth Interviews and few observation. It helps to dig up the root causes and these three combinations also help to triangulate the information which is often neglected.

After qualitative study, if you feel to have some information to support specific findings, you can conduct quantitative study. I am also supporting the balance of qualitative and quantitative study but I am more focusing on qualitative because so far I understand, the study will be focused on certain beneficiaries than whole population.

Sanjay Rijal

~

To my experiences, there are pros and cons of both methods. What types of method you would use will depend on what types of data you want to collect. If you want to collect " why, how and cause and effects" types of information, it would be good to use qualitative methods. If you need to collect, on the other hand, information on quantitative indicators, and generalise your findings to a district or region or for certain groups of beneficiaries, it would be good to use quantitative techniques. I personally do not see the need to be biased to any, which is often the case with many of us development professionals, as both methods are complementary to each other. I would suggest using a balance approach depending on the nature of information you would like to collect. For UCP analysis, (if i am not mistaken, does this refer to underlying causes of poverty model which the CARE often uses?) , MAY BE you may need to use more qualitative methods.

Dinesh

~

Actually qualitative and quantitative data collection methods are not two distinct schools of thoughts! Both should be complimentary to each other.

While considering your objective, that is, finding out the root cause of the problems, I think you have to concentrate more on qualitative techniques. To support or confirm your results you can make use of quantitative data.

But while collecting data through qualitative methods you have to be more cautious to get away from the possible errors.

Sunitha Thampi

~

With regard the qualitative tools aspect of your question I would recommend to look up PRA/PLA techniques. Also borrowing from LFA, a problem tree in all its variants brings you to the heart of your question; what does your group see as the root causes. in following steps you might look into ranking of causes.

In addition tools used in Participatory Poverty Assessments could give you some inspiration on how to asses or opening up the dialogue on policies, governance or rights.

Some sources to start your search

<http://www.fao.org/Participation/>

http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_toolbox.html

<http://www.eldis.org/participation/index.htm>

I do like the care's Program Quality Digital Library Under the program design, monitoring and evaluation:

<http://pqdl.care.org/practice/Design%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Jozef Serneels

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M&E Online Training

There are a number of free on line classes here:

<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/training.html>

Some of these are short, one time classes, but a few are semester long, like this one Areol, action research and evaluation:

<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/areol/areolhome.html>

Gene Shackman