

INNOVATIONS

with Evaluation Methods:

*Lessons from a Community of Practice
in International Development*



INNOVER

avec les méthodes d'évaluation:

*Leçons tirées d'une Communauté de Pratique
en développement international*

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Participating organizations

Canada World Youth (CWY) offers world-renowned international programs to youth from Canada and abroad who, through their participation in community-driven development projects, acquire the leadership skills that allow them to become agents of change.

Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) is one of Canada's leading volunteer-based development organizations. Since 1967, through partnership and the dedication of our volunteers who are highly skilled and experienced in their professions, we have completed more than 46,000 assignments focused on improving the economic and social well-being of peoples across Canada and in more than 120 countries.

La mission du le **Centre d'étude et de coopération international** (CECI) est de combattre la pauvreté et l'exclusion. À cette fin, le CECI renforce les capacités de développement des communautés défavorisées; il appuie des initiatives de paix, de droits humains et d'équité; il mobilise des ressources et favorise l'échange de savoir-faire.

The mission of **Crossroads International** (CI) is to create a more equitable and sustainable world. Collaborating with civil society organizations in West and Southern Africa as well as in South America, CI's work is concentrated in two sectors: sustainable livelihoods and women's rights. Volunteer exchanges – North-South, South-North and South-South – are the primary means by which partner organisations and CI work to promote women's rights and reduce poverty.

Cuso International supports people-centred development through volunteering. It collaborates with local partner groups in more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean to identify areas of greatest need, and then develops strategic volunteer positions. Our volunteers come from many professional and cultural backgrounds. They come from across Canada and the United States, and also from many developing countries.

Oxfam Canada's mission is to build lasting solutions to global poverty and injustice. We work with allies in Canada and around the world to change the policies and practices that perpetuate human suffering. We support organizations in poor communities in Central America and Cuba, the Horn and East Africa, Southern Africa and Asia in their struggle to secure basic rights. OC strives to be a centre of excellence on capacity building linked to women's rights and gender equality.

Oxfam-Québec, est une organisation dynamique et engagée composée de personnes qui travaillent ensemble à la construction d'un monde sans pauvreté. Les gens sont au cœur de nos actions ! Ils réalisent des projets de développement, ils sauvent des vies humaines en acheminant de l'aide humanitaire d'urgence, ils effectuent des collectes de fonds pour appuyer les populations au Sud, ils mènent des campagnes de mobilisation pour un changement durable et ils mobilisent les jeunes du Québec.

Solidarité Union Coopération (SUCO) est un organisme canadien de solidarité et de coopération internationale fondé en 1961, qui a pour objectif l'appui au développement durable des communautés et l'éducation à la solidarité internationale. SUCO, c'est avant tout des personnes engagées et dynamiques qui travaillent au Québec, comme dans les pays où nous œuvrons, à la promotion de la prise en charge démocratique du développement, en misant d'abord sur les populations, afin de contribuer à l'émergence et au renforcement de la société civile et afin de lutter contre toutes les formes d'exclusions.

USC Canada was founded by Dr. Lotta Hitschmanova in 1945 as the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada. Our Mission is to promote vibrant family farms, strong rural communities, and healthy ecosystems around the world. With engaged Canadians and partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, we support programs, training, and policies that strengthen biodiversity, food sovereignty, and the rights of those at the heart of resilient food systems – women, indigenous peoples, and small-scale farmers.

World University Service of Canada (WUSC) is a leading Canadian non-profit organization in international development, committed to building a more equitable and sustainable world. We work with a unique and powerful network of post-secondary institutions, private-sector partners and volunteers to provide education, employment and empowerment opportunities that improve the lives of millions of disadvantaged youth around the world.

This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada/La réalisation de ce travail a été rendue possible grâce au soutien financier du Centre de Recherche pour le Développement international, Ottawa, Canada.

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The case studies are authored by various members of the Community of Practice.

The views expressed in this research report are those of the participants and interviewees and do not necessarily represent those of IDRC

Nous remercions le Centre de recherches pour le développement international (CRDI) établi à Ottawa, Canada, en particulier le Programme des Partenariats canadiens pour son soutien financier, technique et logistique qui nous a permis de réaliser à la fois cet important projet et ce rapport de recherche.

L'élaboration de ce rapport de recherche a sollicité la contribution de Daniel Buckles, (SAS2 Dialogue) comme rédacteur principal, ainsi que la participation au comité de rédaction de Loredana Marchetti, de Fabienne Pierre-Jacques, Ghizlaine Ben Zerrouk et Jacques Chevalier.

Les études de cas sont le fruit d'un travail impliquant plusieurs organisations de coopération internationale, membres de la Communauté de pratique.

Les opinions exprimées dans ce rapport de recherche sont celles des participants et des personnes interrogées et ne reflètent pas nécessairement celles du CRDI

Abbreviations and acronyms

CECI	Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
CESO	Canadian Executive Service Organization
CoP	Community of Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWY	Canada World Youth
GER	Gender Equality Review
IDRC	The International Development Research Centre
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
ME&L	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
PIE	Planning, Inquiry and Evaluation
RBM	Results-based Management
SUCO	Solidarité Union Coopération
VCA	Volunteer Cooperation Agency
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

Introduction

Many Canadian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working globally are actively looking for ways to innovate in the use of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in their work. The search is prompted by a desire to learn about and improve the effectiveness of international development programming, and satisfy the demands of widely used accountability frameworks such as Results-Based Management (RBM). The government-sponsored Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and CSO responses to the agreement, highlight the challenge of striking a meaningful balance between two legitimate expectations: honest and action-oriented learning from on-going work, and accounting for both resources and results to donors and, importantly, to the intended beneficiaries of international development.

In February 2010 a group of 11 CSOs located in the Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto triangle jointly began to experiment with different approaches to action learning and accounting for resources and results (see the list of participating organizations). The collaboration involved meetings every three months to assess needs, learn new methods, and share experiences and results of applications to planning, monitoring and evaluation activities within their organizations and with their partners in developing countries. The process was supported by two university professors and consultants, Daniel Buckles and Jacques Chevalier, who provided training and coaching in M&E design and facilitation. Buckles and Chevalier also developed and tested with members new methods to assess their learning systems and evaluate impacts. The interactions, based on mutual learning and accountability among participants, continued for two years with consistent engagement from most organizations.¹

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), through its Canadian Partnerships Program, launched the process and funded the core costs of the community of practice (CoP), called “Bridging Gaps” to reflect the common commitment to bridge gaps between evaluation methodologies, and between organizations working with different evaluation approaches. Included were organizations that work primarily in English or in French, coordinated by Montreal-based Canada World Youth.² The objectives of the funding as defined by the group were to:

- Assess the various planning, monitoring and evaluation methods of the organizations involved;
- Foster and document methodological innovation in the field of monitoring and evaluation; and

¹ One organization stopped participating in the community shortly after it started because the focus and composition of the community did not fit their mandate and programmatic interests (most active members were involved in volunteer sending activities, which is a limited set of international development programming). Two other organizations stopped after the first year, either because members were reassigned away from evaluation tasks within their organizations or because of competing organizational commitments. Changes in personnel assigned to engage with the community of practice also affected the continuity of individual participation for several other organizations. Nevertheless, 10 organizations, typically with 2 individuals, participated regularly for one year and 8 organizations for two years.

² Meetings alternated between Ottawa and Montreal, with participants from Toronto participating in both. All participants needed to fully understand both English and French, while speaking in the language of their choice.

- Support the development of organizational learning systems that can meet both learning and accountability objectives.

This document gathers a collection of stories of innovation from members of the community of practice. The innovations center around the use of participatory methods to enhance learning from evaluations and mobilize evidence and analysis from different stakeholders in projects, programs and organizational hierarchies. The methods help to bridge the processes of fact-finding, analysis and decision-making normally separated into different stages and conducted by different actors using mainstream methodologies such as surveys, interviews, or case studies. They mesh and integrate both qualitative and quantitative thinking and findings to support interactive engagement and mutual accountability among stakeholders. This is a principle often ignored in evaluations carried out by third party experts as well as in evaluations by proxy (assessing one's work by reporting on the results of partners) or in individual self-evaluations (isolated from challenges by others).

The stories address key evaluation tasks in organizations: developing criteria and indicators for new programs, routine monitoring of program results, and evaluation of strategic questions, including impact evaluation. Several deal with the need to periodically review monitoring and evaluation systems at the organizational level, and make plans to adjust or update the way evaluation is conducted and how it interacts with other activities in the organization. All of the stories describe real-life events meaningful to each organization, not training activities or practice sessions. Each one was written primarily to document the process for internal purposes, and then edited for this publication to highlight and share the methodological innovations and evaluation design considerations of potential interest to the broader international development community. The details of results are not emphasized in the stories, but rather the methods, design and reflections on what made it meaningful to the organization.

Three stories speak to systematic reviews of current monitoring and evaluation systems. Cuso International's story shares the details of a specific review exercise, undertaken by all members of the CoP using a tool developed by Chevalier and Buckles for the purpose. It engages members of an organization in reflection on the balance and integration of three components of a learning system – planning, inquiry and evaluation (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a). Cuso International's review took place in the context of a plan to develop “fit-for-purpose” evaluation systems across a large and diverse organization. The Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) review began prior to the community of practice, and made use of participatory methods to engage additional stakeholders and deepen the analysis of strategic gaps. The story reflects particularly on the problem of fragmentation (silo effects) preventing the active use of evaluation results for different purposes by different parts of the organization. Crossroads International also reviewed its monitoring and evaluation system in relation to planning and research activities of the organization. The results of the review point to specific changes needed in monitoring practices, and to the strategic role that research could play in creating a more balanced and integrated learning system.

Participatory methods for ongoing monitoring of program results is the focus for stories from Canada World Youth (CWY) and Solidarité Union Coopération (SUCO). The CWY story describes a range of uses of a single tool, The Socratic Wheel, to engage youth and youth-based organizations in setting their own targets and tracking their own progress, either at an individual

or an organizational level. The account includes several side-bars showing other applications of the Wheel by members of the community of practice, to give readers a full appreciation of the complexity and flexibility of this deceptively simple tool. The collaborative development of criteria and indicators, a key moment in any evaluative process, is the focus for the SUCO story. It shows how SUCO engaged with partners in four countries to examine the fit between partner priorities and its own new program directions, and put in place the building blocks for later monitoring and evaluation.

USC Canada shares a story from a gender equality review process conceived prior to the formation of the community of practice and significantly redesigned in light of questions raised by engagement with the community. The story focuses on the evaluation design process, that is, the design options and design decisions made when developing and implementing the review with partners and the communities they work with. It highlights questions and implications that come with the decision to prioritize learning goals – learning by whom, at what level (program, project, partner, community) and for what purpose (planning, publication, sharing)?

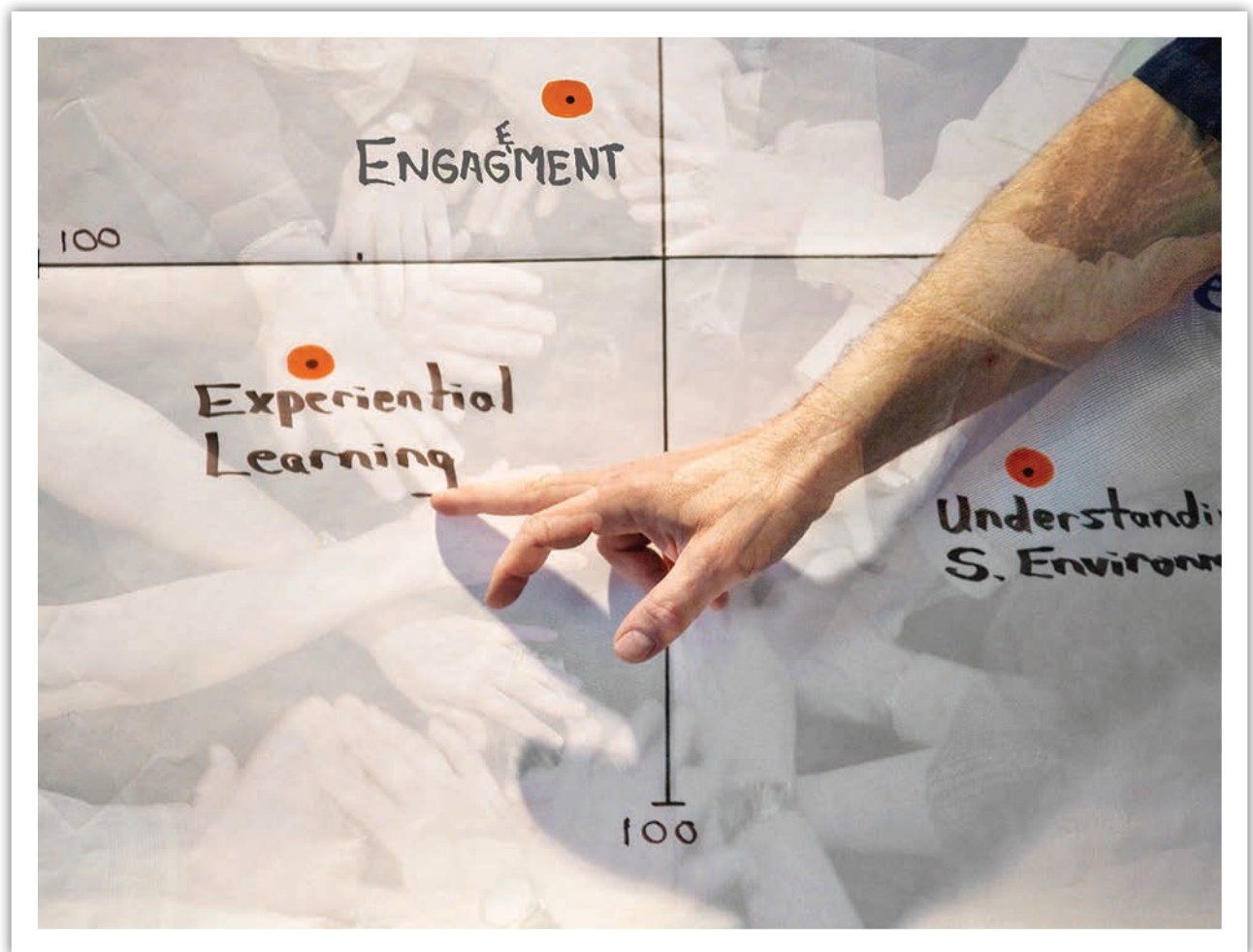
An experiment with a new approach to assessing impacts is at the centre of two concluding stories: a story from Uniterra, a multi-country initiative managed jointly by the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and an assessment of the impact of the community of practice on M&E by participating organizations. Both draw on a tool developed by Chevalier and Buckles (2013) to address various issues raised by the challenge of assessing impacts involving complex causality. The Uniterra story illustrates the steps in the tool, called *Attribution and Contribution*, using results from the assessment of an HIV/AIDS program in Burkina Faso. The CoP impact assessment summarizes and contrasts results from a structured interview with members by Daniel Buckles. The purpose of this impact assessment was to develop an overall understanding of the extent to which observed changes in monitoring and evaluation by organizations can be attributed to participation in the community of practice, and to explore the implications for organizational plans.

While all participating organizations assumed responsibility for documenting their experiences in the CoP, none were obliged to produce a standardized report. Every story is different in style and focus, reflecting the perspectives of individual authors but also planned uses of the written contributions by the organizations themselves. The collection is consequently an expression not only of innovations in evaluation methods but also a guiding principle of the CoP – every evaluation, and every documented experience, has its own purpose and use, whether it be telling the story to inspire, learning for planning, or accounting for resources and results.

Daniel Buckles

October, 2013
Ottawa, Canada

Developing Learning Systems





Cuso's Current Learning System and the Shift to "Fit for Purpose" Systems

Don Cockburn and Daniel Buckles¹

Background

There has been longstanding internal dissatisfaction in Cuso International with our ability to tell persuasive results stories and to present evidence of what our work achieves in the aggregate. And yet despite this dissatisfaction we have a history – until very recently – of minimal investment in monitoring and evaluation. A recently adopted Gender Policy includes a commitment to “establish annual monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to actively hold ourselves . . . accountable to high gender equality and gender equity standards and to institutionalize our learning”, but these mechanisms are not yet in place.

More generally, there is growing unease among Volunteer Cooperation Agencies about our collective ability to convincingly demonstrate “value for money” in a competitive international development funding environment. Preparations for submission to CIDA of our next Volunteer Cooperation Program proposal have underscored the difficulties in aggregating results across multiple, diverse sub-programs and in the measurement and attribution of beneficiary-level results. They have also prompted basic questions about our program choices that a better monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system might have helped us answer. We are dealing with increasing numbers of project proposals in which we are required to demonstrate competence in M&E, make impressive promises about results and avoid unmanageable performance measurement commitments. Working through multiple strategic partnerships and dealing with multiple donors is adding new layers of complexity.

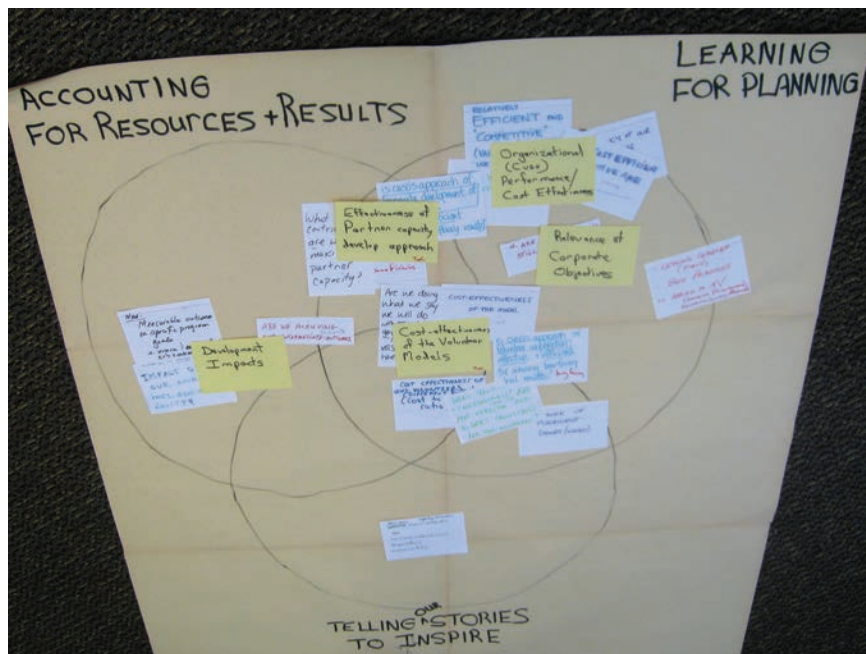
Beyond issues of external accountability, questions have been raised internally about whether our M&E tools, processes and practices give us (field staff, Head Quarters) what we need for program management and learning for program improvement, as well as for understanding our own impact in terms that matter to us. There is ongoing interest in, but limited application of, participatory, learning-oriented approaches to M&E. Cuso International's participation in the community of practice (CoP) has increased awareness of the range of possible applications of such approaches.

¹ The authors acknowledge the contributions of Joanne Owens to the work of Cuso International with the CoP.

Our current strategic plan includes among its priority objectives to improve our capacity to measure and evaluate the impact, efficiency and effectiveness of our work against key outcomes, as one means to support learning and innovation in development practice. A Cuso International M&E Working Group established in the autumn of 2012 undertook an initial exploration of current practice and areas for system improvement. An initial scan of working group members was followed by a survey of our Latin America and Caribbean region program staff. This work has since been integrated into a formal internal project to design an appropriate monitoring, evaluation and learning (ME&L) system and develop an ME&L capacity building strategy and action plan for Cuso International, based on a sound understanding of our needs as an organization as well of the issues, options and trade-offs involved in meeting them. A first step in this process, reported below, was an assessment of Cuso International's current learning system using the tool Planning, Inquiry and Evaluation (P.I.E.) shared during capacity building activities of the community of practice.

A Learning System Review

A review in June, 2013 of Cuso International's ME&L system engaged 12 Cuso International headquarters / field staff and senior managers, seven of whom were also members of the team responsible for supporting the design and implementation of our M&E capacity building project. The process began with a discussion of the current emphasis of evaluation at Cuso International in relation to three distinct functions or purposes of evaluation: Accounting for resources and results, Learning for planning, and Storytelling to inspire action. Using a Venn diagram tool (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a) to represent each of these purposes and potential overlaps between them participants individually identified a purpose they felt represented where Cuso International was currently putting its attention. The picture that emerged suggested an overemphasis on accountability (particularly to the donor), followed to a lesser extent by attention to storytelling (particularly for fundraising). Learning for planning was not entirely neglected, but was judged to receive much less attention currently, and to be ad hoc at best. Workshop participants went on to identify, through a "free list and pile sort" exercise a set of key evaluation questions they wanted to see an improved ME&L system address. These were ranked in order of priority, by two sub-groups made up of management and non-management personnel respectively. A conclusion drawn from the process was the need for a shift toward greater relative emphasis on learning.



Building on this conclusion, participants went on to discuss what learning systems are all about, and how to build a better learning system. To support the discussion, participants used the P.I.E. tool from the CoP to assess the balance and integration of three main components in a learning system: planning, inquiry/research and evaluation. Participants assessed Cuso International's learning system first in terms of the relative level of effort actually devoted to planning, inquiry and evaluation activities, as well as the degree of integration between them. Each component was then assessed separately in small groups against a set of criteria and indicators on a scale of 0 to 3. The criteria for assessing each component in the learning system were:

- Is it grounded in action?
- Does it mediate differences (participation)?
- Does it use a range of tools?
- Is it at the appropriate time?
- Is it scaled to the right level of detail?

Figure 1: The balance and integration of P.I.E. at Cuso International, and ratings on the qualities of each component (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a).

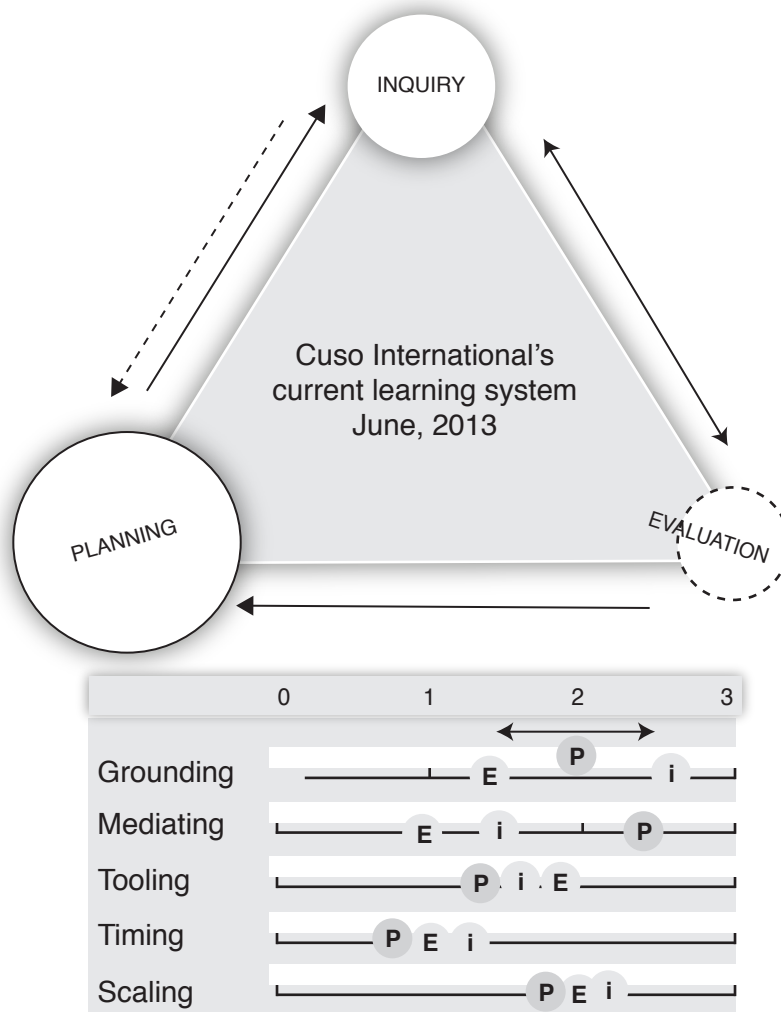


Figure 1 shows the result of the plenary and small group process. It suggests that from the point of view of participants in the analysis Cuso International currently invests considerable time and resources in planning activities and to a lesser extent in inquiry activities, represented by relative size and density of the circles showing each of these components in a learning system. The two components also contribute to each other (represented by arrows between them), although the results of inquiry activities are not well integrated into planning activities. It was also noted that planning tends to occur in silos in different parts of the organization.

By contrast, relatively little time and resources are invested in evaluation activities (especially those focused on Cuso International's new concern about assessing impact). Furthermore, results from evaluation activities only weakly contribute to planning activities, and do not receive support from planning activities (for example, not built into plans and budgeted). The arrows between components also indicate that inquiry activities do provide some guidance to evaluation activities, and vice versa. Overall, however, the learning system lacks balance (insufficient attention to clear and priority evaluation activities) and integration (weak contributions of one component to the other and non-existent in some directions).

The causes of these imbalances and divisions/fragmentation can be seen in part through the assessment of the current features of each component on five factors (see table). At present, the planning component at Cuso International and the inquiry component do contribute directly to actions and implementation processes, although less well in the case of plans made with external partners (indicated by an arrow showing a range of scores on this factor).⁶ Evaluation is poorly grounded in follow-up action and course correction (low score on this factor), an observation consistent with the fragmentation problem. The planning component engages many of the right stakeholders (a score of 2.5 on the mediation factor), although both inquiry and evaluation are much less successful in this regard. For all three components the range of tools used is modest (middle score), possibly indicative of weak innovation and experimentation methodologically. All three components do well with respect to scale of the activities – they tend to generate the right level of detail for their purpose (not too much, not too little). The most problematic issue, however, is the timing of the activities associated with all three components. They are too often out of sync with needs (poor timing), a feature that may be fundamental to other problems in the current system (along with participation/mediation, in the cases of evaluation and inquiry).

The analysis of the balance and integration of the P.I.E. components by the group, and discussions regarding the various possible purposes of evaluation within a learning system, led to several tentative decisions regarding follow-up actions:

- There is a lot of planning happening, but in silos. Need to be more coordinated and better reflect inquiry and evaluation.
- Allow enough time for past and future evaluations to be included in planning

⁶ Planning received a range of scores against the “grounding” criterion since the group noted that Cuso’s ability to develop plans that lead to action is impacted by others:

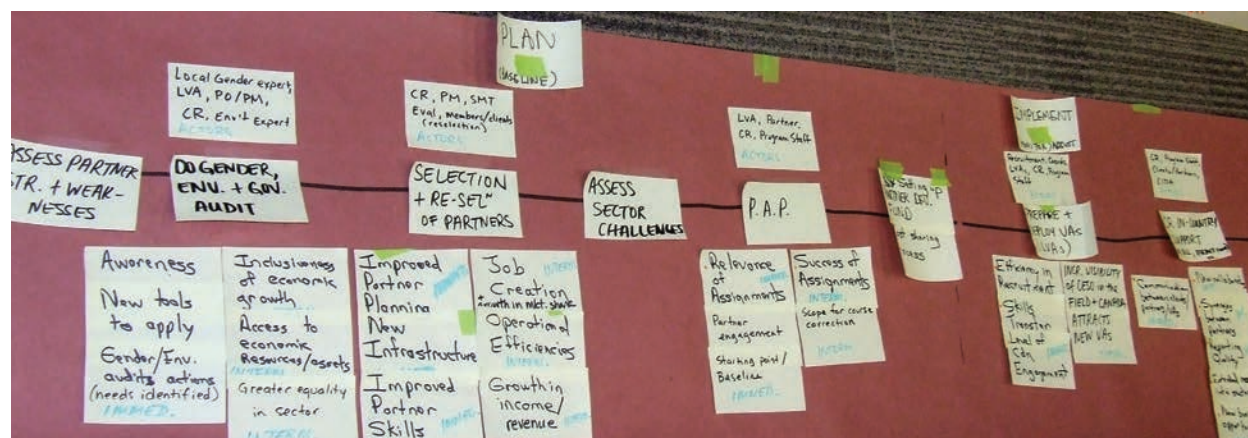
- Cuso’s own plans (corporate) – 2.5
- Shared plans (HQ and program/field) – 2
- Shared plans (HQ and funder or strategic partner) – 1.5

- Systematically be more inclusive of diverse voices in a meaningful way
- Planning to draw more from inquiry and evaluation
- Increase participatory evaluation (built in)
- Create space for learning from evaluations and inquiries
- Be more systematic in planning for evaluation
- Rethink annual institutional planning cycle
- Institute a multi-year planning cycle

These findings also helped to reinforce and sharpen project plans aimed at developing a model for designing “fit-for-purpose” monitoring and evaluation systems at Cuso International. “Fit-for purpose” implies system design that redresses the identified imbalance in, and inadequate integration of, our learning system, and that is a good fit for:

- the characteristics of the programming in which Cuso International is engaged,
- the evaluation questions and monitoring needs the system is expected to address,
- the context in which ME&L activities are to be carried out.

This in turn implies equipping ourselves with the capacity, across the organization, to design and implement ME&L activities that meet these criteria.



Breaking Down Silos: Program Collaboration and Innovation in Monitoring and Evaluation at CESO

Flavia Barandiaran

Introduction

For many years, reporting obligations at the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) centered on the number of Canadian volunteers sent overseas (“Canadian Engagement”). The organization’s approach to evaluations tended to focus on individual volunteer assignments rather than the collective impact of the assignments or the broader picture of development impacts of volunteer sending. Informal feedback and stories of progress and success were regularly shared with CESO by clients, partners and volunteers but these remained largely undocumented and unanalyzed.³ The information collected was anecdotal and without a standard set of indicators other than a few outputs related to volunteer participation. Consequently, it was difficult to link the success of individual assignments to overall progress on various goals at the partner, sector or country level.

This narrow perspective on the contribution of evaluation to programming began to change in 2008 when CESO formalized a partnership model, building on successful experiences with some local partners under an Eastern European program that ended in 2009. The new approach was premised on close collaboration between CESO and local partners, from the planning stages of programs through to monitoring and evaluation. It also included a crucial institution-strengthening or institutional capacity building component with the local partner, as well as technical and advisory assignments with the partner’s constituents, members or clients. Following an organization-wide review of CESO’s Strategic Plan in 2010, the organization introduced various structural changes in 2011 to support the partnership model, including streamlining operations and building closer links between the International Program where the partnership model was first applied and the Evaluations Department. A general consensus also emerged that National and International programming (including their associated processes and systems) should be better aligned to reflect one standard across the organization.

³ CESO provides volunteer services to client groups (for example, a small business) through in-country partner organizations such as a Chamber of Commerce.

Similarly, the Evaluations team in the central office in Toronto began to collect feedback and results from Volunteer Advisors and clients regarding operational processes, which were then shared with the appropriate staff: Montreal office program staff, recruitment staff and volunteers, Program Coordinators, etc. This was the beginning of a systematic breaking down of silos in different areas of work across the organization, to better integrate planning, programming, evaluation and reporting. Where previously International and National program teams, and the different Canadian offices of CESO, had separate evaluation forms and processes, the new approach called for a transition to similar (if not the same) tools, to be able to capture similar data or information that would be valuable to the organization as a whole. The question this challenge raised, however, was what kind of monitoring, evaluation and learning (ME&L) system should be used?

Timely and Strategic Direction

CESO's experience with Result-based Management (RBM) had shown that it was an effective method to manage large projects or programs, and was useful for reporting purposes. However, it was generally recognized by the organization that RBM focused evaluation activities on donor reporting. The full scope of the RBM approach was not used or expressed throughout the organization, and it had little impact on learning and programming decisions. Dissatisfaction among staff, combined with increasing competition among Canadian non-profit organizations for limited funding, prompted CESO to explore new options. The primary concern was to ensure monitoring and evaluation would serve the needs of staff across the organization, and to address an increasingly wide range of issues raised by the scope and complexity of the partnership model in CESO programs.

CESO's engagement with the "Bridging Gaps" Community of Practice (CoP) provided a timely opportunity to examine the gaps and issues present in CESO's ME&L system. The participation of other similar Volunteer Cooperation Agencies (VCAs) in the CoP made it clear that CESO was not alone in wanting to improve evaluations and learning processes. Importantly, the focus on participatory processes and learning was a new dimension that had previously been lacking at the organization, albeit unintentionally. Exposure to participatory tools and methods, along with the expectation that COP participants would apply or test these at their organizations, opened the door to a new kind of examination and reflection on CESO's evaluation practices. This was integrated into the larger planned review of the ME&L system.

To start, CESO members of the community of practice led two exercises with 12 members of the International Program team. The purpose was to determine which areas of monitoring and evaluation were of greatest concern. Several positive lessons for the organization emerged, and participants appreciated how the process created space and safety for the diverse voices in the room, regardless of seniority and first language.

The first exercise used a simple version of the tool Planning, Inquiry, Evaluation (P.I.E.) to examine the relationship between planning, inquiry and evaluation activities in the organization (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a).⁴ Participants explored two key questions: "What is the level of effort by the organization in each of three areas of program activity: Planning, Inquiry and Evaluation?" and "To what extent does one component contribute to the others? (flow of learning between each of these

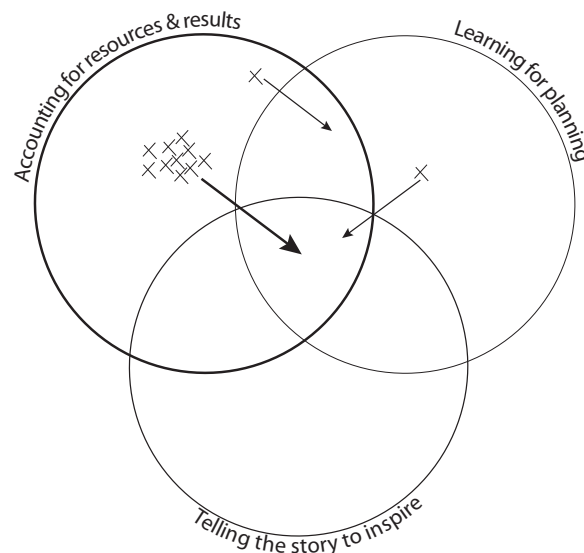
⁴ For an example of an application of the advanced version of the tool, see the Cuso International story.

areas)” The results showed that staff felt there was currently a lack of attention to timely planning. This was due mainly to perceived gaps in information (specifically financial), in addition to daily workload requirements and the fact that planning was not fully internalized but rather reactive to outside actors such as donors. The group recognized that inquiry also received little attention, a weakness that could impact the organization’s long-term viability. In the area of evaluation, the major weakness identified was not the level of effort but rather a delay in providing feedback to other stakeholders, making the information presented stale, outdated, and irrelevant. This observation emerged from the assessment of the flow of learning between each area. The group noted that evaluation activities currently contributed little to planning or to inquiry. They also said that the flow of learning currently between inquiry and planning was tenuous. This was the first time that the International Program team had visualized and examined these aspects of their learning system in relation to each other. It prompted further examination of their relative weight, interaction and eventual impact on programming.

The second exercise used a Venn diagram as a visual support to reflect on the purpose of particular evaluations and help select appropriate methods to achieve the purpose (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a). Participating staff reflected on what primary purpose they thought the current CESO ME&L system was fulfilling: accounting for resources, learning for planning, telling the story to inspire. A large Venn diagram was placed on a flipchart and each participant was given a personal copy to use. They were then asked to mark an ‘X’ in the place they felt best fit CESO’s current evaluation system. Next, each participant was asked to place an ‘X’ in the place they would like to see CESO’s evaluations system a year from now, and connect these two with a line. The individual ‘X’s were plotted on the large chart and showed an overwhelming trend in terms of perception among staff (Figure 1).

The majority of participants (11 out of 13) felt that CESO’s current system was primarily focused on accounting for resources. The collective diagram also showed a desire to move towards using evaluation to meet a range of purposes. The discussions that followed focused on the need for different evaluations using the appropriate methods to carry out evaluations with a particular primary purpose in mind.

Figure 1: Reflections on the current and desired purposes of evaluations at CESO.



This participatory approach to exploring CESO's ME&L system was extended during consultations with in-country staff who visited Toronto the same year. An in-depth review and redesign of the system was already underway, and their participation in person in the feedback and design process proved invaluable. They brought their first-hand experience in using existing ME&L tools and identifying their weaknesses or limitations. New tools learned through the community of practice were used in several sessions, and were found to be helpful in stimulating discussion, getting participants up and moving around, and facilitating constructive conversations about difficult subjects such as organizational performance and community impact. They helped reveal important information in new ways and provided an opportunity to share the opinions of several stakeholders in impactful visual representations. These included using the Socratic Wheel with different groups to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the recently formalized partnership model. The exercises revealed the different realities experienced in applying the partnership model across the program countries. The sessions also achieved capacity building goals by giving participants exposure to participatory methods of inquiry and assessment being integrated in the new evaluations system they were expected to apply in the future.

One-on-one and group discussions with some 60 CESO stakeholders were carried out over the course of four months, to validate gaps and challenges and deepen the analysis of the current system. Feedback gathered during these consultations continued to show a lack of interaction between evaluations and planning, and that the flow of information to and from stakeholders in the organization was plagued with dead ends and lack of use. When appropriate, existing tools and processes were refined, revamped or replaced altogether along the way.

It is important to note that this examination of CESO's ME&L system was originally an International Team-focused exercise. The National Program team became involved through the assistance of an external consultant with a renewed focus on moving towards "One CESO" in terms of operations. This was the first time in several years that program staff and volunteers had been asked to provide input regarding evaluations at CESO, and stakeholders were eager to share their experiences, challenges, criticisms and ideas for improvements. Encouraging this input was critical to the re-design of the system, as these same stakeholders were expected to put into practice the various changes made. At the end of the consultation phase, based on key pieces of feedback received from staff and volunteers, a new ME&L framework was presented and proposed to senior management for approval.

The new framework included changes to tools and procedures to reduce redundancy and more accurately fulfill reporting requirements. It also included the formalization of steps or processes that were ad hoc or optional. Previously, the application and end-use of the tools and information from the evaluations process was controlled exclusively by the Evaluations Department, so adjusting to the new participatory approach was not without its challenges. Nevertheless, Program Managers and other staff saw the benefits they could gain from supporting and feeding into the evaluation process: access to feedback from returning volunteers and clients assisted, deeper involvement of in-country staff in collecting evaluations information, and being kept in the loop (especially at the end of the evaluations cycle) regarding outputs and outcomes of the assignments. Having participated in the PIE exercise and Venn diagram exercises, stakeholders saw the value of linking planning back to new evaluations, and of doing evaluations for different purposes. The new evaluations

framework contained mechanisms to document successes, lessons and best practices – valuable opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.

From Theory to Practice: Practical Impacts and Deepening Collaboration

Staff and volunteer perception of evaluations system at CESO changed slowly as they became increasingly engaged in the process of either collecting information, providing it, or both. Initially, volunteers and in-country staff challenged the changes in paperwork – they were comfortable and familiar with previous processes. Nevertheless, they saw the value in at least some of the changes, and through support from the Evaluations team, the transition was completed successfully and the benefits of the new system became more apparent. For example, country representatives (in-country staff) appreciated the new reporting forms that combined their feedback with that of the client, as it meant there was only one form to fill out, where before there had been two. Program staff in Canada liked these forms because they were easier to recover and included the client responses and commentary by in-country staff, providing context or elaborating where appropriate.

The National Program team negotiated further adaptations to the new framework to better suit their needs in the Canadian Aboriginal context. This included making some tools more participatory, and moving away from paper/electronic forms. A conversation guide was developed to replace the client report, allowing the relevant program staff to gather valuable feedback about the assignment through phone or in-person conversations with the client. This greatly reduced their burden in terms of following up on outstanding reports, and also systematized a step in the communications cycle with their clients, an example of greater flow and synergy between a planning step and an evaluation activity. Similarly, a site visit to clients in British Columbia demonstrated the importance of using participatory methods instead of evaluation forms in that context – through one-on-one interviews, group discussions and encouraging storytelling, the Evaluations team was able to collect important feedback relating to past assignments and volunteers.

As the new ME&L framework was implemented, new areas of concern came to light, prompting closer examination of specific elements of the partnership model and overall program methodology. The barriers and gaps related to the flow of information and learning were deep-rooted in past processes and not easy to overcome. The Evaluations team made concerted efforts to disseminate documents and relevant information across the organization to those who would find it most useful – i.e. systematically providing final evaluations of an assignment to the volunteer involved, or bringing up issues from volunteer reports to the appropriate program manager or coordinator. These actions were appreciated by both staff and volunteers and helped address the issues around who and what the information was for.

A regularly-scheduled meeting between Evaluations and Program staff was also established, aimed at promoting dialogue and collaboration between the two departments. During these meetings, Evaluations staff shared what they were working on, presented trends or recurring issues from reports, and invited input from Program teams in the planning and prioritization of evaluation work to be done. Additionally, this recurring meeting provided an opportunity to work out the kinks in implementing the new evaluations framework, where changes were proposed, discussed and adopted collectively, responding to the realities and needs of those using the new tools.

Another concern that surfaced once the organization passed the initial implementation phase was the limited use of the evaluation information gathered. As identified in the Venn diagram and PIE exercise, evaluation data was not being used to tell a story to inspire others, nor to learn for planning, and there was very little being done in the way of inquiry into deeper causes of the situations underlying programming priorities. Enhancing the use of the online database system provided an opportunity to address these gaps in a way that was accessible to all stakeholders. The Evaluations and Program teams decided to include several new tracking features for assignments, which were incorporated into every assignment page and could be flagged for future searches or data tracking. Similarly, the key output and outcome indicators CESO wanted to track were programmed into the database and data previously held in Excel tables was uploaded to populate the various fields.

Evaluations and Program staff (including in-country) were now able to flag an assignment for Public Engagement, for example, or document a lesson learned. It was agreed that the more data CESO could put into the database, the more information would be available when pulling that data. For the first time, CESO staff had the ability to know instantly how many women had been trained in Senegal the previous year, for example, or how many assignments CESO carried out that focused on the Environment. Adding to the online database and democratizing the input and classification process certainly helped to deepen the engagement of staff in the process and enriched the information available for various kinds of reporting purposes. Success stories highlighted by staff formed the basis for communications materials and other reports, while lessons learned were summarized and shared with program staff for further exploration through a deeper inquiry.

These changes were possible because of strong collaboration between Evaluations staff and other departments at CESO, including the National Program team, Recruiters and Coordinators. Collectively, CESO staff decided which indicators were of most value to each stakeholder group, including funders. For the International team, using the original program logic model for a current multi-country program as a guide, performance indicators were streamlined or adjusted to suit donor reporting requirements, but new ones were also added to reflect important areas such as service to clients and volunteers.

It was at this time that stakeholders recognized the limitations of the original Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) for that contract. The LFA focused on reporting back to donors on what had previously been CESO's main focus: the placement of skilled volunteers. The expected outputs and outcomes had little relation to the realities of the program at that time, which had shifted to demonstrate development results. Importantly, the group realized that CESO was surpassing the original expected results of this program, and that the organization would be able to provide more and better information about the work being done. Stakeholders began to understand that CESO's evaluations system could serve a bigger purpose than just reporting back to funders, and that the organization could gather information that was useful for other purposes, such as examining areas of work that were not in any LFA or Logic Model.

The Practice of Breaking Down Silos

Through small but continuous and well-founded adjustments to the ME&L system at CESO staff gained a deeper understanding of the potential usefulness of evaluations to programming.

This in turn led to a general increase in the desire to critically examine areas of the organization's work more closely. One aspect that was of ongoing concern was the partnership model, CESO's program delivery mechanism. This model centres on partnering with key institutions in-country and providing assistance to strengthen their organizational capacity while also providing targeted support to their members or clients. Although the model had been successfully applied in eight program countries and was newly launched in the National program, it was clear that the silo effect between planning, program delivery and evaluations made it difficult to establish interactions between evaluation, planning and results-oriented learning at higher levels. Further improvements were needed, but where exactly was unclear. Senior management decided it would be beneficial to undertake a detailed, participatory review of the partnership model as a whole, benefiting from coaching support provided through the CoP.

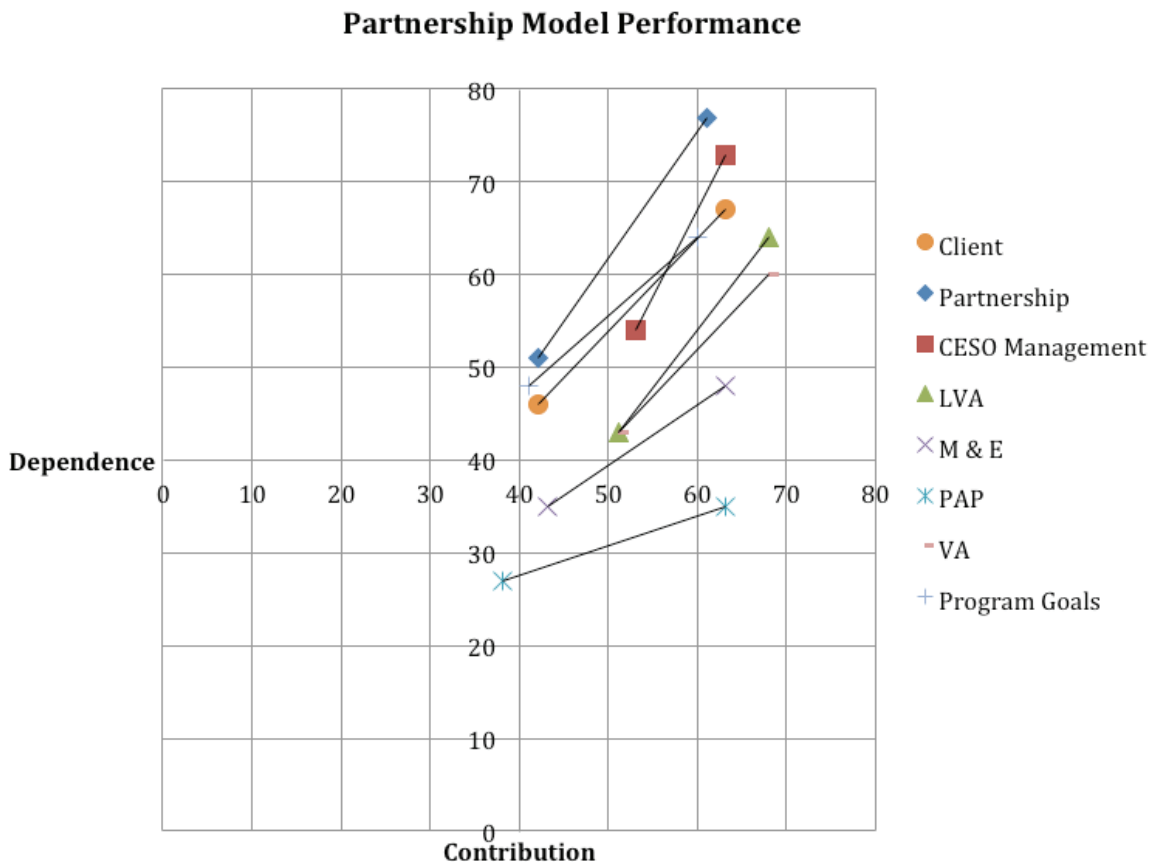
Prior sessions with the Country Representatives had revealed their perspectives on what worked and what didn't in applying the partnership model on the ground – this was documented in their cumulative Socratic Wheel. But few recommendations had come out of the exercise, which was primarily to launch the discussion and identify general areas of interest. During this subsequent session, International and National program staff came together to explore their understanding and expectations of the partnership model. To support the discussion, participants identified the key elements of the model and assessed interactions between the elements, using the Activity Dynamics tool learned during capacity building sessions of the community of practice (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a). Dissecting the dynamics of contribution and dependence between the various elements generated important discussions and questions about the reasons for silos between elements, and generated a list of recommendations for future action. It was the first time that national and international staff had explored the model together and the experience of debating two expressions of the same programming approach was invaluable. Furthermore, the involvement of senior and management staff brought the daily challenges, issues and concerns of staff applying the model to the forefront.

To start, participants were asked to list key elements of the partnership model, which were then piled and sorted into eight categories to be further explored. This included key stakeholders, key problems, and significant actions. The categories were:

- Client – the main recipients of technical assistance provided by VAs
- Partnership – the combined elements of working in collaboration with institutional partners and their members or clients
- CESO Management – in-Canada staff responsible for managing programming
- Lead Volunteer Advisors (LVAs) – volunteers who oversee the partnership and act as CESO's liaison with the partner institution
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) – CESO's M&E system, processes and tools
- Partnership Action Plan (PAP) – a planning document used to guide the partnership's activities
- Volunteer Advisors (VAs) – skilled Canadian volunteers deployed by CESO to provide technical assistance
- Program Goals – the overarching objectives of the program

Small groups were formed and each group was asked to discuss the level of interaction and contribution that one category had in relation to the other categories and provide a ranking from 1-10 based on the level of contribution. Then they were asked to determine what the optimal level of contribution should be, and to also record that number. The values for each element were totaled (both current and optimal) and plotted out on a Cartesian graph to provide participants a visual representation of their actual and desired level of interaction between elements in the partnership model (Figure 2). Finally, the participants were asked to generate some recommendations as to how CESO could support the contribution moving towards the optimal level.⁵

Figure 2: Actual and Desired Performance of the Partnership Model at CESO.



The presentation and discussion of each group's assessment revealed some key areas of interest for learning and integration. For example, there was evidence that few elements were contributing to the overall program goals – a symptom of the silo effect between programming and evaluations previously identified. Discussion of Figure 2 converged around the observation that most of the eight categories had medium dependency on other elements, but also contributed in the low-mid range to these same. The group expressed a desire to see all eight elements move more towards the higher ranges of both contribution and dependence, although the optimal range for contribution varied from element to element. Participants deemed that the dependence of partnership model elements should be between 60-70 on the chart, while optimal contribution ranged from 30-80.

⁵ For details on the tool Social Dynamics see Chevalier and Buckles, 2013b.

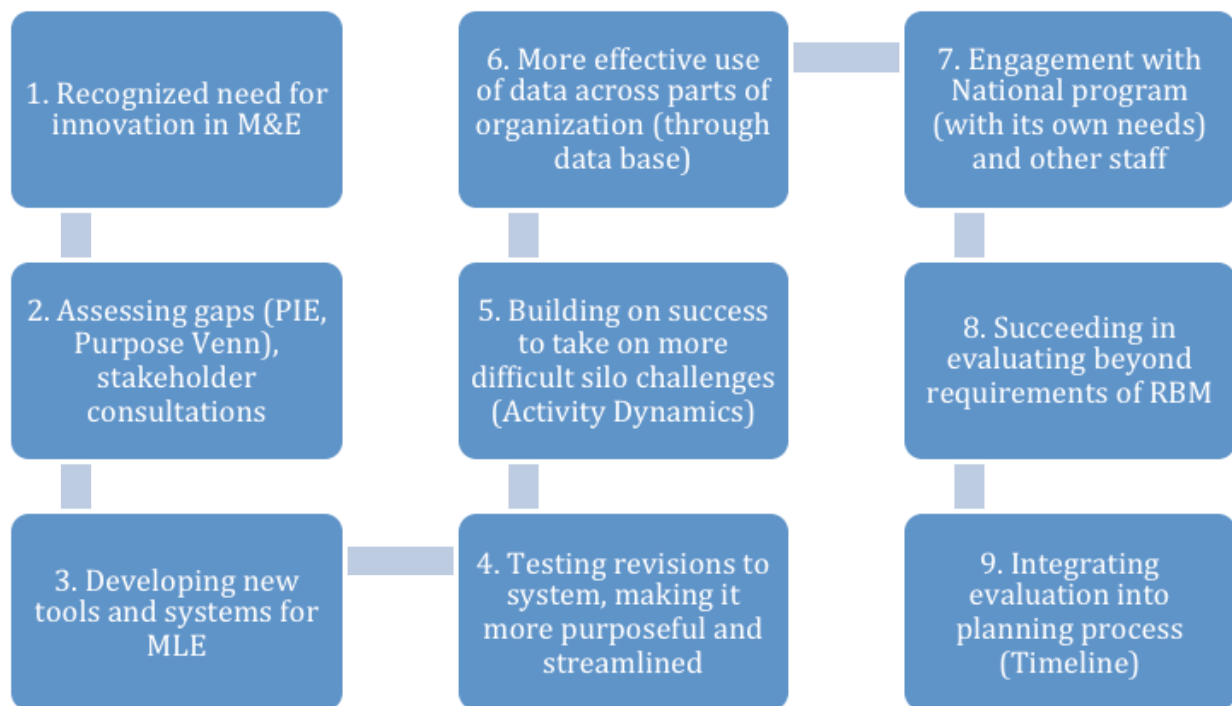
Some of the most interesting discussions and learning happened when groups proposed their recommendations for moving partnership model elements towards their optimal levels of contribution or dependence. Although the model had been modified and adapted in response to specific challenges or issues, this was the first opportunity that a mixed group of staff stakeholders had to identify weaknesses and suggest improvements. Furthermore, staff from different departments proposed ideas and solutions that had not previously been considered because they were not part of the International program. Examples from CESO's Nunavut program and PCV-Haiti consortium program were offered as interesting alternatives to the “usual” way of doing things – proof that different interactions between the elements were not only possible, but that they could be successful. From the PCV-Haiti program, the group observed that assignment objectives and results are closely tied to overall program goals because their continued funding depends on the program being able to demonstrate a high level of transparency and purpose in its activities.

A final result of interest is the relatively low “optimal” contribution ranking given to both planning with local partners and the ME&L system. It could be expected that the planning, objective-setting, monitoring and learning associated with these two elements would mean they would be deemed more important in terms of contributing to the overall success of the partnership model. However, the groups felt this was not the case, perhaps due to their limited involvement in the creation and use of tools associated with those elements. Another explanation could be that there exists an overall gap between this local planning element and other aspects of the program, as evidenced by the low contribution rankings for M&E and program goals to the local planning. The group recognized that program goals should be identified in the local partner plans and a direct link made between the partnership goals and how those will contribute to the program.

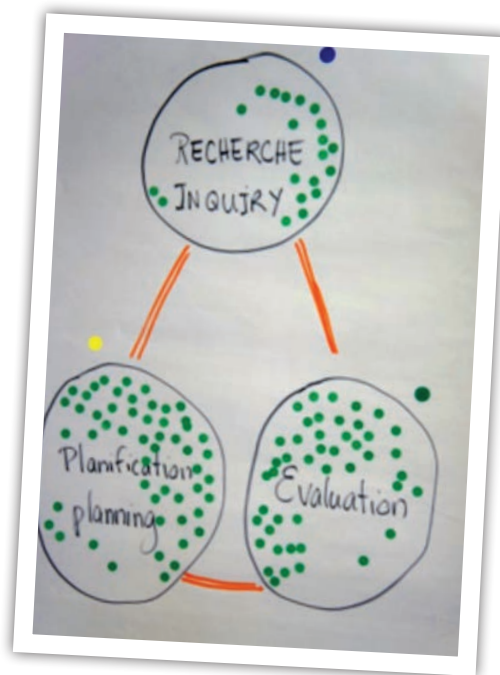
The visual representation of Actual versus Optimal is shown in the graph below. The many specific recommendations generated by participants will support the organization in moving towards the optimal levels identified, with a strong focus on relating partnership goals and activities back to the overall country or program goals.

Grounding Evaluation in Planned Uses

The ultimate change in understanding among stakeholders as it relates to CESO's evaluations system has been the internalization of monitoring and evaluation by the people who both use it and benefit from it. Whereas previously, these stakeholders were perhaps the transmitters and occasional consumers of evaluation information, they are now active contributors, users and audiences. The final step will be to further integrate the role of evaluations into program planning, but the organization is already moving in that direction. A recent work session with the support of coaching from Daniel Buckles put into practice the use of Timeline to plan key operational tasks relating to CESO's next five-year program cycle, including the assessment of new partners and evaluation of volunteer performance. This gave participants an opportunity to once again link planning steps to evaluation tasks and progress markers for key elements of the new program cycle. The participants decided that they would work particularly with the Lead Volunteer Advisors to further develop these progress markers, and jointly establish with partners a baseline against which to assess progress.

Figure 3: Flow diagram of learning process at CESO.

Overall evolution of the ME&L system over the period discussed is summarized in Figure 3. It has progressed from recognizing the need for innovation through periodic and systematic assessments, to continuous and practical adjustments in light of learning along the way. These lessons learned from the partnership sessions using learning from the community of practice are now being applied to program development. Program staff and volunteers now confer with the Evaluations team to access further information about reports, results and volunteer feedback. Planned Monitoring and Evaluations visits to the field now include participatory components such as icebreakers, group discussions and storytelling. All of these are designed to engage, and to contribute to evaluations that have a clear purpose and are immediately useful and innovative.



Vers la revision du système de suivi-évaluation de Carrefour International

David Panetta, AndréAnne Cloutier and Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo

Contexte

Le programme 2004-2009 de Carrefour International propose, en accord avec sa vision et sa mission, une approche basée sur le partenariat, le renforcement des capacités et l'engagement du public en accord avec sa vision et sa mission. A ce moment, Carrefour International cible trois secteurs d'activités, à savoir, le VIH Sida, la réduction de la pauvreté et les droits des femmes. La mise en œuvre de son programme est assurée par quatre bureaux régionaux basés à Vancouver, Halifax, Toronto et Montréal.

Afin d'assurer un suivi de la mise en œuvre de la programmation, Carrefour International s'est doté d'un système de suivi et d'évaluation qui permet de mesurer les résultats planifiés en fonction du modèle logique, les résultats non planifiés par le programme et de tirer les leçons apprises en matière de développement et de performance opérationnelle. Afin d'assurer l'application et l'appropriation du système de suivi et évaluation, une série d'outils ont été développés, un processus a été mis en place et des formations sur différentes approches participatives ont été données aux membres du personnel.

Pour le programme de 2009-2014, Carrefour International poursuit donc la mise en œuvre d'une programmation basée sur le partenariat et le renforcement des capacités tout en y apportant certaines modifications suite à différents apprentissages. La planification stratégique apporte des précisions sur les orientations de l'organisation. D'une approche basée sur le partenariat tripartite

formelle avec des partenaires du Sud et des organisations Canadiennes, Carrefour International passe à une approche partenariale où l'appui des organisations Canadiennes est assoupli et ouverte à plus d'une organisation en vue de bénéficier de différentes expertises requises pour le renforcement des capacités des organisations du Sud.

Les différents changements basés sur des apprentissages organisationnels ont entraîné la nécessité de revoir certaines approches de planification ainsi que le système de suivi et d'évaluation afin d'illustrer adéquatement les résultats atteints et l'impact de la programmation de Carrefour International dans différentes domaines. La participation de Carrefour International à la communauté de pratique « Bridging Gaps » lui a permis de procéder à cette révision mais surtout d'effectuer une analyse du système en place et d'explorer de nouvelles possibilités d'amélioration.

Analyse du système de suivi et d'évaluation en place

D'octobre à décembre 2012, Carrefour International a complété une analyse de son système de suivi et d'évaluation en consultation avec les membres de l'équipe « programmes ». L'objectif de cette consultation était de compléter un inventaire des outils disponibles et des approches utilisées par les membres du personnel, mais aussi d'évaluer leur niveau de satisfaction concernant la mise en œuvre du système actuel. Il s'agissait plus concrètement d'évaluer l'efficacité du système de suivi évaluation utilisé jusque-là au regard des exigences de la gestion axée sur les résultats. En effet, le système de suivi-évaluation qui existait jusque-là ne permettait pas de systématiser les principales composantes à savoir la planification, l'évaluation et la recherche. Il n'existait aucun outil standard pour la planification et l'évaluation annuelles des activités de Carrefour International.

La consultation s'est concrétisée principalement par deux exercices :

1. des entrevues individuelles entre le responsable du suivi-évaluation et les membres de l'équipe de programmation à différents niveaux de responsabilité, et
2. une consultation collective de l'équipe de programmation. Les entretiens ont permis de répertorier tous les outils disponibles et les approches utilisés en matière de planification, suivi et recherche en lien avec la programmation en cours.

Les questions soulevées sont :

- Quels sont les résultats fixés par Carrefour International à travers votre secteur de la programmation?
- Est-ce que ces résultats escomptés sont-en lien avec le modèle logique et le cadre de mesure de rendement?
- En référence aux indicateurs identifiés dans le cadre de mesure de rendement, quelle est la démarche et les outils utilisés pour le suivi de vos progrès?

Le premier niveau d'inventaire a fait ressortir une gamme variée d'outils et d'approches utilisés différemment dans chacun des secteurs de la programmation. Cette diversité d'outils ne permettait pas de répondre efficacement aux besoins de planification, de suivi et de recherche. Un autre niveau d'analyse a permis de se rendre compte de l'écart entre les variables du cadre de mesure de

rendement et les données qui pouvaient être collectées à l'aide des outils existants. Ceci a conduit à une relecture du modèle logique et du cadre de mesure de rendement, et à des réflexions sur la création d'outils plus appropriés.

La consultation collective a permis de dresser le portrait d'ensemble et d'avoir une compréhension commune des orientations actuelles de Carrefour International. Elle a permis également, d'amener les recommandations requises à une approche et des outils qui répondent davantage à la gestion axée sur les résultats. Finalement, la consultation a permis d'inscrire le système de suivi-évaluation dans un contexte plus large des composantes-clé du système d'apprentissage : planification, évaluation et recherche (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a).

En début d'exercice, tous les membres du personnel ont reçu un nombre fixe d'autocollants, et ont été invités à les placer – en fonction de leur perception – dans les cercles représentés par chaque catégorie permettant ainsi de donner un aperçu de l'effort actuel consenti sous planification, évaluation et recherche. Toujours dans le cadre de cet exercice, les participants ont évalué sur une échelle de 1 à 5 dans quelle mesure chaque activité du système est ancrée dans l'action, s'appuie sur la participation des parties concernées, déploie une gamme de méthodes flexibles aux bons moments et apporte les détails appropriés. Il s'agissait plus concrètement d'évaluer le niveau d'efforts dans la planification, l'évaluation et la recherche.

Comme l'indique la photo ci-dessus, c'est dans les domaines de la planification et de l'évaluation que le niveau d'effort est plus élevé, tandis que le niveau d'effort est faible dans le domaine de la recherche. Si ce portrait semblait normal du point de vue des participants, c'est parce que d'une part, la planification a toujours été le point de départ de la mise en œuvre de la programmation, et que d'autre part, l'évaluation constitue une tâche fondamentale qui contribue à l'élaboration du rapport annuel d'activité. Cependant le faible niveau d'effort en matière de recherche constitue la principale faiblesse identifiée. Ceci pourrait s'expliquer par le fait que la recherche nécessite d'importantes ressources matérielles pour s'y engager de manière efficace et que chaque membre de l'équipe de programmation pense que la recherche ne relève pas de sa responsabilité. Force est de constater que si le réflexe de planifier et d'évaluer est une réalité à Carrefour International, il reste toutefois nécessaire d'harmoniser les outils et d'assurer une cohérence avec le cadre de mesure de rendement. L'implication immédiate de l'exercice du PIE a été de revoir les outils de planification et d'évaluation et d'assurer la recherche – tout au moins dans les domaines où l'organisation pense avoir des résultats – et de renforcer le système d'apprentissage. À ce titre, une évaluation externe dans le secteur « Droit des femmes » a été réalisée dans une perspective de valorisation des acquis.

D'autres sujets de recherche ont été identifiés et feront l'objet d'une évaluation externe qui fournira des données évidentes pour renforcer la qualité du rapport final du programme de coopération volontaire.

L'exercice du PIE a eu un impact au niveau organisationnel, notamment en ce qui concerne l'amélioration du système de gestion du volontariat. La section suivante présente les retombées de cet exercice.

Retombées

Quelques retombées méritent d'être mentionnées. Il s'agit entre autres de :

L'identification des forces et faiblesses du système de suivi et d'évaluation

En termes de forces, on peut constater que Carrefour International a mis en place un système qui était cohérent avec l'approche d'intervention dans le passé. La plus grande faiblesse réside dans le manque d'adaptation du système existant à la nouvelle démarche de partenariat direct avec les organisations du Sud. De plus les indicateurs identifiés dans le cadre de mesure de rendement sont de loin très optimistes par rapport aux résultats qui pourraient être obtenus sur le terrain. Enfin, les outils sont utilisés de façon cloisonnée dans les secteurs de la programmation et ne sont pas cohérents avec le cadre de mesure de rendement.

La revue du cycle de gestion de volontariat

Se donner des objectifs clairs et mesurables à chaque niveau du cycle pour les intégrer systématiquement dans l'étape « Monitoring and evaluation » (Voir Fig. 1)

Figure 1: Crossroads International's Volunteer Management Cycle.



Élaboration d'un outil harmonisé (organisationnel) de suivi de l'envoi de volontaires « Volunteer Tracking System » (outil de gestion des volontaires)

L'harmonisation des outils de suivi-évaluation a commencé avec le volet de gestion du volontariat. En effet, chaque équipe de la programmation utilisait une « Master list » pour documenter et suivre les placements des volontaires. Compte tenu de la difficulté de synthèse de chacune de ces « master list » lors du rapportage annuel, un autre outil plus efficace et plus harmonisé – le « Volunteer Tracking System » - a été élaboré dans le cadre du processus de révision du système de suivi-évaluation de Carrefour International. Il s'agit d'une base de données centralisée pour la collecte, le stockage et l'analyse des renseignements sur les bénévoles.

Identification d'indicateurs d'excellence de volontariat

L'exercice de la révision du système de suivi-évaluation de Carrefour International a également conduit à l'élaboration d'une politique et à la définition d'indicateurs d'excellence de volontariat. La question fondamentale qui a mené à l'identification de ces indicateurs est : Qu'est-ce qui fait d'un volontaire quelqu'un d'exceptionnel?

Pour répondre efficacement à cette question, des normes de performance de gestion des bénévoles y compris des indicateurs de performance ont été établis dans 8 les axes suivants: l'engagement, le développement des ressources, la diversité, le développement de mandat, la sécurité, le recrutement, l'intégration, et enfin le soutien et la reconnaissance. Les indicateurs identifiés font présentement l'objet de discussions aussi bien à l'interne qu'avec les partenaires, en vue de leur validation.

Concrètement, un système de suivi a été mis en place permettant une efficacité accrue de la gestion des volontaires et apportant une plus grande précision de leur contribution à la programmation. Une relecture et un ajustement du cadre de mesure du rendement a facilité la capacité de l'organisation à répondre de façon efficace (ou efficiente) à ses engagements. Le processus est en cours et contribuera efficacement à l'élaboration du rapport final du programme de coopération volontaire.

Observing Change and Making Plans





Variations on the Socratic Wheel at Canada World Youth

Daniel Buckles, Nadia Ponce Morales and Ghizlaine Ben Zerrouk

Introduction

The Socratic Wheel is a deceptively simple and powerfully visual rating tool with multiple applications (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013a). It can be used to set priorities or learning goals in light of baseline conditions, monitor progress or evaluate final results using multiple criteria, or compare projects, activities or individual profiles using a single criteria. The appeal and usefulness of the tool does not rest in its technical features – a simple bar chart adapted to a circular frame – but rather in the intent that sets the technique in motion: reflective dialogue and action in a meaningful context. This is the intent of any whole brain exercise, analytic and visual, cognitive and evocative, the kind that allows views and data to be discussed and organized synthetically, to support collective thinking and action in complex settings. Unlike a table, a wheel figure drawn by a circle of people can launch a discussion of what should be measured (the spokes), what has been achieved (the ratings), and what actions should follow.

Because of these features, and the flexibility of the tool, the Socratic Wheel is used extensively by Canada World Youth (CWY) as a way to offer inclusive opportunities for youth to shape programming and local action, both personal and collective. It was applied first and most systematically at CWY in 2006 as a central tool in an evaluation designed to assess the impact of CWY's programs on youth participants and the communities they interacted with (South House Exchange, SAS2 Dialogue, Canada World Youth, 2006). Since that time the organization has developed many evaluation designs using the Socratic Wheel, from quick evaluations of individual experiences during workshops to comprehensive tracking and measurement of learning by youth volunteers from Canada and partner countries. This chapter presents a few of these applications, selected to provide readers with a range of design options to consider. Curiously, and despite

the simplicity of the tool, common errors include mixing distinct aims in the same exercise or failing to define discrete and concrete criteria. For this reason, the examples are organized under two headings representing the main aims of evaluative thinking that lend themselves to Socratic learning – evaluating change and strategic planning.

Evaluating Change

CWY seeks to contribute to development results in large part through youth volunteer exchanges involving youth from Canada and partner countries. The Youth Leaders in Action program has been the biggest and longest standing of these efforts, providing youth between the ages of 17 and 25 with the opportunity to contribute to community-driven development projects both in Canada and abroad. These projects usually focus on health, the environment or gender equity, under the general framework of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The YLA program typically involves an exchange over a period of 6 months, with about half of the time of volunteers spent in each of two settings, usually Canada and a partner country. It is a reciprocal program, meaning that youth from the participating countries take part in both exchanges. While most of the exchanges include Canadian youth, the program has also supported reciprocal exchanges between youth within the southern Africa region (South African and Tanzanian youth, for example). Some exchanges have focused on engaging aboriginal youth from remote communities in northern Canada or on engaging women only. The Socratic Wheel has been an integral part of the program documentation, combined with other tools to assess changes at three levels: among youth, host organizations and host communities.

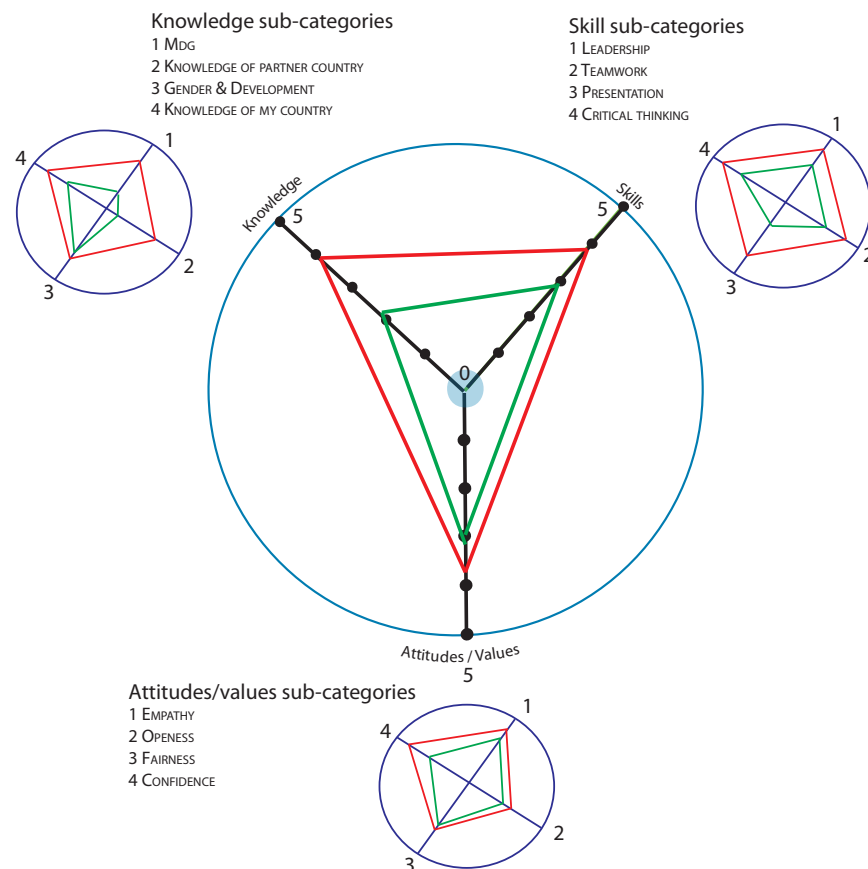
The evaluation process starts for youth completing individual Socratic Wheels during the volunteer orientation camp prior to departure. This is a self-assessment of current competencies in three areas relevant to the learning objectives of the exchange: knowledge, skills and values/attitudes. Volunteers rate how strong they feel they are in each area, referring to specific examples of knowledge, skills and values/attitudes. The rating typically uses a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 indicates no competency and 5 a very high level. While the exercise supplies a standard set of competencies, under each competency area groups are invited to identify examples specific to the country or topic of the exchange.

After establishing their baseline rating of competency volunteers are then invited to set learning goals for themselves in each competency area by indicating a target level of competency they feel they can realistically attain over the period of the exchange. This converts the exercise into a priority setting process indicating individual learning goals and expectations of the exchange. An additional feature, when time permits, is to form groups of youth with similar learning goals (with big gaps between where they are and where they would like to be) and to find a counterpart group or individuals that show particular strength in the desired competency. By forming peer groups with similar goals and complementary strengths the volunteers can support each other during the exchange process through meetings and planned activities to build competencies in the desired areas.

The evaluation process continues six months later at the end of the exchange with detailed reflections on major lessons learned and the specific components of the program that most contributed to their learning. It uses a unique visual developed by CWY called the Lexy Learner to classify and map impacts onto the body: hands (skills), head (knowledge) and heart (values/attitudes). The wheel is also revisited by asking volunteers to re-assess their original starting point. This lends itself to Socratic Learning as volunteers can adjust their initial rating of competency in light of an improved understanding of the real-life scope and details of each competency area. For example, youth can reflect upon what it really means to refrain from being judgmental (one of the attitude competencies) when confronted with very different cultural norms and expectations. In one case, a 19 year-old Canadian woman participating in a 2012 exchange with youth from Bolivia focused on health issues realized after the exchange that she knew a lot less about the health sector than she thought she knew originally. She also appreciated that her skills at critical thinking were not as strong as she had thought they were. This led her to adjust her baseline scores on these two competencies downwards. She then rated the level of competency she believed she had achieved by the end of the exchange and calculated the difference between the revised starting score and the final rating for each competency. This gave a score for “real progress” reflecting a grounded and confident statement of the changes in competencies following the exchange.

Findings from a women's exchange involving youth from Ontario and Bolivia are represented in Figure 1. All but two of the volunteers adjusted their initial ratings, either up or down, in light of their improved understanding of each criteria and self-assessment of their starting point. The figure, based on the selection of key elements from the data, shows that overall participants in the exchange improved mainly in the area of knowledge, followed far behind by skills and values/attitudes. This is consistent with the specific goals of this exchange, which centred around a sub-set of knowledge, skills and values/attitudes important to enhancing the role of women in development. Wheels for individual scores and averages for each sub-set of competencies provided more detailed understanding of what aspect of knowledge, skills and values/attitudes changed the most for each participant and for the group as a whole.

Figure 1: Average changes in competencies related to knowledge, skills and values/attitudes among women involved in a youth exchange between Ontario (Canada) and Bolivia. Inner marks are the baseline. Satellite wheels show average changes for a sub-set of competencies. In this case, knowledge of the mellenium development goals (MDG) and of the partner country, the attitude of confidence, and skills associated with giving presentations and critical thinking showed the greatest average progress. Improvements in language skills (not shown) were uniformly high in all cases.



CWY has collected data on changes in competencies among youth participating in exchanges for more than 4 years, using an evaluation guide translated into four languages. While the primary intent of the process is to support reflection by youth on their own learning goals, and to support learning activities during the exchanges, summary analysis of the data also supports learning by CWY on the direction and level of change among youth. Specific areas of change experienced in different countries and programs, and by different peer groups (Canadians compared to developing country youth, for example), provide insight into what matters most to the youth involved, and what learning has been fostered by the exchange. For example, data for the entire sample of youth participants in YLA exchanges in 2012 (392 youth from various regions in Canada, Benin, Bolivia, Ghana, Honduras, Kenya, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Tanzania, Vietnam, the Ukraine and Indonesia) showed positive change in the level of knowledge of youth concerning host history and culture as well as specific issues in the field of development (the Millennium Development Goals, gender and development, the role of local organizations and public engagement in development). Specific skills areas also improved, including abilities to do a gender analysis or needs assessment, ease and skill at making presentations, skills in critical thinking, project management skills and

second-language skills. Changes in attitudes and values were less notable, reflecting in part the strong starting point of youth drawn to exchanges based on the values of respect, fairness, openness and self-confidence. Differences between countries (Bolivia recorded greater change in the level of knowledge compared to Benin) and between Canadian and partner youth (Honduran youth recorded higher levels of skill acquisition compared to Canadian youth in the same exchange) were also identified through follow-up analysis of the ratings by evaluation coordinators. These findings, combined with other information generated with youth during the final assessment, contribute to learning about what components contribute most to changes and ideas for planning to strengthen the components further.

Recently, a small local group of Kenyans implementing a youth-led project supported by CWY partners used the Lexy Learner tool in combination with The Socratic Wheel to discuss their learning with regards to starting and managing a project aimed at improving the environmental or health conditions of their communities. They identified some of the learning prompted by a small grant and mentoring and coaching from CWY's partner in Kenya. Some of them spoke about increased capacities to write funding proposals or understand financial concepts. The group of 9 youth involved in the exercise identified mechanisms to continue building their skills and sharing responsibilities as a group: keeping records, promoting teamwork and trust, etc. In this way, the process was useful for sensitizing youth to the value of assessing and monitoring their own progress. A more formal evaluation is foreseen in 2013-14, once the YLA program that supports these initiatives ends.

Another variation on Socratic Wheel assessments of the impact of youth exchanges compared two different models used to support South-South exchanges in the southern Africa region supported by CWY through the YLA program and by another agency (Southern Africa Trust) based in South Africa (Mwathi Mati and Perold, 2012). To the assessment of impacts on volunteers were added evaluations of impacts on host organizations (along the lines of the organizational performance assessment reported below) and on host communities (with a focus on assessing the development of understanding and solidarity across regional boundaries). The assessment with host organizations added to the Socratic Wheel and Lexy Learner a Force Field analysis of the factors at play affecting youth participation in the exchange programs. This supported discussion of ways to enhance youth participation in the context of South-South exchanges.

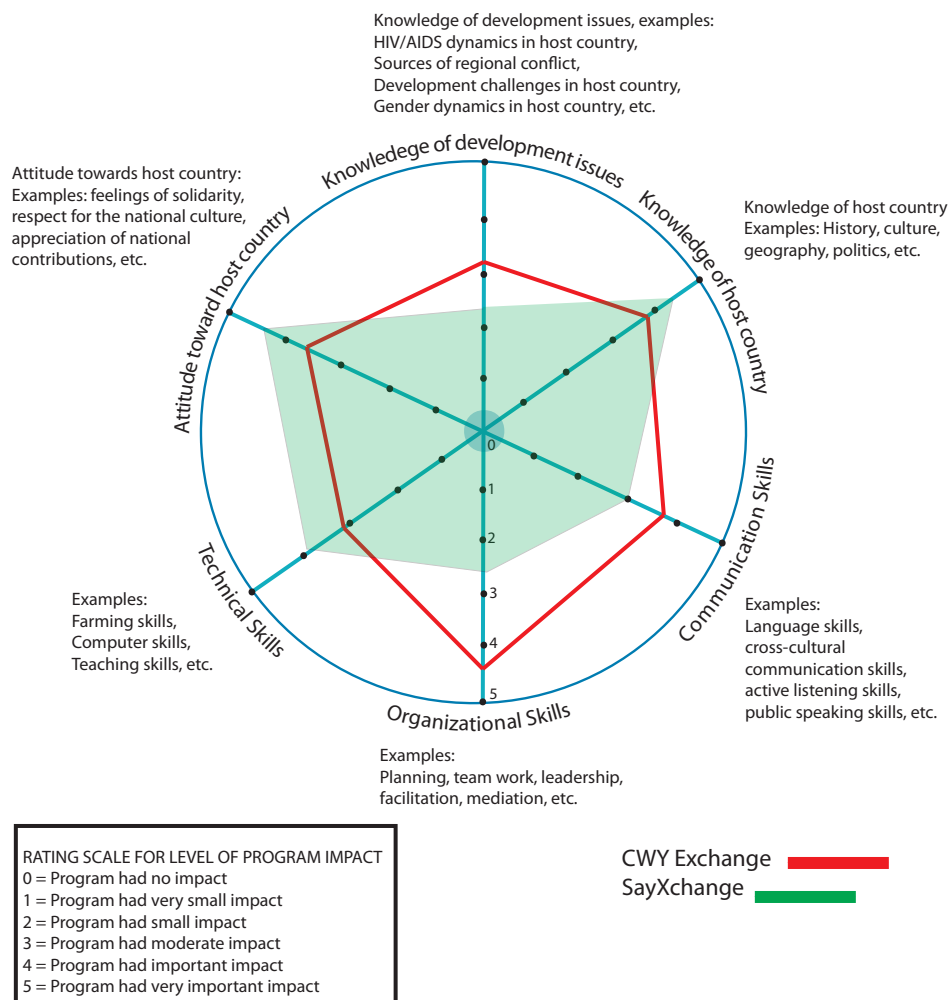
The results from the assessments with host communities suggest that for host families and communities the exchanges can shift perceptions of neighbouring countries dramatically, building bridges and understanding needed for regional solidarity. Interestingly, host communities expressed a new appreciation for volunteering, one which broke from the stereotypes of traditional North-South volunteer relationships. Participants said that it stimulated a local understanding of the volunteering spirit within their own communities.

The Force Field analysis by the host organizations identified various factors that affect youth participation in volunteer exchanges and the relative weight of each factor, both positive and negative. This assessment contributed to learning about various opportunities and challenges created by South-South youth exchanges. For example, the assessment showed the importance of building the development of employment skills into the exchanges so that youth could use the

exchange as a direct bridge into employment. Attention to potential synergies between the goals of youth and the practical needs of communities emerged as a promising way to develop these skills.

Comparisons between the two programs reviewed in the study point to some similarities and some differences in the level of change achieved among participating youth. In both programs, changes are greatest with respect to the acquisition of communication skills, as well as knowledge acquired of the host country. In terms of organizational skills, youth in CWY programs expressed stronger improvements, which may be due to the fact that CWY consciously integrates these skills into its learning objectives and planned activities. The presence of peer learning in this program through work and live-in pairing of volunteers may also lead to increased opportunities to exercise teamwork or mediation skills, also showing higher levels of achievement among volunteers in the CWY program. Changes in levels of knowledge and attitudes towards host country do not present significant differences between programs. One interesting observation is that progress with respect to knowledge of development issues was fairly low for both programs, while changes in attitudes towards host country was relatively strong for both. This general pattern may be due to the emphasis of both programs on the personal development of youth as opposed to the achievement of development results.

Figure 2: Comparison of average changes in 5 competencies assessed with youth volunteers involved in Canada World Youth and Southern African Trust South-South programs.



Strategic Planning

The Socratic Wheel can be adapted to support strategic planning by engaging people in an assessment of a current situation, setting improvement targets, and planning steps to achieve their goals. This variation of the tool was used by CWY to support a capacity-building process with local partners focused on improving organizational performance with respect to the delivery of program results.

Capacity building, and strengthening organizational performance, have been key strategies for CWY since it started to work through a partnership model more than a decade ago. CWY provides capacity building support through local training, skill sharing among local and visiting youth, and partner access to funds for strategic organizational improvements. The theory of change underlying these activities has been that local organizational capacity is an important enabling factor, and that CWY can contribute to improving capacities in local organizations through continuous and supportive partnerships. Knowing whether the capacity building strategy is working, however, is a delicate matter. The starting point and priorities of organizations, and the steps needed to improve organizational performance, vary considerably from organization to organization. Measuring all organizations against the same yardstick of performance ignores these differences and invites insidious comparisons between organizations of very different characters (size and age of organization, for example). Uniformity in standards can also feel like an imposition and feed into power imbalances between CWY and its partners. At the same time, common performance criteria and ways to assess progress are needed to be accountable both internally and to external bodies for investments in capacity building aimed at improving organizational performance, and through better performing organizations, for the delivery of program results.

To address this apparent dilemma – the need for flexibility and common criteria for assessing organizational performance – CWY staff involved in the community of practice and Daniel Buckles developed an application of the Socratic Wheel rooted in individual organizational priorities expressed in a common aspirational language. The literature on organizational assessment provided the initial guidance on the main categories relevant to analysing the performance of an organization, a review that settled on a set of four proposed by Lusthaus et al. (2002): effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and financial viability. These provided a comprehensive yet simple set of elements grounded in the literature yet open to debate and discussion by stakeholders regarding their specific meaning and expression in an organization. In addition, the categories were compatible with the results-based management tools that CWY and other Canadian volunteer sending agencies had agreed to when entering into a granting relationship with the Canadian International Development Agency.

Through a visual, group-based process, stakeholders in CWY partner organizations were invited to reflect on the meaning of these broad categories in their own context and set their own specific performance objectives and progress markers in relation to each.⁷ The process involved the following steps, illustrated with examples from Honduras, Kenya and Tanzania.

⁷ OXFAM Canada integrated the Socratic Wheel into the process it now uses to support transformative organizational capacity building, with a focus on gender justice (OXFAM Canada, nd). Building first on group assessments of the capacities needed to work on gender equality and women's rights, including metaphors expressing qualities of leadership, groups identify and rate current capacities and aspirations under major headings (for example, gender-just structures and processes). The resulting needs assessment and benchmarking of capacities is then fed into the development of specific capacity building strategies that can be implemented and monitored over time (Oxfam Canada, nd)

Step 1: Plan the exercise

Step 1.1 Identify the people who should contribute to the planning process. Consider involving a range of knowledgeable stakeholders, such as staff, Board Members, volunteers and key community partners. Consider using the strategic planning process to support important conversations with these stakeholders about the vision of the organization and steps it is taking to achieve excellence in the way it works. This will ensure that the knowledge of different groups is mobilized, and enhance the level of consensus and confidence around the performance objectives and ways to achieve them. For example, at ASONOG, a Honduran organization that works to protect human rights in border areas, the assessment process brought together 15 people from middle management and field levels, along with community representatives and volunteers. The organization was in the middle of their current strategic plan, and used the exercise to develop and carry key messages regarding organizational performance to senior management. KENVO, a Kenyan organization focused on environmental issues in the southern Aberdare mountain range, brought nine people together, including the Director, program and management staff.

Step 1.2 Think about the information that should be collected and distributed prior to the exercise. In advance, discuss the Partner project proposals funded by CWY, the needs expressed in these projects and the aspect of organizational performance the needs refer to (effectiveness, efficiency, etc.). If relevant, ask the Partner to reformulate the needs expressed in the proposals as broader performance objectives. KENVO, for example, had previously received funding to improve its reach through a newsletter (to ensure relevance) and improve fundraising capacity (to improve financial sustainability).

Step 2: Set performance objectives

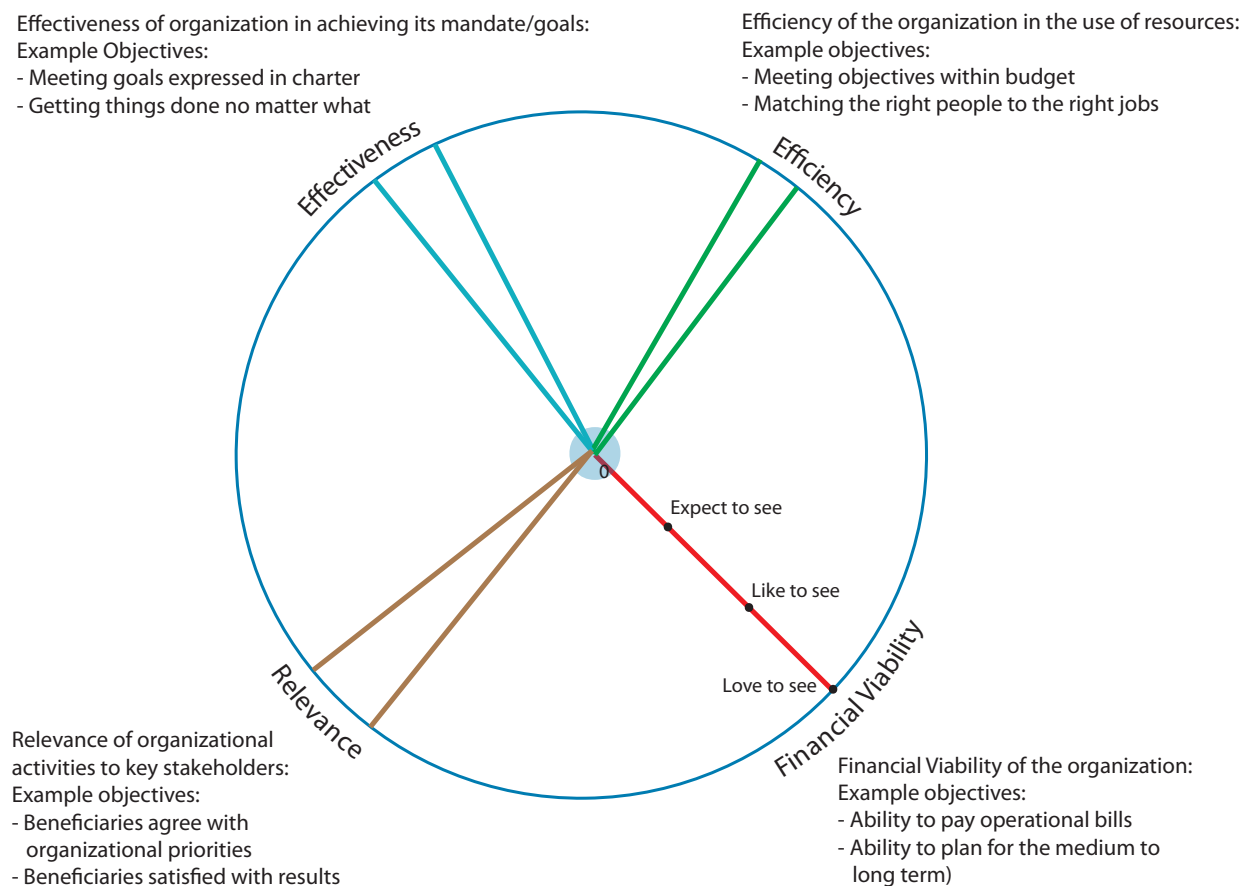
Step 2.1 Review and discuss the four areas of organizational performance under review (effectiveness of the organization in achieving its mandate/goals, efficiency of the organization in the use of resources; relevance of organizational activities to key stakeholders; viability of the organization in terms of its ability to meet ongoing financial requirements). Adjust the language to ensure that each area is clearly understood and distinct, and create a large wheel with four labelled spokes on the wall or arranged on the floor. These represent the broad performance categories to be assessed (Figure 3). For some organizations, such as KENVO, the framework for talking about organizational performance required a lot of discussion as people shifted their thinking from organizational survival as the main indicator of performance to consider what it means for their work to have relevance, to be effective and efficient as well as financially viable. ASONOG, an organization with a long history of critical reflection on their relevance to the communities they serve, quickly appropriated the terms.

Step 2.2 For each performance area, formulate specific performance targets organizations want to achieve within the **next 12 months**. Participants can free-list their individual ideas on cards to be discussed and sorted into categories expressing the same or very similar target under each performance area. Participants can refer to and make use of specific ideas reflected in the capacity building projects funded by CWY, and to the broader performance targets that underlie or prompted the proposal in the first place. Not every performance area need have the same number

of targets. No area should have more than three. Participants should be encouraged to be concrete when describing the performance targets and only include distinct and important ones in the wheel. If need be, use a ranking procedure to select the most important. Once selected, draw a spoke in the wheel for each performance target, located under the broader performance area it refers to.

For example, ASONOG participants set as a target a process to validate the needs of the communities they serve, something they felt would improve the ongoing relevance of the organization. They also proposed to re-organize their activities from a focus on project-based departments (micro-credit, food security, human resource development) to a territorial or geographic model where work and budgets were integrated into wholistic territorial and geographically based programs. This, they felt, would improve their effectiveness. Other targets were set for enhancing financial viability, such as the development of social enterprises, and for improving their efficiency. While not final decisions, the process had created a space for parts of the organization to talk about what would most improve their performance as an organization.

Figure 3: Areas of organizational performance.



Step 3: Develop Progress Markers

Step 3.1 Create a set of progress markers (statements) for each specific performance target that would represent observable change in the way the organization works (Earl, Carden and Smutylo, 2001). These statements (markers of progress) represent graduated levels of achievement of the specific performance target. First create two to three statements that express at a minimum what you would **expect to see** the organization achieve in relation to the performance target. Second, create two to three statements that express what you would **like to see** the organization achieve. Third, identify two to three other statements to express what you would **love to see** the organization achieving if it were to implement the performance target in even more significant ways. If the progress markers are too general, ask how people would know that the target was actually being achieved (a process known as “laddering down”). Note that progress markers are **levels of achievement**, and steps or stages along the way.

For example, a performance target related to effectiveness might be: Increase the proportion of organizational attention to school food programs (because child nutrition is the main mission of the organization).

An example set of progress markers might be:

Expect to see: Food delivered to existing school food programs; food arrives in sufficient quantities for all children in the school; school cooks provide information on what food is eaten and what is spoiled or discarded.

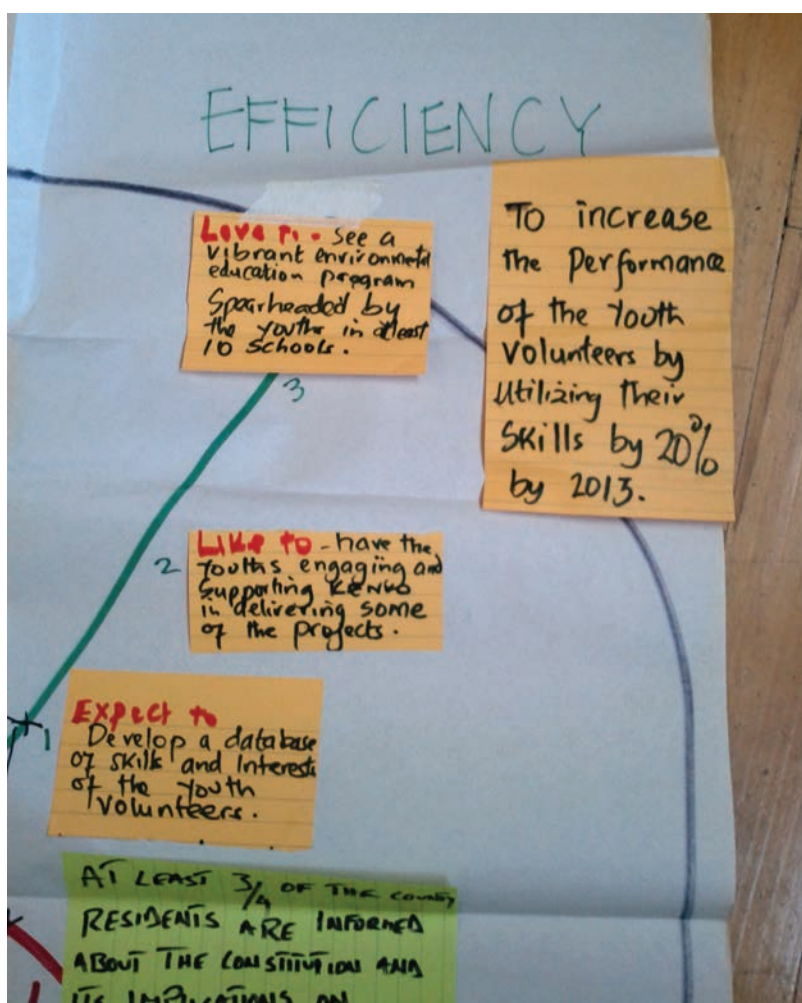
Like to see: Excess food is redirected to other schools in need; meetings held among school principals, cooks, community partners and potential donors to identify new schools in need; clinic staff do regular tours of schools to promote school food programs.

Love to see: On an ongoing basis, food is sourced from local producers and suppliers; schools set up gardens in their yards for teaching and supply of fresh food; teachers, parent volunteers and community partners are successfully matched to provide more complete meals; nutritional status of children is assessed with the assistance of local clinics.

Step 3.2 Place the final set of progress markers on the corresponding spoke of the wheel, using a three point scale from 1 for **expect to see**, 2 for **like to see** and 3 for **love to see**.

UVIKIUTA, a youth organization in Tanzania focused on income generation, employment and nutrition projects, set as a target the development of more clearly structured tasks for staff and volunteers, something they felt would improve their efficiency. They said that they **expect to see** a report with recommendations for more clearly structured tasks emerging from the organizational development assessment, they would **like to see** members, management and the board adopt the recommendations, and they would **love to see** an increase in the number of volunteers, interns and paid staff performing more clearly structured tasks. To enhance relevance, KENVO set as one of its targets the replication of a program of environmental education grounded in local schools they were confident was making a difference. Their progress markers indicated increasing levels of reach of

the program all the way to the national level. ASONOG set as a target for improving their financial viability the active promotion of joint budgeting with communities. They said they **expect to see** by the end of the year an organizational budget with jointly managed actions and related budget line items, and would **like to see** joint budgets for three-year periods. To achieve their target even more significantly, they said they would **love to see** five-year action plans and budgets for territorially-based interventions. They also developed progress markers for coordination and articulation of a territorial program with communities and other actors as a way to improve the efficiency of the organization. These included progression from strategic alliances with formal agreements, to active engagement of populations and other actors in problem solving.



Step 4: Assign resources and make plans

Step 4.1 Review the overall result by looking at which performance area has the most performance targets and where the greatest effort is needed. Consider the feasibility of acting on the plan and adjust priorities and the timeframe as needed. Identify first steps in acting on the plan, and assign roles and responsibilities accordingly. Place the final Wheel in a prominent place at the organization, so others can also review and monitor.

Step 5: Monitor, evaluate and share

Step 4.1 After six months have gone by, or at some other appropriate point, plan a monitoring exercise to assess the extent to which the organization has made progress, referring to the graduated scale of progress markers. Plan course adjustments and new capacity building activities as needed, to keep moving towards higher levels of progress.

Step 4.2 After 12 months, or at some other appropriate point, plan an evaluation exercise to assess the actual level of achievement in the planned timeframe against the organization's own targets and progress markers. Using the Wheel, describe and rate the extent to which the organization has actually achieved the performance targets for each performance area. Refer to the graduated scale of progress markers and place a mark on the corresponding line indicating the **actual level of achievement**. In-between ratings are possible only if some of the progress markers within the rating are achieved but not others. Repeat the process for each performance objective.

Step 4.3 Join the marks for all rated performance targets. Discuss the resulting shape inside the Wheel. It shows the actual level of achievement at the end of the planning cycle. Use other methods and tools to assess the factors and actors that have contributed to the situation achieved (for example, Force Field, or an interview process) and plan a new cycle of organizational capacity building. Use the results of the combined exercises to provide internal and external stakeholders with evidence of changes in organizational effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and financial viability.

All three CWY examples of the assessment process described above required further work and validation by other actors, before they could be formalized and acted on (Boards, and Senior Managers, for example). CWY did not require partners to share the results of these next steps, or activities aimed at monitoring and evaluating changes. This gap was an important lesson learned for CWY, which is likely to repeat the exercise more systematically, as the organization and its partners will continue to make efforts aimed at strengthening their performance in these four areas. Informal follow-up by CWY staff suggests, however, that partners appreciated the space the assessment process created to talk about the directions of the organization, how they would know they were making progress, and what data they would need to collect along the way. Some, such as KENVO (Kenya), spoke about the pathway for organizational improvements created by the progress markers, making a big target more manageable. They also implemented at least some of the plans that emerged from the assessment, particularly with respect to a model of eco-schools later presented at an international conference. ASONOG (Honduras) restructured their program along territorial or geographic lines and introduced a more wholistic approach to interventions involving the integration of actions and staff expertise on family gardens, hygiene, social enterprises and capacity building. While the Socratic Wheel assessment of organizational performance facilitated by CWY was only one moment in this evolution, it stimulated a constructive and useful dialogue. Discussions with these and other partners involved in the exercise (e.g., the National University of Ostroh Academy in Ukraine), suggest that many have developed their own applications of the Socratic Wheel, focused on monitoring and evaluating changes among youth and strategic planning of project and program activities.

Conclusions

The Socratic Wheel is flexible enough to support step-by-step monitoring and evaluation of change on a small or large scale, by itself or in combination with other M&E tools (story telling, surveys, etc.), with or without the use of change indicators. The tool can also support strategic planning starting with a baseline assessment of the situation (supplemented, as needed, with information from other sources and formal indicators), setting of targets and planning to move from the current to the desired situation. It can also be used to examine the similarities and differences that exist between people (as in the YLA example of volunteer learning alliances), projects (YLA programs in different countries or sectors) and approaches (CWY and SayXchange South-South volunteer exchanges). Selecting the right tool and using it in the right way, with a good blend of rigour and dialogue, is key to success in supporting effective group thinking.

The flexibility and apparent simplicity of the tool is surprisingly deceptive. Design options are many, and can lead to confusion or poorly focused exercises. Careful attention should be given to planning who to engage, when and how frequently, and responsibilities for documentation. Importantly, design of a process needs to consider the following specific questions:

Purpose

- Is the assessment aimed at monitoring and evaluating changes or developing targets and related steps to achieve them?
- Should the assessment involve several wheels to represent and compare projects, activities or individual profiles? Or should it focus on a single project wheel generated by the entire group? If a single wheel, should the spokes stand for criteria or for the activities to be assessed (against one or two criteria)?
- Should the wheel(s) express individual, subgroup or collective assessments of the topic at hand?
- Should the wheel be combined with other assessment tools to answer multiple questions?

Criteria

- Should some or all of the criteria be generated, negotiated or supplied?
- Should participants start with storytelling or Free List and Pile Sort to generate meaningful criteria?
- How many criteria should appear in the wheel? Are sub-wheels needed to represent more precise criteria for each spoke?
- Would the exercise gain from using objects, drawings, pictures or people to represent each spoke on the wheel?

Ratings

- Should the ratings involve indicators or progress markers?
- What rating scale (short or long) should be used?
- Should the scale vary according to the importance of each criterion through weighting of the spokes?
- Should the ratings be negotiated, averaged or determined by the majority?
- Should ratings be done in subgroups (mixed or homogeneous), divided by spoke or wheel, to save time?
- When should the ratings be done: before, during or after plans are implemented?
- Should initial ratings be revised at a later point in time?
- Should prior fact-finding inform the exercise?

Reporting

- Should the wheel be drawn with flip charts, masking tape on the floor or software (Excel or RepGrid)?
- How should the exercise be documented?

For the Socratic Wheel to be useful, facilitators need to learn the art of browsing and navigating through these various questions to select, mix and adjust the tool to achieve a clear purpose and guide action learning. What counts is the fit between the chosen method and the actual contribution the process seeks to make, grounding measurements in dialogue and meaningful action.



Monitoring & evaluation as a learning process: USC Canada's experience in Bridging Gaps

Sarah Paule Dalle and Dana Stefov

The starting point

In 2010, USC Canada embarked on a new five-year program cycle aimed at building food and livelihood security in smallholder farm families in nine countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, funded by CIDA. Building on USC Canada's well-established Seeds of Survival approach, and in partnership with 20 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and approximately 270 participating communities, the program aimed to work towards the following (intermediate) outcomes:

- Enhanced diversity and security of farmer-based seed supply systems;
- Improved food crop and biomass productivity on-farm;
- Improved economic security for smallholder farm families;
- Increased influence of women's knowledge and priorities;
- Increased spread of the Seeds of Survival vision and approach among key stakeholders;
- A more informed and engaged Canadian citizenship on global food security issues; and
- Enhanced use and application of evidence-based information on program results by USC Canada and its partners.

The final expected outcome speaks directly to USC Canada's motivation to participate in the Bridging Gaps community of practice (CoP). "Evidence-based information on program results"

was increasingly recognized by USC Canada and by our partners as essential to improving program strategies, communicating and inspiring donors and supporters of the program (including the Canadian public) and informing policy/advocacy work in Canada and abroad. Collaborations with academic researchers had been one important way to generate in-depth impact assessments but had only been possible for a few programs. Case studies and testimonials collected from the field eloquently illustrated the impact of USC Canada programs in people's lives, but did not speak to the breadth or extent of these impacts. As practiced in previous programs, Results-based Management (RBM) did generate information, but not in a way that was satisfying or particularly meaningful – something that we aimed to change in the 2010-2015 program.

The Bridging Gaps CoP was thus timely, coinciding with a juncture in which USC Canada was seeking to enhance the effectiveness and utility of its M&E systems. Concretely, this translated into two areas of engagement linked to the CoP that have contributed to enhancing USC Canada's M&E: (1) the design of a methodology for assessing gender equality strategies in USC Canada programs, and (2) a broader reflection on how to improve the planning, design and implementation of future results-based management systems.

One size fits all? Design of a participatory gender analysis

Regular meetings of the CoP afforded the opportunity for three USC staff to interact with other NGOs and deepen their knowledge of the SAS2 collaborative inquiry tools and approaches, including some new ones adapted specifically for monitoring & evaluation purposes, such as Contribution-Attribution. The first opportunity to apply these approaches to USC Canada's M&E activities was the design of a methodology for a Gender Equality Review (GER), to be conducted in all USC Canada-supported programs. The GER was a key commitment USC Canada and partners had made when launching the five-year program, with the aim to reflect more deeply on how gender equality and women's rights were addressed in USC Canada food and livelihood security programming. USC Canada defined gender equality as a strategic priority recognizing that food sovereignty and agricultural biodiversity required that concerted and specific attention be paid to women's strategic interests and their role in building sustainable livelihoods in a systematic program-wide approach. Through several rounds of consultation and feedback between Ottawa-based staff and partner organizations, the following objectives were identified:

1. To review and analyze current programming strategies, approaches and activities to assess whether they adequately promote, address and achieve gender equality and women's rights;
2. To review and analyze organizational systems of USC Canada partner organizations and their strengths and challenges for promoting and addressing gender equality and women's rights within agricultural biodiversity programming;
3. To undertake a process of mutual learning for analysis, reflection, sharing and exchange and;
4. To develop action plans and pursue improved gender equality strategies.

Coaching from the community of practice was requested via the CoP to assist in the design of the methodology for this process. A small group of USC Canada staff worked with Jacques Chevalier over five work sessions to develop the research design. The first key decision was to determine the strategic focus of the GER: Accountability, Learning, or Story-telling? The answer came quickly: Learning. Above all, the process was meant to stimulate critical reflection among key program actors to identify strategies to enhance gender equality practices on the ground. Yet, several considerations made this a challenging task, including potential resistance to the topic, varying degrees of gender equality analysis knowledge and experience, the very diverse cultural contexts among the nine program countries, variations in programmatic approaches and activities, and limitations in time, budget and human resources. The challenge then was to arrive at a common methodology that could be applied in diverse settings yet generate a meaningful learning process that would help advance GE in USC Canada programs.

With this focus in mind, the team worked with Chevalier to develop the design for two types of workshops to be held in each program: an Organizational GE workshop, involving staff and in some cases board members from partner NGOs, and a Programmatic GE workshop, involving women and men farmers from participating communities. In each workshop, participants were guided through a process of (1) defining gender equality criteria; (2) determining progress markers for advancing these GE criteria in their program/organization; (3) analyzing contextual factors that promote or impede progress towards GE progress markers in the program/organization; and (4) assessing participant “buy-in” for the workshop results. SAS2 tools, facilitation techniques and visual supports were defined for each step, including in some cases provisions for anonymous inputs from participants to create a safe space on potentially sensitive topics (Table 1).

Table 1. Outline of workshop design for organizational and programmatic gender equality reviews

Objective	Tool/process used	Org. GER	Prog. GER
1. Ice breaker	Facilitator's choice	X	X
2. Assess participants' motivations for undertaking the GER and gauge buy-in	<u>Venn diagram</u> : participants anonymously identify their motivation as external demand, principles/values or organizational impact, or a combination of two or all of these. Participant contributions are made anonymously and summarized by the facilitator on the venn diagram	X	
3. Identify participants' criteria for achieving GE in the organization or program	<u>Storytelling</u> : participants share a story of something that has changed in the lives of men and women as a result of the program. Stories are used to identify GE criteria		X
	<u>Free-list</u> : participants list criteria to identify what constitutes a gender equitable organization	X	
	<u>Pile-sort</u> : similar GE criteria are grouped in clusters with the aim of having four to five criteria for further analysis in next steps. Sorting is done sitting on the floor, creating an intimate atmosphere.	X	X

4. Determine expectations for advancing GE criteria	<u>Progress markers</u> : working in groups, participants identify what they would expect, like and love to see (3 levels) as progress in the organization/program	X	X
	<u>Carousel</u> : note-taker from each group circulates to other groups to get feedback on the progress markers and incorporate new ideas	X	X
	<u>Wheel</u> : facilitator prepares visual summary of GE criteria with respective progress markers	X	X
5. Analyse factors that contribute or impede GE in the organization or program	<u>Force Field</u> : participants work in groups to identify existing factors that help or hinder progress on the GE criteria, the extent the factor can impact progress and the amount of control the organization/program has over those factors. A graph is produced on the wall or floor to summarize the analysis	X	X
6. Re-assess participant commitment/buy-in for results of the workshop	<u>VIP</u> : participants position themselves physically on a graph laid out on the floor, identifying the extent to which the GER results correspond to their values (one axis) and interests (second axis)	X	
7. Wrap up	Discussion on next steps and workshop evaluation	X	X

One of the key features of the design was that the GE criteria were to be defined by the workshop participants, meaning that participants would have full control over how GE was defined in their context. It also implied that there would be no standardized GE criteria across programs. This approach was meant to empower participants to take full ownership of the process, and reflected the decision to prioritize Learning as the main focus. However, this choice also stimulated a fair amount of debate during the design process. Concerns were raised that important issues related to GE (e.g., gender sensitive budgeting, working with women's organizations, program support for the production of crops managed by women, etc.) might not be discussed in the workshops. In part, this stemmed from specific questions that different team members hoped to see answered in the GER, while others pointed out that the process might not push participants to learn about new GE ideas, innovation or approaches. As one team member put it: *How do we know what we don't know?* Others questioned whether established GE audit methods should be used (gender analysis, collection of specific gender-disaggregated data, quantitative budget review, policy review, in-depth case-studies, etc.) or whether it would be more conducive to establish a methodology to analyze known issues in gender, agrobiodiversity and food security, for example analyses of men's and women's differentiated access to, control over and use of resources like land, credit, training or knowledge or an analyses of gender division of labour in productive and reproductive activities like seed saving, crop selection, food preparation, child-care, etc.

These debates were finally resolved during the validation workshop, held with all USC Canada international program staff and the four external facilitators who would work with partner organizations to implement the workshops. Alternatives, such as supplying participants with GE criteria defined by USC Canada, were discussed. But in the end, the original design was retained, as the team decided that engaging and mobilizing key actors to identify strategies for improving GE was more important than completeness of the exercise. And while some team members still had

some reservations, it was agreed that if significant gaps emerged after the analysis of the workshop outcomes, further work and reflection could be completed at a later stage.

After nearly 12 months of work went into the initial conceptualization, methodology design/validation, and production of facilitator guides, the workshops were implemented in all nine countries between January and April 2013. Over 650 men and women farmers, staff and board members from 23 partner organizations, participated in the workshops. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many commented on the “mobility” of the tools and facilitation techniques, which they found very stimulating and enjoyable. Because similar tools were used in both types of workshops, a number of staff from partner NGOs commented that the experience also served as a sort of hands-on training in participatory approaches, as they switched from participant in the organizational workshop to co-facilitators in the programmatic workshop with farmers.

Group work and story telling during the Timor Leste Organizational Gender Equality Review



USC Canada is currently working on a synthesis of the key findings and lessons learned across all programs. Given some of the debates mentioned above, one aim of the synthesis is to examine what kinds of GE criteria were assessed in the workshops and identify any gaps that might require more follow-up or training in the future. Meanwhile, at the field level, we have already observed

initiatives among partners and participating communities to start implementing results from the GER workshops. In Ethiopia, for example, the 1800 member-strong farmers' organizations that run the community seed banks – a key strategy of the program – have decided to launch a campaign to actively recruit more women members. In Bolivia, the GER process identified that women's contribution to farming and agrobiodiversity was not adequately visible and the partner organization has developed plans for developing public awareness tools, like videos that will air as public service announcements, highlighting women's significant roles, contributions and interests. In Honduras, the program partner has translated the outcomes of the GER into an action plan, with the aim to mobilize additional resources for certain actions. One key strategy will be to work to influence national, regional and local women's institutions to better address issues affecting rural women and women farmers in their approaches, policies and programs. In Timor-Leste, an exchange visit for both farmers and staff to USC Canada's program in Bangladesh – a program with a very strong experience in gender equality – is also in the works to stimulate further learning on GE strategies.

Looking forward: emerging ideas for a “results-based learning system”

Parallel to the GER process described above, during the course of the Bridging Gaps CoP, USC Canada has independently continued to make significant investments to improve organizational M&E systems, including:

- Organized regional workshops with all partners to discuss indicators and methods for measuring outcome indicators and supported partners to carry out more rigorous baseline studies than in past program cycles;
- Introduced tools for assessing M&E capacity of USC Canada and partners, based on Socratic wheel;
- Adjusted logic model and indicators, based on lessons learned in baseline data collection;
- Introduced a new reporting format to facilitate reporting on outcomes by indicator, and developed a database for managing cumulative results across all programs;
- Assigned one staff with a part-time role in coordination of M&E;
- Started engaging CIDA more openly to discuss process/needs for progressive strengthening of M&E system;
- Collaborated with academic researchers on impact assessments and related research in three programs.

Some interesting learning has begun to emerge from this work, with some partners having used the information to identify gaps in their program strategies, and with USC Canada and partners disposing of more information to help communicate the scope and results of USC Canada programs. Yet, overall, the system remains relatively challenging to manage and on the balance, much more effort has been invested in building capacity for data collection, management and analysis than in effective learning and planning.

Being mid-way through our current program cycle, more substantial changes to our overall M&E system were not possible during the CoP. However, in a coaching session held towards the end of the

CoP, a small group of USC Canada staff explored possible avenues to achieve a more manageable, learning-focused M&E system in the future, with the following thoughts emerging:

1. **More guidelines – structured flexibility.** One of the lessons learned from the GER experience described above is the value of investing upstream in a well thought out methodology that can be adapted to all programs. In the regional workshops held at the beginning of the 2010-2015 program cycle, methods and tools for measuring indicators were discussed with partners, but a common methodology was not worked out. As each partner worked thereafter to develop their own approach, many fell back on surveys and questionnaires, rather than using more participatory tools that required more time and resources to design. Analysis of the data was time consuming, and the results were reported in a variety of ways, making global synthesis a challenge for USC Canada. Development of a structured, yet adaptable process to guide data collection, **analysis** and reporting, could be considered, as was done with the GER.
2. **Translating the global to the local.** For monitoring to be meaningful on the ground, indicators need to be specific to the particular context – a challenge in designing an M&E system for a multi-country program. Global indicators used by USC Canada have tended to be broader – perhaps more criteria than indicators – and an approach to define more specific and meaningful indicators needs to be built into the “guided process” proposed above. Establishing “progress markers” for specific criteria as done in the GER is one possible approach.
3. **Strategic and negotiated.** One of the major challenges with the current system is the large number of outcomes and indicators being tracked. Simplifying the system seems essential to shift the balance to enhance learning from M&E. In the current program, USC Canada has begun engaging CIDA more openly on the needs and processes required to enhance learning from M&E with positive response to date. Clearly and confidently making the case for a more streamlined but meaningful M&E systems is essential to open the space for further improvements.
4. **Integrated into ongoing programming.** Identifying ways to integrate M&E activities into ongoing program activities is another strategy for making the process more manageable, but requires planning.
5. **Ongoing coaching and follow-up.** No matter how well planned the methodology, adjustments to meet specific conditions on the ground are always necessary. Facilitating this process in a way that meets both partner and USC Canada needs, will require effective communication and follow-up. Identifying mechanisms to do this in a multi-country context with relatively limited resources remains a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Final thoughts

For USC Canada, the CoP has been an opportunity to enhance ongoing efforts to improve our M&E systems. Access to coaching has been extremely productive, enabling us as an organization to apply learnings from the CoP to specific projects such as the gender equality review.



Validation de la Programmation de SUCO

SUCO, avec la collaboration d'Anne Loranger-King au Pérou, de Delmy Martinez au Honduras, de Mylène Castonguay en Haïti et d'Émilie Lemieux à Montréal

Introduction

Dans le contexte de la planification de la nouvelle programmation de SUCO pour 2014 -2019, l'organisation s'est donné comme objectif de réaliser une réflexion à propos des résultats de développement qu'elle souhaite atteindre avec ses partenaires dans les cinq prochaines années. SUCO a donc facilité un processus d'une journée d'animation avec ses principaux partenaires et bénéficiaires dans quatre de ses cinq pays d'intervention afin de valider sa prochaine programmation de façon participative et s'assurer qu'elle est réaliste et en concordance avec les objectifs de ses partenaires. Cette démarche a aussi permis à SUCO d'identifier les principaux indicateurs de changement qui permettront de mesurer les résultats identifiés, toujours avec les partenaires et leurs bénéficiaires. Ces indicateurs, en plus d'aider SUCO à atteindre ses résultats, doivent représenter ce que la population souhaite atteindre comme objectif, comme rêve de développement, pour améliorer sa qualité de vie dans les cinq prochaines années. Finalement, avec ce processus, SUCO a évalué le niveau d'acceptation du modèle logique développé. Avec ce nouveau processus de validation, SUCO souhaite développer une méthodologie de planification et de suivi-évaluation plus participative pour atteindre un niveau de collaboration plus étroit avec ses partenaires et la population appuyée, dans un même objectif commun de développement.

Le processus s'est déroulé dans quatre pays : Haïti, Honduras, Pérou et Mali. En Haïti, le processus s'est déroulé le 11 septembre 2013, à Port-au-Prince avec le partenaire ICKL réunissant six personnes au total. Au Honduras, le processus de validation s'est déroulé pendant une journée complète le 21 août 2013 à Tegucigalpa puis le 23 août 2013 à Choluteca. Le 21 août 2013 un atelier a réuni quinze personnes issues d'organisations avec lesquelles SUCO est en train de développer de nouveaux partenariats : Solidaridad, Cosecha, ADROH et ANAF AE. Ensuite un autre atelier, à Choluteca, a réuni le 23 août 2013, 12 membres parmi les partenaires actuels de SUCO au sud : ADETRIUNF, CARITAS et AMDV. À l'instar du Honduras, le processus au Pérou s'est déroulé en deux journées. Dix personnes ont participé à l'atelier du 23 août à Huari avec le partenaire ALLPA

et des bénéficiaires. Enfin huit personnes ont participé à l'atelier de validation du 18 septembre, à Lima, avec les partenaires IDMA et RAE et des bénéficiaires. Finalement, au Mali, le processus a également requis deux journées : un premier atelier a eu lieu le 12 août à Bamako avec les organisations avec lesquelles SUCO est en train de développer de nouveaux partenariats : AMPDR et ADAF, réunissant dix personnes au total. Un second et dernier atelier avec des organisations partenaires de SUCO et d'autres avec lesquelles SUCO est en train de développer de nouveaux partenariats : AOPP, AMATEVI et GRAADECOM s'est déroulé le 23 août, à Sikasso.

Étape 1: Validation des priorités de développement

Dans cette étape du processus, nous souhaitons valider le niveau d'appropriation des résultats par les partenaires.

Exemple d'Haïti

Avant de voir les résultats identifiés par SUCO pour sa prochaine programmation, nous pouvons réaliser une pluie d'idées sur les principaux défis prévus pour le développement organisationnel et agroenvironnemental durable souhaité. Cette discussion a permis de comparer les priorités des participants et participantes avec celles établies par SUCO.

En Haïti les éléments suivants ont été identifiés dans la pluie d'idées :

- ✓ Problèmes et dégradation environnementales :
 - déboisement
 - assèchement des rivières
 - dégradation des plages et des récifs
 - diminution de la productivité agricole due aux techniques appliquées dans les jardins et au niveau de l'élevage; et
 - problématique de gestion de la production.
- ✓ Faiblesse des associations qui ne peuvent pas assumer le développement local face à l'État qui ne se responsabilise pas.
- ✓ Politiques néolibérales :
 - création de zones franches agricoles
 - exploitation minière; et
 - question agraire et complications dans les droits fonciers.
- ✓ Influence négative des autorités locales (religieuse, politique, etc.) qui tiennent le rôle d'agents de développement auprès des populations mais qui répandent des idées fausses et néfastes pour l'environnement. D'où un besoin de renforcer le plaidoyer, sensibilisation et formation.

SUCO a identifié cinq résultats intermédiaires que l'organisation souhaiterait atteindre avec un prochain programme de coopération volontaire PCV (2014-2019). Ces résultats sont :

- Résultat 1 : Sécurité alimentaire des populations améliorée
- Résultat 2 : Situation et perspectives économiques des jeunes, des femmes et des familles améliorées
- Résultat 3 : Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes améliorée
- Résultat 4 : Pouvoir d'agir en faveur du développement durable des organisations accru
- Résultat 5 : Résilience accrue des personnes et des communautés face aux risques de dégradation du milieu physique

Discussions sur les défis identifiées par la pluie d'idées et les défis identifiés par SUCO :

- Par rapport au résultats 1 "Sécurité alimentaire des populations améliorée", ICKL préfère utiliser le terme "souveraineté alimentaire" plutôt que sécurité.
- Au niveau du résultat 2 "Situation et perspectives économiques des jeunes, des femmes et des familles améliorées", ICKL propose que l'amélioration ne soit pas seulement économique mais également sociale.
- Pour le résultat 3, ICKL a identifié que le thème de l'égalité H/F n'était pas soulevé dans la pluie d'idée, mais que le thème est traité de façon transversale à ICKL malgré des difficultés à développer et appliquer une politique d'égalité H/F.
- Au niveau du résultat 5, ICKL a noté une ambiguïté dans la formulation. De la manière que le résultat est écrit, il leur semble qu'on veut augmenter la résilience ou la capacité d'adaptation des populations face à la dégradation du milieu physique. Ils proposent une reformulation pour mieux exposer notre idée: par exemple : Capacités accrues des personnes et des communautés à agir et poser des actions pour réduire les risques de dégradation environnementale.
- Dans un dernier point, ils ont soulevé que la place du plaidoyer pour l'agroenvironnement et le travail avec les collectivités ne sont pas clairs dans ces 5 résultats.

Étape 2 : Identification des facteurs qui contribuent ou qui atténuent les problématiques soulevées

Exemple du Honduras

Grâce à l'outil du champ de force (Chevalier et Buckles, 2013a), SUCO a invité les participants et les participantes à identifier les facteurs qui contribuent à la thématique soulevée par le résultat identifié et les facteurs qui atténuent cette même thématique :

- Résultat 1 : Sécurité alimentaire des populations améliorée
- Résultat 2 : Situation et perspectives économiques des jeunes, des femmes et des familles améliorées

- Résultat 3 : Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes améliorée
- Résultat 5 : Résilience accrue des personnes et des communautés face aux risques de dégradation du milieu physique

Au Honduras, cet exercice a permis d'identifier les facteurs suivants (pour les deux groupes confondus) :

Problème central : l'insécurité alimentaire

Facteurs qui y contribuent :

- L'absence d'une réforme agraire intégrale;
- Le peu de relèvement agricole chez la nouvelle génération;
- L'absence de diversification des cultures dans les parcelles agricoles;
- Les effets des changements climatiques;
- L'accessibilité aux produits dommageables pour la santé et qui ne correspondent pas à la culture hondurienne (Ex : la malbouffe);
- L'exploitation minière (34% du territoire hondurien en concessions);
- Les monocultures et les intrants chimiques qui stérilisent la terre;
- Le processus de la globalisation qui impose de nouveaux patrons culturels;
- La déforestation;
- La sécheresse;
- Le manque de sensibilisation et de connaissance des familles sur la thématique de la sécurité alimentaire; et
- La perte de la culture alimentaire et productive ancestrale des communautés rurales.

Facteurs qui atténuent :

- L'agroécologie;
- La promotion de la souveraineté alimentaire;
- Une forte organisation, pour favoriser la commercialisation des excédents de la production agricole;
- L'implication des familles dans les projets productifs;
- L'utilisation de ressources locales; et
- La sauvegarde des connaissances et des valeurs paysannes ancestrales.

Problème central : Situation économique précaire

Facteurs qui y contribuent :

- Le chômage;
- La migration des jeunes;
- La désintégration familiale;
- Les problèmes liés à la consommation de drogues;
- La pression du rendement scolaire;
- La corruption (les ressources ne sont pas attribuées aux personnes qui en ont besoin);
- La perte des coutumes et des repères culturels;
- La dépendance des familles paysannes à un système agricole qui les défavorisent; et
- L'absence de politiques publiques qui appuient les modèles de production et de développement durable.

Facteurs qui atténuent :

- Le développement des micros entreprises, des métiers professionnels, et de l'agriculture;
- Un marché local pour commercialiser les excédents de la production agricole et générer des revenus;
- Une participation active de toute la famille; et
- Des alliances stratégiques avec les organisations économiques.

Problème central : l'inégalité entre les femmes et les hommes

Facteurs qui y contribuent :

- Le machisme;
- Le conformisme;
- Le manque d'éducation;
- La discrimination envers les femmes dans le milieu agricole par rapport à leur force physique;
- La faible participation des femmes aux activités productives agricoles;
- La faible participation des femmes dans les espaces de pouvoir et de prise de décision;
- Le peu d'espace laissé aux femmes pour le développement de leur leadership;
- La surcharge de travail des femmes; et
- La résistance des hommes face à la thématique de l'égalité F/H (les hommes sont en position de pouvoir et ne veulent pas céder).

Facteurs qui atténuent :

- L'éducation depuis le milieu familial;
- L'exécution des politiques, des accords et des planifications budgétaires établis sur l'égalité F/H;
- Le renforcement des connaissances sur la thématique;
- Le développement de l'auto-estime et des valeurs;
- La sensibilisation des hommes et le développement de connaissances sur le thème de la masculinité; et
- Les opportunités de participer à des formations techniques appliquées (comme les formations en agriculture), à des actions d'incidences politiques et de participation citoyenne et à différents espaces de développement entre les femmes et les hommes.

Problème central : La dégradation de l'environnement

Facteurs qui y contribuent :

- Les changements climatiques et leurs impacts sur la production agricole;
- La compétitivité déloyale en agriculture;
- Le clientélisme politique;
- Le modèle de production extractif (mines, bois, terre, eau);
- Les projets miniers et hydroélectriques;
- Les transnationales;
- Les concessions forestières;
- La loi de reconversion de la dette;
- Modèle de production agricole tourné vers la production intensive et l'exportation;
- Les politiques globales de production et de commerce (Accords de libre-échange);
- Ingérence des pays développés dans les politiques du Honduras (politique, économie, territoire, armement, etc.);
- Rôle de certaines ONGs internationales, qui font la promotion de la dépendance et de la contamination de la terre avec les intrants chimiques (FAO, USAID, VISION MUNDIAL etc).

Facteurs qui atténuent :

- Incidence citoyenne et politique;
- Reforestation;
- Recyclage;

- Éducation;
- Récupération des coutumes ancestrales dans la façon de cultiver, récupération des terres et des ressources;
- Développement d'initiatives paysannes en agroécologie durable;
- Promouvoir la défense du territoire;
- Conservation des semences natives;
- Pratique de conservation des sols; et
- Diversification de la production agricole.

L'exercice du champ de force a connu quelques lacunes au niveau de son exécution. Les facteurs qui atténuent les problématiques soulevées n'ont pas toujours été identifiés et décrits comme des facteurs existants, mais souvent comme des facteurs hypothétiques. De plus, l'exercice n'a pas été complété avec la classification du poids relatif de chaque facteur afin de créer le graphique du champ de force.

Par contre, l'exercice a permis d'identifier des facteurs sur lesquels SUCO travaille déjà tels que l'agroécologie, la promotion de la souveraineté alimentaire, le renforcement organisationnel, l'appui à la commercialisation des excédents de la production agricole, l'implication des familles dans les projets productifs, l'utilisation de ressources locales, la sauvegarde des connaissances et des valeurs paysannes ancestrales, le développement de micros entreprises, d'un marché local pour commercialiser les excédents de la production agricole, le renforcement des connaissances sur la thématique de l'égalité F/H, le développement de l'auto-estime et des valeurs, la sensibilisation des hommes et le développement de connaissances sur le thème de la masculinité, le développement d'opportunités à participer à des formations techniques appliquées (comme les formations en agriculture), à des actions d'incidence politique et de participation citoyenne et à différents espaces de développement entre les femmes et les hommes. Ceci vient corroborer le fait que SUCO peut renforcer son intervention dans le futur sur des facteurs sur lesquelles l'organisation travaille déjà, et possède une expertise, en plus d'ouvrir la discussion à d'autres facteurs présentés par les participants et participantes.

Étape 3 : Identification des critères et indicateurs de progrès

L'étape suivante du processus consiste à identifier les indicateurs rattachés à la réalité des partenaires et à celle de leurs bénéficiaires. Cette partie amène les participants et les participantes à évaluer quels sont les aspects concrets de leur vie qu'ils et elles souhaitent voir changer et quelles sont les modalités de changement qu'ils et elles souhaitent identifier pour ce faire.

En se plaçant dans une situation de jeu de rôles, il a été possible de faire émerger des indicateurs qui permettront de mesurer les résultats identifiés pour la programmation de SUCO.

Au Pérou par exemple, le jeu de rôle a permis d'identifier les indicateurs suivants :

Vous vous trouvez dans une communauté de la région de Huanuco, et deux personnes de la communauté discutent de ce que représente pour eux une vie sans insécurité alimentaire. Que se disent ces deux personnes?

- Il est possible de produire à toutes les époques de l'année.
- Les familles consomment une variété d'aliments biologiques produits.
- Les producteurs sont organisés et font le poids pour la vente de leurs produits.
- La production de lait est régulière.
- Nos enfants sont en meilleure santé.
- Nous disposons de suffisamment d'argent pour acheter d'autres aliments.
- Nous faisons des choix éclairés par rapport aux aliments que nous consommons concernant leur valeur nutritive.
- Les produits locaux sont transformés en aliments sains pour la consommation de la famille.

Vous vous trouvez au village de Oxshapampa et deux fromagères discutent sur un monde où les femmes seraient égales aux hommes. Que se disent ces femmes?

- Les femmes prennent leurs propres décisions.
- Les femmes ont l'opportunité de gagner et économiser leur propre argent.
- Les jeunes filles vont à l'école dans une même proportion que les jeunes garçons.
- Les femmes peuvent se déplacer pour recevoir des formations, alors que les hommes s'occupent des enfants.
- Ma fille a terminé son secondaire et elle pense maintenant étudier l'ingénierie.
- Une femme est présidente du comité directeur de la communauté.
- Les femmes participent aux réunions et leur opinion est prise en compte.
- Les femmes ont accès au crédit.
- Les maris appuient leurs femmes dans les activités productives.

Vous vous trouvez dans la communauté de Pica piedra dans la vallée de Lurin et deux adolescentes discutent des risques associés à la dégradation de l'environnement. Que disent ces adolescentes sur un monde sans risques pour l'environnement ?

- La végétation est florissante et entretenue.
- L'environnement est pris en compte.
- Les jeunes sont sensibilisés aux enjeux environnementaux.
- Les jeunes utilisent des produits écologiques sur les terres.

- Des infrastructures sont développées pour les vidanges et le recyclage
- L'air respiré est pur.
- Les rues, les champs et les rivières sont propres.
- Il existe des aires de repos et de loisir aménagés et agréables.
- Nous pouvons nous baigner dans la rivière qui est propre.
- Les budgets futurs ne sont plus utilisés pour la décontamination, mais pour des projets à vocation sociale et culturelle.
- Les mauvaises habitudes sont changées pour préserver l'environnement.
- Plus personne ne brûle ses poubelles ou son pasturage.

Vous êtes à Huari en 2020 et deux hommes se racontent combien les choses ont changé depuis 5 ans, surtout en ce qui concerne la situation économique des familles. Que se disent ces deux hommes?

- La participation des familles aux bio-ferias pour vendre leurs produits a augmenté.
- Les familles ont amélioré leur maison pour un meilleur confort.
- Les familles disposent d'argent pour envoyer leurs enfants à l'université.
- Les petites occasions d'affaire ont fructifié de façon phénoménale depuis 5 ans.
- Les économies réalisées ont permis de capitaliser pour une meilleure production.
- L'élevage débuté avec 2 vaches, produisant 1 fromage par jour, a cru à 10 vaches produisant 7 fromages par jour.
- Une femme dirige l'Association fromagère Jallga.
- La coopérative de fromage mise sur pied il y a 5 ans produit maintenant 10 variétés de fromages.
- Les familles sont heureuses de réaliser une activité agricole qui leur plaît, qui génère des revenus et qui valorise les individus au sein de leur communauté.
- Les enfants sont éduqués et reviennent travailler la terre comme agriculteurs professionnels.

Vous vous trouvez dans le bureau de SUCO à Lima, et vous planifiez la programmation de l'organisation pour 2020-2025. Vous parlez du pouvoir d'agir des organisations de la société civile pour un développement durable. Que racontent les représentants des partenaires de SUCO sur ce qui a été atteint dans les 5 dernières années?

- Wow! Nous avons 2 projets d'envergure en marche, chacun représentant un budget de \$15 millions.
- Nous intervenons maintenant dans 3 régions du Pérou.

- Notre méthodologie d'intervention est utilisée par d'autres institutions privées et publiques comme référence en développement durable et inclusive.
- La majorité des municipalités du département d'Ancash sont impliquées dans un travail conjoint de développement avec les organisations de la société civile.
- Nous faisons parti d'un réseau d'organisations renforcé et nous collaborons pour promouvoir le développement.
- Les communautés alto-andines qui parlent Quechua ne sont plus des populations exclues, mais des populations incorporées au développement du pays.

Conclusion

En général, le processus réalisé a permis un partage riche avec les partenaires et a amené une belle réflexion sur la philosophie du développement. Les activités étaient bien structurées et les étapes ont permis réellement de faire naître le débat et de se questionner en profondeur avec la participation de tous.

L'activité des indicateurs a été ludique et vraiment appréciée. Elle a permis d'identifier des indicateurs tels que formulés par les participants, en leur laissant la liberté de s'exprimer selon leur compréhension et leur interprétation. Bien que les éléments apportés ne soient pas tous des indicateurs en soi, ils permettront à SUCO de s'en inspirer pour développer des indicateurs de rendement bien ancrés dans la réalité des partenaires et des populations. L'activité était facile à animer comparativement au champ de force, mais plus difficile à animer avec des populations bénéficiaires. Les animatrices ont manqué de temps pour bien compléter l'exercice du champ de force.

Les partenaires ont souligné que le processus avait permis de se replonger dans une réflexion stratégique, et en général, les partenaires ont beaucoup apprécié le processus inclusif qui a généré un espace de réflexion sur la prochaine programmation de SUCO.

L'exercice a permis de faire ressortir certains points de compréhension commune pour la prochaine programmation, dont les suivants :

- L'importance de ne pas seulement considérer le développement dans la perspective de croissance arithmétique mais aussi envisager l'amélioration en terme qualitatif. Donc, se dégager de l'évaluation uniquement quantitative.
- L'utilisation du terme « souveraineté alimentaire », plutôt que « sécurité alimentaire » dans la programmation de SUCO.
- Que l'amélioration visée ne soit pas seulement économique mais également sociale, malgré les orientations du Ministère des affaires étrangères, commerce et développement.
- L'importance de la famille comme unité productive, et non seulement des jeunes ou des femmes.

Impact Assessment



Uniterro program staff during a workshop on impact assessment.

Uniterra and HIV/AIDS Programming in Burkina Faso: An Impact Assessment

Jacques Chevalier, Daniel Buckles and Philippe Fragnier

Introduction

Uniterra, one of Canada's largest international volunteer programmes, is a joint initiative of the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC). Volunteers are present in eight African, three Latin American and two Asian countries for periods ranging from a few weeks to two years, to help build the capacities of partner organizations to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

In the late fall of 2011, Uniterra decided to enhance their Results-based Management framework by incorporating results from the application of Attribution and Contribution into a mid-term assessment of project and sector activities undertaken since July 2009. The decision reflected a desire shared by many volunteer and international development organizations to ensure that the attribution of credit to interventions, as required by funders, not be done mechanically or without due cause. After testing the tool among their own international staff, Uniterra sponsored applications to individual projects within each country and convened broader national analyses at the sector level, with a focus on Uniterra's contribution to intermediate outcomes (i.e. medium-term changes in behaviour). A total of 108 organizations in thirteen different countries engaged in assessments using the tool, contributing to 65 new cooperation project proposals and 15 new sectorial plans.

What follows is a step-by-step description of reasoning emerging from the application of Attribution and Contribution to the health sector in Burkina Faso, with a focus on Uniterra sponsored HIV/AIDS projects. A group of 17 participants – two representatives from each partner organization in Burkina Faso and three national government officials – took a few hours to complete the assessment, drawing on the prior data gathering and analyses done for each project. The assessment involved all sector partners and was coordinated and facilitated by Fatimata Lankoandé, Clémentine Vimbamba, and Adama Ouedraogo, with support and coaching from Philippe Fragnier. Figure 1 summarises the analysis performed by one of the seven partners in Burkina Faso, used as an input into the sector-wide analysis described below.

Step 1: Intervention, objectives and partners

Attribution and Contribution (Chevalier et Buckles, 2013a) begins with a description of the intervention (action, project, program), its main objectives (fixed or adjusted over time), the corresponding time frame and the implementing partners.

The Uniterra IVC program managed by CECI and WUSC in Burkina Faso engages Canadian, national and South-North volunteers in work with partner organizations to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. During a two-year period (2009 to 2011), Uniterra brought 62 Canadian volunteers (38 women, 24 men) to build the capacities of seven different partner organizations in areas ranging from HIV/AIDS prevention (information, education,

behaviour change, communication, counselling for voluntary HIV testing) to gender equity awareness and the provision of support and care services (palliative care, helping orphans and vulnerable children achieve financial autonomy, etc.). The Unitererra program and its volunteers have also sought to strengthen organizational governance and efficiency by bringing improvements to strategic planning, the management of human resources, accounting for resources, mobilizing resources and managing knowledge (through better secretarial work, archival methods, data base management, communications, monitoring and evaluation).

Step 2: Observed change

Participants in the assessment discuss the relevant observed changes in the domain. Based on the available evidence, they form and justify a judgment regarding the magnitude of the observed changes — whether there has been major, moderate, small or no progress, or whether the situation has worsened.

Based on prior studies using surveys, interviews and self-reporting, the participants in the Unitererra program noted that since 2009, various changes have been observed.

Increased outreach

Of the three partners working on prevention, all have increased outreach, each in their own way. Some offered counselling for voluntary HIV testing. Another created a theatre forum involving 12 people living with HIV (PLHIV) who gave performances for a total audience of 12,192. A third built a more efficient electronic management and provisioning system for pharmaceutical products used by PLHIV.

Enhanced support and care

Using a novel approach that incorporates ergotherapy and psychosocial support, three of the six partners offered support and care services to 6,217 PLHIV. Palliative care services reached 70 women and 30 men living with HIV, and another 228 received nutrition counselling. As for measures to promote financial independence, reports indicate that the theatre forum raised USD 2,000. Another 31 PLHIVs secured micro-loans totalling USD 6,400, 80% of which were reimbursed within the expected period. Income generating activities helped 13 orphans and vulnerable children achieve greater financial autonomy. Four of these children have seen their earnings from a soap cooperative jump from USD 1,000 to USD 2,000 in 2011.

Improved leadership and governance

All partners mentioned improvements in leadership and governance. For some, this meant producing high-quality financial reports and delivering them on time to decision-makers; for another, a review of its by-laws helped to clarify the roles of directors and staff; for a third, producing a news bulletin four times a year increased its visibility and accountability to supporters. All partners indicated that knowing how to better mobilize financial resources and diversify sources of earnings contributed to greater organizational coherence and project sustainability.

Greater gender equity

Two of the partner organizations increased substantially the number of women in key decision-making positions within their organizations. Another delivered gender equality workshops to 30 elected representatives and 50 association leaders. More broadly, partner awareness of gender equity issues increased.

Enhanced engagement in policy dialogue

Partners reported being better prepared to participate in political dialogue, with a view to influencing policy-making and the development of important HIV/AIDS services such as palliative care.

At a broader level, the seroprevalence rate in Burkina Faso has gone down from 1.6% in 2007 to 1.2% in 2010, according to official UNAIDS statistics. Sexual behaviour seems to be changing as well. In 2010, about 70% of adults aged between 15 and 49 said they used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse. These reflect positive changes for the country as a whole.

Step 3: Intervention scope

Further specification of the intervention scope is needed to begin to build understanding of the link to observed changes. Was the intervention the sole contributor to the observed change, or did it play a role jointly or in parallel with other interventions or intervening factors? Did the intervention contribute directly to the observed change, through nearness of cause and effect, or did it act indirectly or somewhat remotely, several steps removed from the final effects? What was the scale of the intervention — large, moderate or small? How important were the obstacles blocking progress? Were they major, moderate or minor, if any? Responses to these questions can be consolidated in a figure using a rating process, for reference later in the assessment process.

Discussion among partners of the Unitererra program concluded that it had made an indirect contribution to the observed changes by jointly interacting with others. The scale of their intervention was moderate and moderate obstacles were encountered along the way (delays and interruptions in funding that hampered the implementation of project activities as planned).

Step 4 and Step 5: Default scenario and overall results

Assessment of the default scenario by the partners of the Unitererra program concluded that without the help of Unitererra volunteers, partners would not have had the capacities and staff to offer new services such as palliative care, the theatre forum and counselling for voluntary HIV testing. The visibility of existing networks would have remained low were it not for Unitererra's assistance in strategic planning, network resource mobilisation and institutional reform. Financial viability would also have been compromised for three of their partners were it not for support of income generating activities provided by volunteers. Overall, organizations are now more competent in their own priority areas and better equipped to mobilize the financial resources they need to implement and sustain project activities. Given the distance between the default scenario (involving small or no progress) and the observed changes (moderate changes), the overall results are positive and significant.

Step 6: Methodology of the intervention

Another key consideration in legal reasoning regarding responsibility for a situation concerns the methodical nature of the intervention (expressed in the concept of rational premeditation). When applied in an evaluation context, four questions help to determine this:

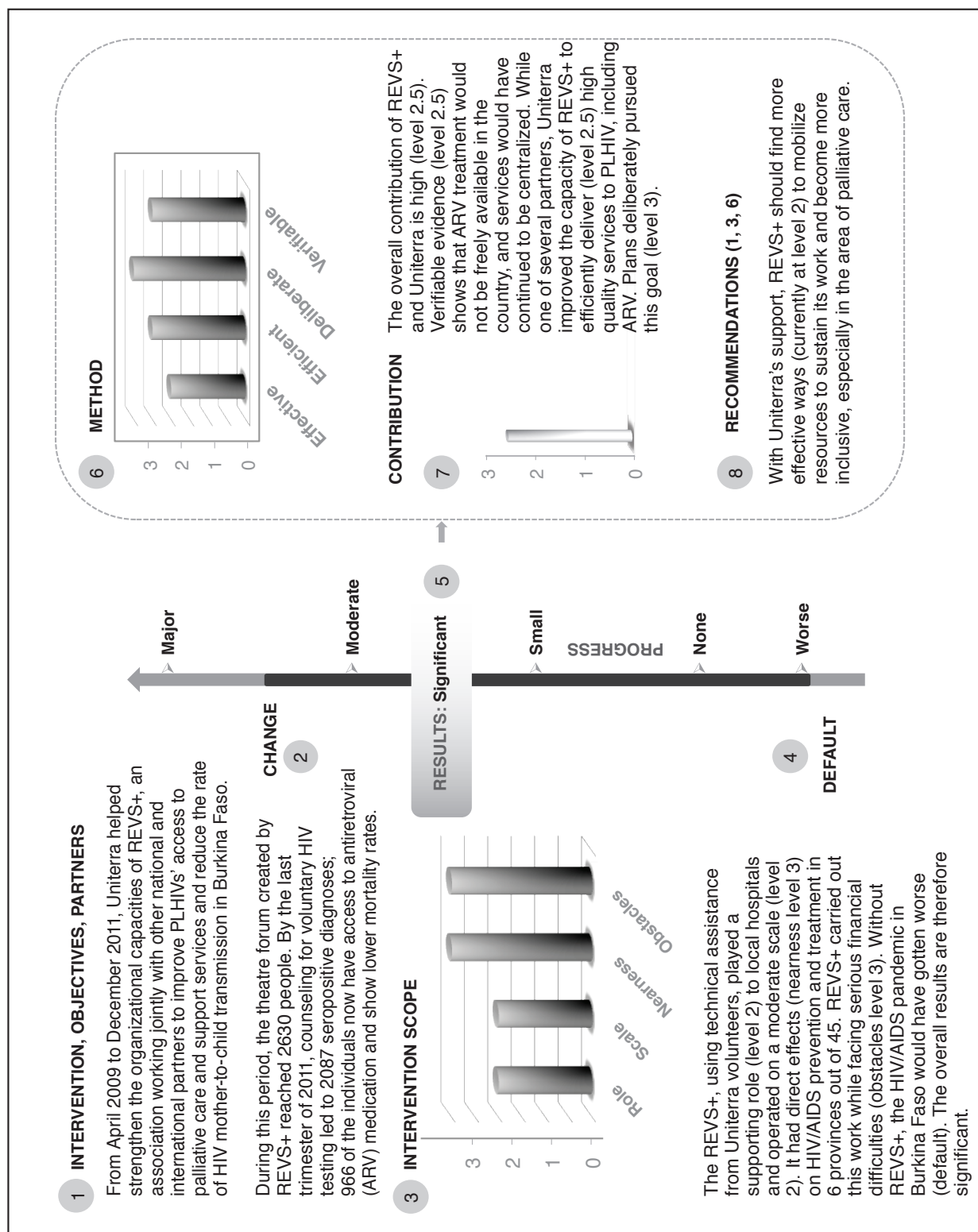
1. To what extent did the intervention use effective methods, i.e. rational steps and credible means, to achieve the observed results?
2. To what extent did it make an efficient use of available resources (human and material)?
3. Did the intervention achieve results through steps and adjustments that were deliberate, or were results partly or fully accidental, i.e. obtained through unintended actions?
4. How verifiable is the evidence used to answer all preceding questions? Is it generally sound, incomplete, or rather weak?

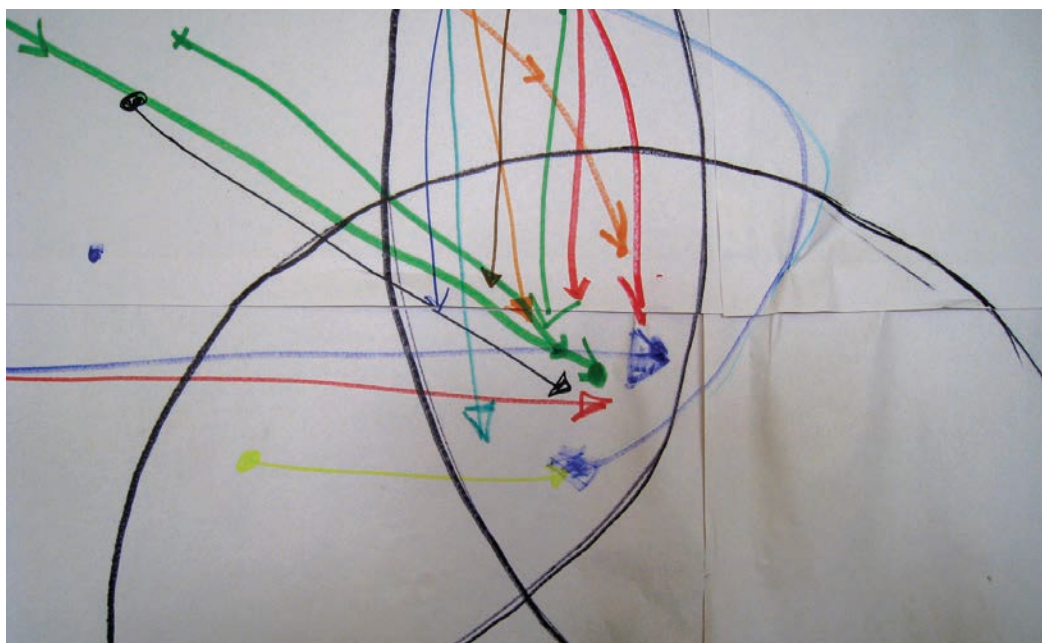
Discussions by Unitertra stakeholders concluded that the program and its partners were methodical in bringing about the observed results, and that the evidence to show this is strong and verifiable. Program planning documents created through the RBM process show the rationale for the interventions and logical steps to be taken. They provide detailed information on M&E indicators and ongoing performance measurements using the Logical Framework and reflect careful and deliberate thinking about cause-effect relationships. Evaluation data generated through iterative reporting by volunteers, organizations and a sectorial committee also support the conclusion that the methods of the intervention were effective and deliberate. On the matter of efficiency, however, things could be improved in two ways: by adding more national volunteer placements to the program and by clearly identifying the people responsible for planning, M&E and reporting activities. Figure 1 consolidates the results of these deliberations and synthetic ratings on each question.

Step 7 and Step 8: Contribution and recommendations

Assessment of the overall contribution that an intervention has made to observed changes makes use of the answers to all previous questions consolidated in the figure and associated ratings. It also lays the groundwork for discussion of the implications or recommendations that follow from the assessment.

When reaching these last steps, the HIV/AIDS sector committees in Burkina Faso concluded that Unitertra made a **significant joint contribution** to the introduction of important new HIV/AIDS services and the development of organizational capacities in the sector. Three recommendations followed. First, some adjustments to project priorities are in order, to more directly reinforce Burkina Faso's work in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention. Second, the results of project activities such as voluntary HIV testing and the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT) should be consolidated, preferably through contributions from national volunteer placements. Third, given the current decline in funding for HIV/AIDS projects, Unitertra should continue to strengthen its contribution to capacity building in the area of resource mobilisation and the development of strategic North-South partnerships.

Figure 1: Impact Evaluation of Unitererra programme work with REVS+ in Burkina Faso.



Impacts of the Community of Practice

Daniel Buckles and Jacques Chevalier

The question of impact, and how to assess it, was from the outset a preoccupation of many members of the community of practice (CoP). Efforts to demonstrate that international development programming is making a difference, and to learn what individual components work best, are increasingly important to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and to their donors. Impact evaluations are still relatively rare, however, among CSOs. Christie (2008) notes that until recently there have been few incentives for CSOs to go beyond an extremely narrow accountability framework focused on the delivery of outputs (goods and services) through specific activities and inputs. Dependence on evaluation findings for the renewal of funding discourages organizations from reporting project weaknesses or negative outcomes reflecting poorly on the relevance, efficiency or effectiveness of their work. Davies (2005) argues that reluctance among CSOs to engage with questions of impact is, ultimately, self-defeating. He laments the growing tendency of organizations to limit their responsibilities to “the output level”, defining impacts so narrowly that they do not pay attention to system-wide changes and longer-term impacts, or attempts to generate knowledge about what works and does not work in a given situation.

The CoP innovated in this important area by experimenting with the *Attribution and Contribution* tool in various contexts.⁸ The methodological strategy tries to address three central issues in the field of monitoring and evaluation: **time frame, system boundaries and causality** (Chevalier et Buckles, 2013a). The first issue concerns the understanding of results and the distinction between immediate, intermediate and ultimate results now part of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) lexicon. The expected results of a project or program intervention may be mapped out on a timeline, from the beginning to the end of a defined period. For programs involving international volunteer

⁸ In addition to the Uniterra story shared here, Crossroads International and SUCO also undertook systematic assessments using this tool, in addition to practice by all groups during capacity building sessions of the CoP.

cooperation this might refer to changes in volunteers after their participation in an exchange program (immediate results) or changes in organizations hosting volunteers for a number of years (intermediate results). Changes in communities where volunteers and organizations are active may have deeper time horizons (ultimate results). Impact evaluation typically focuses on ultimate results, even when these can only be achieved well after specific interventions are over, if at all.

Second, projects and programs concerned with international development are embedded in the middle of systems of actors and fields of intervention, making it difficult to define system boundaries. CIDA, for example, funds a right-to-food project with the Canadian Food Grains Bank which in turn works with World Relief Canada and through them with the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR), with the assistance of a partner, the Council for Socio Economic Benevolent Action (SEBA). These organizations in turn work on the right-to-food with numerous advocacy groups, each of which is embedded in other systems of local and national actors affecting expected results all along the results timeline. Even the field of intervention (human rights) is embedded in systems involving interactions between food technology, food rights, land tenure dynamics, etc. that vary from one setting to another. To assess results, system boundaries must be identified that strike the right balance between whole systems thinking and thinking about the parts with some proximity to the intervention at hand.

The third issue built into impact evaluation, and the most difficult to resolve, concerns the question of causality – how one thing results in another when complex systems are involved. The question focuses on the extent to which a defined intervention (the cause) creates a meaningful change in a multi-stakeholder and multi-factor situation (the effect), and whether or not that contribution to change is positive or negative.

Different methodological approaches to evaluation reflect different views on what complex causality is all about and ways to infer or demonstrate cause-effect relationships. Experimental approaches to impact evaluation make use of randomized control trials to create a **counterfactual scenario** – a description of how things would have turned out differently to the way they actual did. The method requires that part of the target group (a control population) be isolated from the effects of the intervention. Large surveys and sample sizes are then used to collect information on observed changes and compare scenarios (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011). Another approach to causality in impact evaluation draws on Theories of Change positing root causes and plausible causal links between expected results and proposed activities (Stern et al., 2012). A Case Study approach grounds impact evaluation in the search for underlying principles that explain impacts (Scriven, 2008). As White (2006, p2) notes, “the reports and literature from these different approaches are in general developing in parallel, with rare attempts at dialogue to establish common ground let alone methodological fusion”. This has resulted in what has been characterised by some as “the causal wars” (Cohen and Easterly, 2009). In short, battle lines are drawn between quantitative and qualitative approaches and the tendency for hard methods to reduce causality to its simplest expression, i.e. linear and mechanical, leaving out considerations of complexity in society and nature or issues of human ethics and responsibility (for example, what is the right thing to do, whether or not it has much chance of succeeding or influencing other factors).

Specialized methodologies developed in a variety of contexts are constantly evolving to address the various dimensions of project or program evaluation in complex settings: impacts over longer timeframes, at a systemic level and through linkages of complex causality. When it comes to assessing the work of CSOs, the methods present several serious problems (Scriven, 2008; Catley et al., nd). Experimental designs, the most widely recognized methodology, typically rely on large-scale surveys and time-consuming statistical analysis beyond the means of most CSOs. Large investments in impact evaluations well after projects and programs are complete may not be feasible or useful to the organizations originally involved in the intervention. Furthermore, many fields of CSO action (improving rural livelihoods, for example) lack clear and internationally recognized criteria and indicators of project performance or other standards against which they can be assessed (Catley et al., nd). The ethics of using control groups for the purpose of evaluating impacts, a key feature of the experimental method, is also highly problematic.

The tool *Attribution and Contribution* seeks to address these issues (Chevalier et Buckles, 2013a). It draws on the long-standing Anglo-Saxon legal tradition used to assess responsibility for harm in a complex social environment. In the process of formulating legal judgments, judges and juries must reflect on the extent to which the harm observed is justly attributed to the actions of the accused. They rigorously go through a fact-finding and reasoning process, by bringing together evidence and logic to reach conclusions regarding causation beyond reasonable doubt. With the *Attribution and Contribution* tool findings and recommendations follow from a series of considerations – descriptions of the intervention including time frame and people involved, evidence of change observed in a particular domain or system, the scope of the intervention, the role of other intervening actors and factors, and obstacles along the way. The methodology also engages people in counterfactual thinking – fact-finding and reasoning regarding what would have happened had the intervention not taken place, as in legal deliberations in court - without relying on randomized control trials. *Attribution and Contribution* addresses each consideration in order, converging around a final judgment on the contribution of an intervention to observed changes in real settings, bringing together evidence and logic at the service of action learning.

Following are the results of the application of the *Attribution and Contribution* thinking process to evaluation of the impacts of the community of practice on member organizations. It was scaled to meet a precise goal within a limited timeframe: a synthetic snapshot of observed results to be shared with the donor and fed into further reflection by the CoP on both impacts and the CoP model used to achieve these impacts. Using a structured interview approach, Daniel Buckles talked with individuals or small groups in six organizations active in the community of practice near the end of the planned period.⁹ To maintain the coherence and confidentiality of the conversations, the presentation that follows groups similar findings together and treats specific sources anonymously.

⁹ The interviews were conducted in June and July, 2013, just prior to conclusion of the project period. They included members of the community of practice from USC Canada, CESO, CWY, SUCO, Cuso International and Uniterria. For the version of the tool *Attribution and Contribution* used during the interview see “A Handbook for Participatory Action Research, Planning and Evaluation” (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013b) available at www.participatoryactionresearch.net.

The CoP Intervention

The community of practice met 11 times over a period of 30 months between February, 2011 and September, 2013. During this period, one, two or three individuals from each organization participated regularly in the planned meetings, which typically involved a capacity-building process facilitated by Buckles and Chevalier. These sessions were based on a needs assessment during the previous meeting, sharing of experiences with the use of methods, discussion of tips and best practices, and selecting new topics for subsequent meetings. In between meetings, members designed and practiced planning and evaluation activities using the learning from the meetings and coaching support. Every organization had access to and made use of coaching over the period, to help design evaluations at various scales or support capacity building workshops within their organizations. A handbook of tools for participatory action research, planning and evaluation developed previously by Buckles and Chevalier, and the occasional circulation of relevant publications on M&E by CWY, also formed part of the inputs into the mix of activities and practice by CoP members.

The shared objectives of the CoP, expressed broadly at the beginning of the process (see Introduction), were sharpened gradually during the various meetings of the CoP in light of a better collective understanding of needs and expectations. They were distinguished at three levels. As an immediate result, community of practice members expected to **learn** new approaches to M&E and **share** this learning both within their organization and with partners. At the intermediate level, community of practice members expected to **use or apply** their learning to real-life planning, monitoring and evaluation activities, internally and with partners. Finally, at the ultimate result level they expected to see the **integration** of new approaches to M&E in their organizations and in the organizations of some partners, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of their programming.

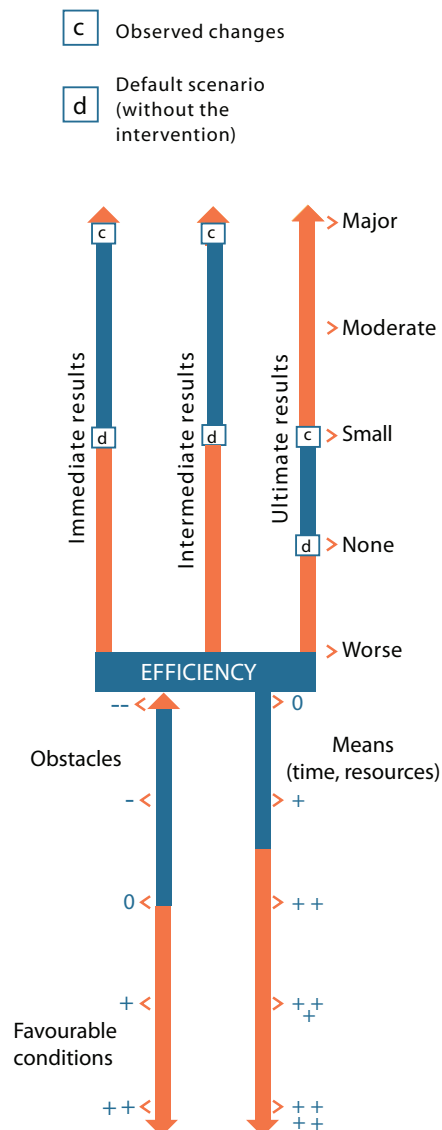
The CoP Contribution

The *Attribution and Contribution* discussions focused on evidence of observed changes in M&E at each result level, the efficiency of the intervention (the relationship between results attributed to the intervention and the means and conditions encountered) and final judgments regarding the overall value or worth of the intervention. In each interview participants described concrete examples of learning, use and integration of new approaches to M&E observed in the organization during the previous two years. This continued until they felt that the picture of changes for each level of results was as complete as possible. They then formed a judgment regarding the significance of the observed changes, labelling it from a situation of major or moderate progress to small or no progress or whether the situation had actually gotten worse. Participants then explored what part of the observed changes would have happened anyway, without the CoP intervention. This included discussion of other factors and actors intervening in the domain and reasoned distinctions between the activities and impacts of all factors and actors.

The findings from each discussion were graphed onto a flipchart to create a visual representation (Figure 1) of the changes observed (c) and the default scenario without the CoP (d). The gap between the two represented the results attributed to the CoP intervention. Discussions then shifted to the assessment of the scale of means (time, resources) used to achieve these results and the conditions, favourable and unfavourable, encountered along the way. These findings were also added to the

graph. The ratio between the attributed results (upper part of the graph) and the scale of means and conditions (the lower part of the graph) were then used to form a final judgment regarding how efficient the intervention had been, and the overall worth of its contribution to the observed changes.

Figure 1: This organization observed major changes (c) associated with learning and use of new approaches to monitoring and evaluation (immediate and intermediate results). Small changes in these result areas would have occurred without the CoP intervention (d). The gap between the two represents the results attributed to the CoP intervention. But for the CoP intervention, no progress would have been made with respect to the integration of learning and use into organizational structures (ultimate result). Changes at this level remain small, however, at least in the two year timeframe of the intervention. Overall, the efficiency of the intervention (the ratio of results to means and conditions encountered) is high – the results were achieved with a moderate investment of time and resources and despite various important obstacles encountered along the way.



The findings from the interviews point to three different conclusions by member organizations. Half of the organizations interviewed (3) determined that their engagement with the community of practice was **very worthwhile**, two concluded it was **worthwhile** and one noted that the results of their engagement in the community of practice were **less than they were aiming for**. Each organization arrived at its conclusion for different reasons reflected in the relationships between the results of the CoP intervention at different levels and the means and conditions encountered.

Two of the three organizations concluding that the intervention was very worthwhile observed major changes at the immediate and intermediate levels, and argued that very little or no progress would have been made at these levels but for the contribution of the community of practice. At the **immediate** results level – learning about new approaches to M&E and sharing this learning both within the organization and with partners – observed changes included detailed knowledge of a wide range of participatory tools shared across the organization, the creation of customized toolkits for use by the organization and its partners, and new expertise in active facilitation of evaluative thinking, learning and reporting. Understanding of key concepts in evaluation were also much improved across the organization and among partners, including the ability to distinguish between levels of results and reflect on critical M&E design considerations related to purpose and use of evaluation findings. Without their engagement in the community of practice, participants from both these organizations said that knowledge of M&E in the organization and among partners would have remained largely limited to its role in reporting on activities. They also pointed out that they would have had only vague ideas about how to engage people actively in learning from evaluations, a weakness that would have undermined their credibility with key stakeholders such as youth and community groups.

Results for these two organizations at the **intermediate** level – use or application of new approaches to M&E – were also assessed as major and largely due to engagement with the community of practice. The evidence participants in the interviews provided included examples of many small evaluative exercises they had conducted on a wide range of topics, often with partners. They had also used new approaches in several large-scale applications involving many partners and for important organizational initiatives. Independent uses of new M&E approaches by partners were also provided as signs of the significance of the observed changes at this level. One person interviewed pointed out that their partners are now saying that they are the users of evaluations, not just providers of data. She concluded that a chain of engagement had been created through use that redefined ownership of the evaluation. As with the immediate level results, both organizations reasoned that little progress in actual application of new approaches would have occurred without having engaged with the community of practice. Desk-based reporting on outputs supplemented by general observations during short field visits would have remained the only option in peoples' minds, and the only thing that would have happened in this default scenario.

Results at the **ultimate** level – integration of new approaches to M&E in their organizations and in the organizations of some partners, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of their programming – were **small** for these same two organizations. High-level organizational decisions had been made to investment more in participatory approaches to M&E but more time was needed to consolidate these in the organization. In one case this included the creation of a senior position focused on M&E, and in the other an investment in the development of criteria and indicators with partners from the beginning of a new cycle of institutional programming. This organization noted that the use of participatory M&E methods learned through the community of practice had become a natural reflex within the organization. Nevertheless, gaps were also noted by both organizations in the documentation and analysis of findings from evaluations and their full integration into programming decisions at the organizational level. For these reasons the observed changes at this level were not as significant as they may be after more time. The participants noted

that what progress was made at this level during the previous two years was almost entirely due to their engagement with the community of practice.

Assessment of the scale of means and the conditions encountered diverged for these two organizations. In one case the (Figure 1) scale of the intervention was moderate (steady participation by two or more staff, plus a number of coaching sessions and supplementary workshops in the context of a large organization) and various obstacles were encountered including high staff turnover and uncertainty regarding future directions of the organization. Participants concluded that the CoP intervention was very worthwhile, that is, the results attributed to the intervention were achieved efficiently (the relative size of results compared to means and conditions encountered). The other organization invested resources at a small scale (steady participation by one staff person, plus a few coaching sessions) and encountered favourable conditions along the way. They also concluded that the CoP intervention was very worthwhile, although the relative size of results compared to means and conditions was less impressive.

The third organization concluding that their engagement with the CoP was **very worthwhile** drew on a different set of factors and calculation of the ratio of means and conditions to ends. They attributed less of the observed change at the immediate and intermediate level to the community of practice, noting that some progress with respect to learning and use of new approaches to M&E would have been achieved anyway through prior commitments to review and renew their M&E system and contract specialist staff. Unlike the other two organizations, however, they observed major progress at the ultimate results level – integration of new approaches to M&E in their organization, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of their programming. They observed that the organization now makes a deliberate “business case” for field resources assigned to M&E and invests in information and communication technologies and training in participatory methods to facilitate regional access to and use of evaluation results. Furthermore, senior managers now meet regularly to discuss evaluation results, and support the deliberate shift in approach from a narrow focus on project and program management to the active use of evaluations for program development based on evidence from past work.

While some progress at this level would have occurred anyway, senior managers and field-oriented staff in the interview argued that the organization's engagement with the CoP provided timely and highly strategic direction to M&E renewal at the institutional level. The engagement significantly quickened the pace of progress compared to what they might have accomplished otherwise. Results at this ultimate level, they reasoned, are more difficult to achieve and consequently all the more striking considering what was a small-scale investment by the organization (steady participation by one staff in the context of a large organization where conditions were very favourable).

The review of results and efficiency of the CoP intervention by other organizations was more tempered but nonetheless positive. One organization observed major changes in learning (immediate results) and a number of examples of active use of new approaches to M&E (intermediate results). Some of this progress was due, they argued, to actors and factors other than engagement with the CoP (including prior knowledge of some of the approaches). However, the coaching support in particular helped them move ahead much more quickly at these two levels than they would have otherwise. Observed changes at the ultimate result level were small, however. Further innovation with new

approaches to M&E was still needed to create systems more broadly relevant to the mandate of the organization. The scale of means used to achieve the results at the three levels, while low, was met with a number of important obstacles – a lack of synchrony of the CoP with respect to the planning cycle of the organization and limited opportunities to engage directly with partners in the field. This made the moderate results achieved despite obstacles all the more efficient and supported their judgement that the overall contribution was **worthwhile**.

The reasoning of the other organization reporting a worthwhile contribution also focused primarily on moderate changes at the immediate and intermediate levels. These included a large-scale evaluation using a new methodology, and learning from this by partners, both emerging from their engagement with the community of practice. Factors independent of the CoP also contributed to observed changes at these levels, including opportunities created by a mid-program review process. While observed changes at the ultimate level were few, the progress achieved at the other two levels inspired new thinking at the organizational level, especially with respect to the assessment of impacts. Whether this contributes later to institutional changes remains to be seen, although conditions encountered during the assessed period were favourable and the scale of means invested small considering the size of the organization (steady participation by one person). This ensured that the modest results were achieved efficiently, making the overall contribution worthwhile.

Finally, one organization concluded that the results of their engagement in the community of practice were **less than what they had aimed for**. Changes observed at the immediate level (learning) were moderate. They included a deeper understanding of how to engage people in evaluative thinking rather than simply collecting data, better knowledge of a range of tools and key concepts such as the adjustment of evaluations to fit specific purposes. Virtually all of this learning came from the CoP, although sharing of the learning within the organization was limited. Uses of new approaches to M&E did not take off either. Only a few applications were completed during the period, typically in the context of internal meetings, resulting in small progress at the intermediate level. Still, a small shift did occur at the institutional level that may yet lead to strong integration of new approaches to M&E in their organization. Time will tell. These results were achieved with a moderate scale of means (two staff participating in regular meetings and several coaching sessions, in the context of a large organization), and under highly favourable conditions. In short, the results were small despite highly favourable conditions and a moderate scale of means, making the overall contribution less than what they had aimed for and the intervention not particularly efficient.

Implications for Organizational Plans

While the impacts of the CoP on M&E varied across organizations, commitment to continuing with key innovations was a constant during the interviews. Some said that the integrity of their organizational mission depended on the further development and use of participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation – aimed at being accountable to intended beneficiaries and engaging them in mutual learning. For others, continuing to innovate in the directions fostered by the CoP experience was necessary to show relevance in a competitive environment and make better use of the information already being collected but not fully understood or shared.

The ongoing challenges of integrating new approaches to M&E at an organizational level (the ultimate result) were also discussed, including human and financial constraints, the relatively high and broad range of skills required to be effective, and difficulties sustaining the spirit of engagement and learning in evaluation contexts where donor needs and timelines dominate. Various strategies for dealing with these challenges emerged from the discussions and from earlier meetings of the CoP. First, various participants felt strongly that their organizations needed to be more deliberate about budgeting for partner engagement in M&E, including both funding and staff time allocations to the task. This, they argued, should be combined with more strategic planning of evaluations in light of their intended purpose and the kind and amount of information to be collected. The notion of evaluations “fit-for-purpose” coined by Cuso International embodies this idea, which also calls for simplifying and adapting M&E systems to make it easier to generate the information needed, with the right people. While demanding on budgets, the experience of the CoP shows that M&E can also be more efficiently designed and consequently more parsimonious in the use of existing resources.

Second, various organizations have begun to develop plans for ongoing training in specialized evaluation skills, with a particular focus on the design of evaluation processes (the selection and scaling of tools for a purpose) and the facilitation of group-based methods. Gaps in skill development was recognized as an ongoing barrier to the effective use of tools for evaluation (the intermediate result). At the same time, the discussions around training recommendations also drew attention to the value of non-specialist training in M&E. Engagement of a wider range of actors within organizations in the M&E process, some argued, was needed to mobilize evidence for specific evaluations and also to expand and deepen the use of evaluation findings. Senior managers responsible for programming decisions and communications specialists focused on public engagement and volunteer recruitment were two examples given of non-specialists that exercise important internal demands on evaluation findings and help to establish a common culture of M&E across organizations. These observations suggest a two-tiered approach to training in M&E, based on the different needs and functions of actors within organizations.

Finally, ongoing innovation in M&E, in response to both learning and accountability agendas, implies a new kind of conversation with the donor community about RBM. Rather than trying to homogenize and standardize M&E for all possible scenarios through the use of RBM, the innovations of the CoP suggest that hybrid models should be pursued and supported. Three models might be considered. One model, called an RBM+ (plus) approach by Christie (2008), implies **supplementing RBM** with topical evaluations focused on evaluation questions not included in funded logical frameworks. The USC Canada review of gender equality is an example of bridging gaps with RBM by adding evaluations that are not required by outside agencies but nevertheless matter to the organizations directly involved. During the course of the CoP organizations identified a range of topical evaluations such as capacity building, partnership development, and empowerment objectives that were built into the missions and programming models of organizations but not necessarily important to funding agreements with donors.

Another model emerging from the work of the CoP centred around **improving RBM** by using participatory methods to collect and analyse the data needed to show expected results in an RBM framework. Converting questions that would normally be asked using surveys and questionnaires

into a structured, group-based conversation around expected results preserves the sharp focus of RBM while at the same time facilitating interactive engagement and mutual learning and accountability. Developing ways to use ICTs such as cell phones, the web and radio to facilitate the collection and virtual discussion of results was another methodological improvement explored during one of the CoP sessions. Whether it be through small groups or broader processes of public engagement, interactive engagement is a principle often ignored in self-evaluations (isolated from challenges by others) as well as in evaluations by proxy (assessing one's work by reporting on the results of one's partners) or carried out by third party experts (using survey, interview and narrative data). These represent options for improvements within the RBM framework.

Finally, the CoP also innovated with what can be called a transformative approach to M&E focused on **integrating RBM** into a learning systems approach. New thinking by members of the CoP about balancing and integrating planning, inquiry and evaluation activities of their organization helped to situate M&E frameworks in this broader perspective. In this model, RBM is intentionally scaled down to its minimalist form – a few key results and associated indicators – fully integrated into the broader organizational process of learning from system change and changing systems of learning.

The tool *Attribution and Contribution* developed through the CoP experience and used to structure the evaluation of the impacts of the CoP, illustrates a methodological innovation where RBM takes a backstage to organizational learning. By doing so, evaluations can contribute more deliberately to planning and to research, and draw more systematically on them at the same time. RBM integrated into a learning system can more easily factor in the effects of uncertainty and complexity, including multiple stakeholder contributions to observed results. It can also serve purposes other than upward accounting for resources and results, to include adjusting plans for ongoing or future actions, or launching deeper assessments of lessons learned. From a learning systems perspective grounded in organizational plans and priorities CSOs can then engage with donors more openly and confidently regarding what should be evaluated and how to bridge gaps between evaluation methodologies and between organizations working with different evaluation approaches.

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