Monitoring and Evaluation: New Developments and Challenges

International conference 14 -16 June 2011

Soesterberg, the Netherlands

Conference convened by: INTRAC International NGO Training and Research Centre; PRIA Knowledge is Power; PSO capacity building in developing countries

We would like to thank the following for their financial contribution towards the conference:
DFID (Department for International Development, UK), PSO, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Conference overview

As development organisations, we are all finding ourselves placing a greater emphasis on measuring for results, on looking for evidence of impact, on justifying our effectiveness and on responding to a growing demand for accountability. Development organisations are continually experimenting with innovative approaches to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In response to this perennial challenge to get the measurements right, INTRAC[1] (UK), PSO[2] (the Netherlands) and PRIA[3] (India) brought together over 170 participants from 41 countries in Soesterberg, the Netherlands to share their experiences and approaches through case studies and workshops, exchanging ideas and reviewing new initiatives that are being developed.

The conference's overall aim was to contribute to improving understanding and action on M&E within international development. There was a particular emphasis on the capacity of civil society organisations to use M&E for international learning and management purposes, whilst at the same time striving to meet the increasingly complex demands of multiple stakeholders.

A need for greater accountability

Since the mid-2000s, monitoring and evaluation has taken on a far greater role in international development. The aid effectiveness agenda has brought about a major change in development agencies' motivation to focus on results and impact, and to provide evidence of their effectiveness. In order to respond to this move, monitoring and evaluation has been given much more prominence in many organisations. This in turn has led to a greater understanding of the challenges faced when attempting to collect and access the right data that improves the work outputs, at the same time as demonstrating accountability to both donors and beneficiaries. For the conference INTRAC, PSO and PRIA identified nine themes under which international development agencies have been using innovative ideas to demonstrate accountability:

1. **Governance and accountability**
2. **M&E of advocacy**
3. **M&E of capacity building**
4. **M&E of humanitarian programmes**
5. **Evaluating networks, including community driven networks**
6. **Impact**
7. **M&E in complex contexts of social change**
8. **The design of M&E systems**
9. **Programme evaluation in an era of results-based management**

> "A good range of presentations and case examples based on real experience and learning experiences."
>
> **Conference participant, quoted from a conference evaluation form**

Each theme had an identified theme leader and space was given to self-selected delegates where innovative ideas and newly developed methodologies would be explored, tensions and debates would be tackled, and lessons would be shared.

Copies of all of the presentations referred to on the following pages are available to download at: **www.intrac.org/pages/en/conferences.html**

1. INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre)
2. PSO (Vereniging voor Personele Samenwerking met Ontwikkelingslanden) [Association for Staff Cooperation with Developing Countries]
3. PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia)

Conference proceedings

Keynote speech - New developments and challenges in monitoring and evaluation

Anne Garbutt, INTRAC Fellow, gave the keynote speech to the conference, highlighting the trends towards emphasising results and evidence of impact, and the need for civil society organisations (CSOs) to justify financial effectiveness. She explained how the focus on effectiveness and efficiency appears to be guiding the way monitoring and evaluation systems are being developed. Anne highlighted issues around participation, measuring capacity, the challenges to monitoring advocacy and improving impact evaluation. She concluded by stressing the need to continue exploring, refining and sharing our approaches to monitoring and evaluation, while walking the fine line between those that control our resources and those that we seek to serve.

Sue Soal from the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA, South Africa) responded to the keynote speech, raising some key points to keep in mind during the conference:

- Know ourselves and our purpose.
- Identify a method and know its limits.
- Get the means of learning and accounting right.
- Deal politically and strategically with the environment.
- Focus on the purpose and tasks: let us not join the absurd chorus that wants to know that 'methods of proving prove that they prove'.

1. Sharing practice and experience of M&E

The conference was broken up into a series of smaller group sessions on the conference themes over the three days. Short presentations of recent experiences were shared to provoke debates related to the monitoring and evaluation of the theme. The following notes highlight the issues and lessons learnt from each.

1.1 Governance and accountability

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Christian Aid case study - Olivia McDonald and Alix Tiernan, Christian Aid (UK).
- M&E for governance and accountability in development programmes: Client Satisfaction Instruments Project in Ethiopia and Malawi - Jerim Obure and Maurits Servaas, ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation) (Kenya and the Netherlands).
- Learning from advocacy of issues related to monitoring and evaluation: Cases where multiple government agencies engaged with limited role clarity - Dr Alok Pandey, PRIA (India).
- Measuring progress through performance-based management: A study of Livelihood Promotion Strategies Project - Jharkhand (India) - Dr Kailaspati Jha, UNDP (India).

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- In monitoring governance and accountability there is a need to include multiple data collection methods, which can help establish trends over time.
- Setting up M&E systems, especially when working with partners, is **time intensive** and requires extensive capacity support for partners and those interacting with them (in-country programme staff).
- Using teams from outside an area helps to overcome the potential cultural issue of difficulty in accepting criticism.
- Using SMART indicators that cut across a large number of projects in multiple countries is not feasible.

- Performance can be deduced without targets as the outcomes are contributing to change not driving it.
- In trying to measure progress through performance-based management systems, M&E becomes very labour intensive, and therefore leads to high costs.
- Qualitative data can be compared across time but **not** compared between projects or across countries.
- Setting targets in governance and accountability is less useful as the nature of political governance which means that so much is outside the control of the project.

1.2 Monitoring and evaluation of advocacy

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Advocacy on disability and road accidents in Ghana: Unlocking opportunities with Action Learning - Cindy Greers, VSO and Eunice Racheal Agbenyadzi, VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) (Netherlands and Ghana).
- Seeing change through: a collaborative approach to monitoring advocacy - Gweneth Barry and Janet Gunter, CAFOD (Catholic Agency For Overseas Development) (UK).
- Stakeholder perceptions on monitoring and evaluation advocacy in programmatic management and impact measurement - Mpho Letima and Seeisa Mokitimi, Christian Council of Lesotho.
- Evaluating advocacy: A case study of an international campaign by Oxfam - Jeff Atkinson, Oxfam (Australia).

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- The complexity of relationships in advocacy programming can lead to an enormous overload of data if you want to capture all. You need to be selective and chose the most significant change.
- The advice to our partners to be flexible and responsive is not reflected by our monitoring systems.
- Monitoring and evaluation needs to be integrated into the planning phase of any advocacy programme.
- The logic of M&E does not reflect the chaotic nature of change; the group questioned the value of log frames when monitoring advocacy.
- People who work in advocacy are often activists and the challenge of M&E is to find space for reflection and admit failure.
- NGOs can overestimate the change they will make in the short term, but underestimate the long term change they may make.
- Inclusive planning and participation at all levels are key for both the beneficiaries and donors; it is important how we collect information, not only extracting, but also providing feedback to empower and to build trust.

1.3 Monitoring and evaluation of capacity building

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Monitoring and evaluation as a means of tutoring a cooperative in a capacity building project in Balaka, Malawi - Dario Marmo, Lama Development and Cooperation Agency (Italy).
- Sustainability of democratic decentralisation and efforts for monitoring and evaluation of capacity building - Professor N Ramakantan, KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration) (India).
- Managing for capacity results in SNV - Marlene Roefs and Sonja Ooms, SNV (the Netherlands)
- Inclusive municipal governance in Monrovia, Liberia: Working together to create value from waste - Sean Green, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (Monrovia and Liberia).
- Rising to the challenge: Monitoring and evaluating capacity development - Virya Vanly, Graeme Storer and Arthur DelVecchio, VBNK (Institute to serve facilitators of development) (Cambodia).

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- An essential question is to be clear on capacity building for what.
- Monitoring and evaluation of capacity building is much easier if there is a tangible end result.
- Working from inputs to outputs is often what donors require, however looking at final changes and working backwards to the intervention (backward tracking) is more useful for learning – we should do both.
- It is essential that three spheres are taken into account - Control, Interest and Influence - and to do this collaboration with all stakeholders is important.
- Organisational capacity assessment tools can be useful for learning, but not for generating ‘objective’ data.
- We should stop blaming the donors for what we do or do not do in our planning, monitoring and evaluation practices - they usually can be convinced if we have a strong argument.

1.4 Monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programmes

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Monitoring and evaluation of outreach clinics in Jaffna, Sri Lanka - Mercy Malaysia.
- M&E of humanitarian programmes: The Danish Refugee Council programme in Puntland.
- Order out of chaos: a case study of an M&E system for collaborative capacity building for humanitarian emergencies - Kwame Boate, CARE USA.

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- There are always difficulties in getting reliable data, especially in long-term conflict situations.
- There is potential in using monitoring information provided by beneficiaries as a tool for deepening engagement in humanitarian work.
- It is important to use the learning during the process in order to improve programme quality over time.
- Questions were raised as to the ethical dilemma of using a ‘mystery shopper’ technique (sending someone in who poses as a patient) to check the quality of services provided.
- Should we always expect people to give up time to provide us with data for our programmes free of charge?

1.5 Monitoring and evaluation in community based networks

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Community Reflection Methodology: Towards downward accountability and collective learning - Awny Amer Morsy (Egypt).
- Planning, M&E and learning: Experiences from a grassroots network and their partner NGO - Shack Dwellers Federation (Namibia), Slum Dwellers International Networks and Prabhat Kumar Datta (India).
- Co-designing learning centred PM&E systems for transnational networks of urban poor: Emerging approaches from Asia - Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Rajesh Tandon, Kanak Tiwari (PRIA, India) and Sundar Burra (SPRAC, India).
- Community monitoring in the provision and maintenance of basic services for the urban poor in India’s West Bengal - Prabhat Datta and Payel Sen.

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- The main purpose of monitoring, evaluation and learning is to enable reflections and learning within the community in order to improve what they are attempting to achieve.
- Existing monitoring and evaluation practices often exclude the community. Community ownership is key and should be supported by: using community language; taking time to build trust; promoting community-to-community learning exchanges; building on community practices.
- There is a need to redesign M&E policy frameworks and structures which are truly participatory, inclusive and empowering to the community.
- On the whole communities become very aware of the of the short-term financial support provided by donors which in turn decreases ownership of a project aimed at network development by the community.

1.6 Impact evaluation

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Cordaid's experience with impact evaluation - Rens Rutten, Cordaid (Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid) (Peru, Ghana and India).
- Measuring capacity building for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care: Lessons from the impact evaluation of the ARCAN Project - Munirat Ogunlayi, ITAD Ltd (UK).
- YCare International impact assessment: Senegal and the Gambia Youth Enterprise and Income Generating Programme - YCare International (Senegal and Ghana).

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- There is a need to be clear about what you are doing (either an evaluation or impact assessment), why you are doing it (for learning or demonstrating) and where to start; what to measure and what to assess.
- There is a need to be realistic about time and capacity, what tools to use and attribution.
- Plan for impact assessment from the beginning and build questions into ongoing M&E systems.
- Impact assessment addresses the "so what" question. There have been thousands of 'successful' projects and programmes that make no lasting difference to people's lives.
- Efficient use of funds does not necessarily lead to long-term sustainable change.
- The current trend of valuing short-term reportable results over longer term, more sustainable impact must be challenged in ways that are coherent and rigorous.
- We need to work alongside donors to find ways of demonstrating lasting change, using dwindling funds as effectively as possible.

1.7 Monitoring and evaluation in complex contexts of social change

This session was led by PSO under one of their ongoing learning groups: 'PSO Thematic Learning Program, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of complex processes of social change'. The presentations were:

- Juggling with qualitative methods and dealing with mainstreaming M&E in multistakeholder processes in Colombia - Natalia Ortiz and Alejandro Imbach, Cordaid-Colombia.
- Promoting inclusive education in Cambodia through outcome mapping based programming - Sander Schot, Foundation Dark & Light (Cambodia).
- Measuring milestones: The application of the Most Significant Change methodology for measuring complex, social change - Steps Towards Development STEPS (Bangladesh) with Oxfam (UK).
- Reflexive monitoring in action in a thematic learning programme on inclusion of persons with disabilities - Saskia van Veen, Athena Institute, VU University (The Netherlands), Paulien Bruijn (Foundation Dark & Light), Barbara Regeer, Athena Institute, VU University (The Netherlands).
- Planning, learning and accountability for sustainable agricultural chain development - Steff Deprez, Vredeseilanden, VECO (Nicaragua).

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- PME in complex contexts require frequent bursts of short learning sessions and regular feedback cycles
- Using the right PME methods in itself is no guarantee for dealing with complexity. Creating space for 'sense-making' is crucial.
- In order to avoid falling back into a reporting mode: stick to the routine of organising 'sense-making' sessions; and use the 'sense-making' session to develop monitoring reports.

1.8 The design of monitoring and evaluation systems

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- The design of M&E systems: A case of East Africa Dairy Development Project - Simiyu Gaitano, EADD (East Africa Dairy Development Project).
- Building stronger internal M&E and learning systems - Fair & Sustainable Advisory Services (Kenya and Ethiopia).

- Nicaragua, The North Zone Project: The design of M&E systems - Elena Laura Ferretti, Lama Development Cooperative Agency (Nicaragua).
- Sightsavers adaptive monitoring and evaluation system - Taitos Matafeni, Sightsavers International.

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- There is a need to find a balance between developing top-down M&E systems and ensuring they are responsive to the needs of the partners and beneficiaries.
- It is essential to link M&E systems to planning. If planning is poor or non-existent it is much harder to develop a good M&E system.
- International NGOs must ensure their systems are set up to capture the right kind of results.
- If we want to develop better M&E systems for learning and improving then we need to make sure we have the support of senior managers and trustees.
- It is important to balance the value of cost benefit analysis with cost opportunity analysis.

1.9 Programme evaluation in an era of results-based management

The presentations of recent experiences in this session were:

- Measuring results of irrigation development: The evaluation of completed Yen Loan Irrigation Projects in the Philippines - Nick T Baoy, Pilipinas Monitoring and Evaluation Society (Philippines).
- Measuring results using the results framework approach: Learning lessons from Concern Worldwide.
- Community monitoring: Improving health care service delivery in Rajasthan, India -CUTS International (India).
- Programme evaluation in an era of results-based management: British Council's South East Europe pilot - Louise Kennard, British Council (South East Europe).
- Relationships of trust as prerequisite for effective M&E - Robert Vandenberg, Mosaic.net International.

The main findings and lessons learnt include:

- The main issue was the overriding importance of **trust**.
- A results frame is not an end in itself.
- Adequate resources and skills are needed to manage the Results Framework Approach.
- Results frameworks are based on solid information and analysis.
- An effective results framework is contingent on clearly articulated targets, timelines and their measurement.
- The emphasis should be on staff, simplifying systems, make them useable and ensure systems are contributing to staff confidence.
- Results-based management needs to be done properly; it needs commitment to the whole process and the resources to do it.
- Consultation is essential if there is to be acceptable ownership and accountability.

> "This has been a good opportunity to hold the mirror in front of us and those who support us, challenge us or abuse us. I hope to find you all continuing the journey over the coming years."
>
> **Rajesh Tandon, PRIA**

1.10 Self-generated learning groups

Time was also set aside for groups of delegates to discuss issues and share learning on topics that were not included within the conference themes. The areas covered included theories of change; capacity building of member-based organisations; evaluating a people-centred approach; fifth generation evaluation; value for money; organisational capacity assessment tools; and embedding an evaluation culture.

2. Learning from others' experience of M&E

The conference was addressed by a series of plenary presentations disbursed amongst the working group sessions. For each of the plenary sessions, presenters brought together monitoring and evaluation thoughts from different perspectives. These included:

- Official donors
- NGOs exploring alternative approaches and changing paradigms
- Speakers working on the topic 'NGOs and common M&E frameworks'
- Private foundations

2.1 Views and approaches of official donors: Debates and experiences of evaluation

This session explored the context within which we are working and within which our thinking and practice sits.

"Evaluation for accountability: Measuring development effectiveness of NGOs"
Dr Ruerd Ruben, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dr Ruben challenged us all to think about whether we have too many people doing M&E in comparison to those working on the ground. He argued that NGOs are lagging behind the private and public sector in evaluations, that NGOs need to get more involved in qualitative methodologies, and he does not think NGOS make a unique contribution. A second challenge that faces the sector is a declining trust in aid programmes by the general public. They previously trusted the sector but they now want to see what is being done.

Key messages

1. Evaluating development effectiveness should measure value for money - rigorous measurement is needed, not just stories
2. Effectiveness needs to be evaluated to build public trust; measurements must be strong at the start of a programme with a solid baseline
3. Transparency starts with autonomy and we support external evaluators and the outsourcing of M&E rather than internally conducted within INGOs
4. If you want to implement a programme, the design should build in evaluation from the start: 'Projects should be designed to be evaluable'
5. No learning can take place without understanding impact.

"DFID [Department for International Development, UK] evaluation process of their PPAs [partnership programme agreements]"
Dr Neil MacDonald, Gondwana Development Associates

Dr MacDonald gave his personal reflections on his findings from a 'meta evaluation' of DFID PPAs, clearly stating he was not representing DFID. In 2008 DFID received a critical report from the National Audit Commission and since then have demanded much more rigour in M&E. The majority of the organisations that received PPA funding have moved away from measuring activities and are reporting on outcomes. There are still weaknesses in measuring impact; however one promising area seems to be outcome mapping focusing on boundary partners.

Value for money is still seen largely as a donor imposition; DFID are expecting methods that measure economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an analytic tool for measuring and accounting for a much broader concept of value. DFID acknowledge the difficulty in measuring these variables and are open to good ideas from the NGO sector on how to measure value for money in a way that 'makes sense'.

"Irish Aid MAPS 2 [multi annual programme support] evaluation"
Hugh Goyder, INTRAC Associate

Hugh shared his experience of evaluating the MAPS programme, noting that the evaluation is still in progress. Key issues arising from the process:

1. There has been a continual process of moving the goal posts since 2007 and in 2009 pressure was exerted by Irish Aid to prepare results frameworks and retrospective baselines.
2. The economic crisis brought about a reduction in funding and created an environment of uncertainty.
3. The partners have become more creative through the experience brought about by their responses.
4. There are a series on unresolved questions that Irish Aid have posed for themselves, including: should the funding be used to strengthen the impact of official Irish Aid or should it be specific funding for particular programmes of these agencies and more heavily tied to results?

2.2 Alternative approaches and changing paradigms: experiences and reflections

One session was set aside to consider the experiences of organisations who have explored different approaches.

Day 2 Plenary Session - presentations

- Multi-level evaluation of the impact of rights-based approach strategies in PLAN International - Tosca Bruno-van Vijfeijken, Syracuse University (USA).
- InnovAndes M&E system - Brenda Bucheli, InnovAndes (Peru/Bolivia).
- Case study of the 'Program Performance and Benefit Monitoring and Evaluation System' of Uttarakhand Urban Sector Development Investment Program - Aparna Pandey, Investment Program Management Unit, UUSDIP (India).
- PSO Thematic Learning Programme cross-case analysis - Jan Van Ongevalle, HIVA (Belgium).

The key issues and themes covered were similar, even though the presentations and the contexts of the case studies were very different. The following issues and lessons learnt emerged.

Key issues

- Keeping M&E simple and flexible.
- Capturing innovation.
- The process of developing a Theory of Change is evolving whereas M&E process development is stagnant.
- How do we learn from unexpected results?
- Linking lessons from PME to improving programmes.
- Strengthening relationships between different stakeholders.
- Upward, horizontal and downward accountability.
- The increasing demand for M&E but limited resources, with too many indicators and focus on operations rather than strategy.

Key lessons learnt

- Active participation and trust in relationships takes time and effort.
- There is a clear demand for information and an interest in learning.
- NGOs need to be very involved in all evaluation design and developing implementation parameters.
- Access to all data and informants is essential.
- There needs to be clear agreements on confidentiality rules and use of data.
- Clarity of roles is vital.
- Focus the initial baseline to test the theory of change.
- There is a need for fewer, simpler, standardised indicators linked to Theory of Change.
- Include qualitative information on impacts and success factors.
- For complex projects the M&E system needs to capture both innovations and expected results.

2.3 NGOs and common M&E frameworks

Day 3 Plenary Session - presentations

- Accountability in restricted civil society environments - Adele Poskitt, CIVICUS.
- The Bond Effectiveness Programme: developing a sector-wide framework for assessing and demonstrating effectiveness - Rob Lloyd, Bond (UK).

On day three the conference explored two initiatives aimed at developing and using common frameworks. Firstly, Adel Poskitt from CIVICUS described the findings from the Civil Society Index programme and how common frameworks will benefit CSOs. Then Rob Lloyd from Bond gave a presentation on the Bond Effectiveness Programme, which seeks to develop a sector-wide framework for assessing and demonstrating effectiveness.

Both presentations highlighted issues that influence why common frameworks are necessary. Adel described why increasing restrictive legislation reduced the effectiveness of CSOs; the value of frameworks can be used as a form of protection, a means of survival against repressive governments. Rob highlighted the need for harmonisation in how UK NGOs measure, manage and report effectiveness; a need to improve rigour in how we assess and demonstrate our effectiveness, looking at common domains of change, indicators, data collection tools and best assessment methods.

Key points

- Common accountability frameworks have several benefits but must be adaptable to different contexts.
- Frameworks should not be about creating a single definitive way of assessing effectiveness - they are about, where possible, encouraging greater harmonisation and consistency in the sector.

2.4 Alternative funding actors

Day 3 Plenary Session - presentations

- Responsive approaches to strengthening monitoring, learning and evaluation capacity - Suman Sureshbabu Patel, Rockefeller Foundation and Sheela Patel, SDI.
- Learning how to tell a coherent MLE story for a complex organisation - Sean Green, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (USA).
- How does the Oak Foundation view M&E - Blain Teketel, Oak Foundation (Ethiopia).

The penultimate plenary session shared experiences of how three private foundations approach M&E. Suman Sureshbabu Patel, Rockerfeller Foundation explained why the Rockerfeller Foundation is interested in improving their learning M&E. They aim to be true to their commitment and values, to inform good governance and management decisions and they want to work more effectively with their partners.

Sean Green from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation explored learning how to tell a coherent Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation story for a complex foundation. He highlighted the main challenge of the foundation in developing a framework to fit vastly different programmes across the globe. Sean provided an ideal approach to their giving and two alternative approaches explaining that they expect the MLE framework to allow for any approach they use. They do MLE for three main purposes: to help inform their strategy to ensure a clear articulation of 'why we do what we do'; to meet effectiveness of their giving; and to learn how to better recognise what success looks like.

> "We want to strengthen the field of development evaluation, influence standards, methods, innovations, practice, the longer term institutionalisation of progressive approaches to learning, monitoring and evaluation."
>
> **Suman Sureshbabu Patel, Rockerfeller Foundation**

Blain Teketel from the Oak Foundation described the underlying principles of the Oak Foundation's M&E, including: equal partnership - establishing equal and open communication with grantees about the role and purpose of M&E; transparency -

partners see it as a funded audit, while Oak believe they have a responsibility to create a level of trust that creates open dialogue; accountability - shifting primary accountability to those we are serving; and opportunity for learning - knowledge from evaluations triggers reflection at the levels of managers and staff. They integrate M&E into the day-to-day grant making by establishing common understanding of objectives and outcomes, clarifying stake-holders expectations of M&E and allowing space for doing M&E (time, financial and human resources for themselves and partners).

It was refreshing to hear the presenters all emphasise the value of learning, a value which often gets lost in the result-based culture we find ourselves in.

3. Action points from the conference

The last session brought together seven action groups that explored next steps for after the conference. This section outlines a few of the suggestions that came from each group. There were many more ideas listed on 'trees of ideas' and the theme leaders, supported by INTRAC, PSO and PRIA, intend to explore further ways of taking forward the points raised.

3.1 M&E of governance and accountability

Included in the 'tree of action' was a recommendation that we need to do more long-term studies or explore what others have done to promote or demand more. We need to synthesise information - possibly through learning groups, exploring the last 12 years of M&E of governance projects.

3.2 M&E of advocacy

The advocacy 'tree of action' suggested that organisations should avoid jargon, use a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, and leadership should provide space for good practice in monitoring advocacy programmes.

3.3 Working collectively to improve our M&E practice

This group felt there is a need to organise a working group to look at strategic M&E issues, inviting experts from other disciplines as well as M&E experts.

3.4 Evaluating community based networks

The 'tree of action' included the need to engage with government to shape or influence M&E guidelines and to develop a critical analysis of the existing practices of the evaluation industry.

3.5 Theories of change and impact assessment

This group are looking for valid methods to assess complex social change. There needs to be clarity about what to apply and where, and there is a need for real commitment amongst peers to share real examples.

3.6 Complex contexts

The 'tree of action' suggested we all try to avoid jargon, to explore more methodological diversity, and they thought it would be useful to commission a study to explore if learning can contribute to accountability. Finally they want to share more widely the results of phase two PSO-PME and complexity action research.

3.7 M&E of capacity building

This group suggested the launching an e-learning programme that can engage more practitioners. They would also like to see online chat forums for all to discuss M&E issues and related themes.

Conference outputs and final thoughts

This conference report is one of a number of conference outputs. There are several journal articles to be submitted to *Development in Practice*, based on selected case studies. An overall M&E paper will be produced based on the background paper and including the key lessons learnt from the proceedings, plus several thematic papers will be published under the INTRAC M&E series. Finally, INTRAC will prepare a research proposal for taking forward the key questions that came out of conference.

“We need to demonstrate with rigour the difference our work makes - even if we only collect qualitative data not only through tools and techniques, but because we believe in it wholeheartedly, and seriously.”

Rajesh Tandon, President, the Society for Participation Research in Asia (PRIA)

“There are challenges ahead, how can we collaborate better as a sector? This conference was an example of such collaboration and cooperation, we should develop quality standards as a sector to share not only amongst ourselves but also outside.”

Margo Kooijman, Director of PSO, Netherlands

“It is almost criminal to keep making mistakes - the resources available are insufficient to do that - we need to learn and make change.”

Brian Pratt, Executive Director, INTRAC

INTRAC
International NGO Training and Research Centre

Oxbridge Court, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES, United Kingdom
Email: info@intrac.org Tel: +44 (0)1865 201851
www.intrac.org