

06-05-2025

From Data to Dialogue: Hands-On Participatory M&E for Real-World Impact

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Housekeeping



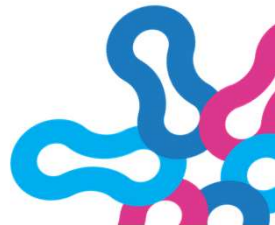
You are muted. You are welcome to participate using the **Q&A** function.



We will prompt several discussion questions. Please feel free to answer these using your polling feature

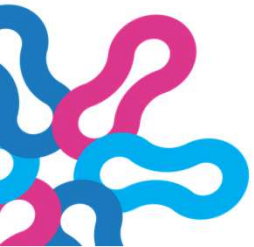


We will be sending the slides and resources after the session, so do not worry about taking detailed notes!



Warm-up question

- When it comes to making M&E more participatory and adaptive, what's your BIGGEST current hurdle?



Our Development Goals are Ambitious, But is Our M&E Agile Enough?

The Shifting Landscape:

- International development operates in increasingly dynamic and complex environments: from climate crises to rapid political shifts and interconnected global challenges.

The M&E Dilemma:

- Traditional M&E, with its focus on pre-set indicators and linear logframes, often struggles to capture the richness of these complex changes or inform timely adaptations.
- It can feel like we're meticulously measuring the rearview mirror while trying to navigate a winding road ahead.

The Consequence for Impact:

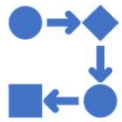
- When M&E doesn't keep pace, we risk:
 - Missing crucial learning opportunities.
 - Failing to adapt strategies effectively to evolving local realities.
 - Not fully understanding or valuing the diverse outcomes experienced by the communities we serve.

The Call to Action: We need M&E approaches that are not just about accountability for past actions, but are dynamic tools for learning, adaptation, and navigating towards a more impactful future.



Shifting Perspectives

Process-oriented vs. outcome-centric views



Understanding and Process:

Emphasize the importance of understanding the processes that lead to outcomes

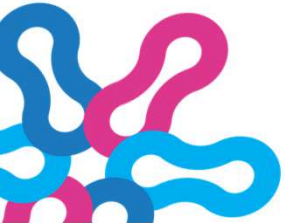
Encourage our clients to focus on the journey, not just the destination



Success and Progress Markers:

Define success and its progress markers from the beginning of the project.

Integrate these markers into the reporting structures and practices.





Shifting Perspectives

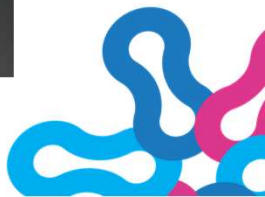
Participatory MEL methods

Try MEL Participatory tools:

- Most Significant Change (MSC)
- Outcome Mapping (OM)
- Outcome Harvesting (OH)
- Pause and Reflect Sessions

Empowerment and Cultural Sensitivity:

- These methods empower local entities.
- Foster culturally sensitive MEL approaches that resonate with local contexts.



Enhanced Monitoring

Data-oriented adaptation

- Utilize formative assessments or self-assessments to gauge the skills and capacity of teams and sub-awardees.
- Tailor MEL system designs to align with the capacity and experience of the teams.

Reflection sessions:

- Regular reflection sessions (every 3-6 months).
- Foster a safe space for sharing thoughts and ideas.

**TIP: Local perspectives are key for success, try to include representatives as often as possible.*

Tool Highlight: *Self-Assessment*

- Developed to identify strengths and areas for improvement in MEL capabilities.
- Ensure MEL requirements are feasible and practical, avoiding overly complex approaches.
- Formative assessments can also be beneficial if resources and skills are available.

** TIP: Consider staff turnover and reassess as needed.*



What can MEL Participatory methods bring to the table?



Synchronize monitoring with the pace of change



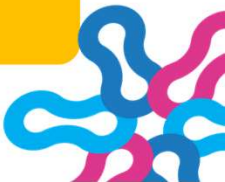
Attend to performance monitoring's three blind spots

Broader range of outcomes
Alternative causes
Full range of non-linear pathways of contribution

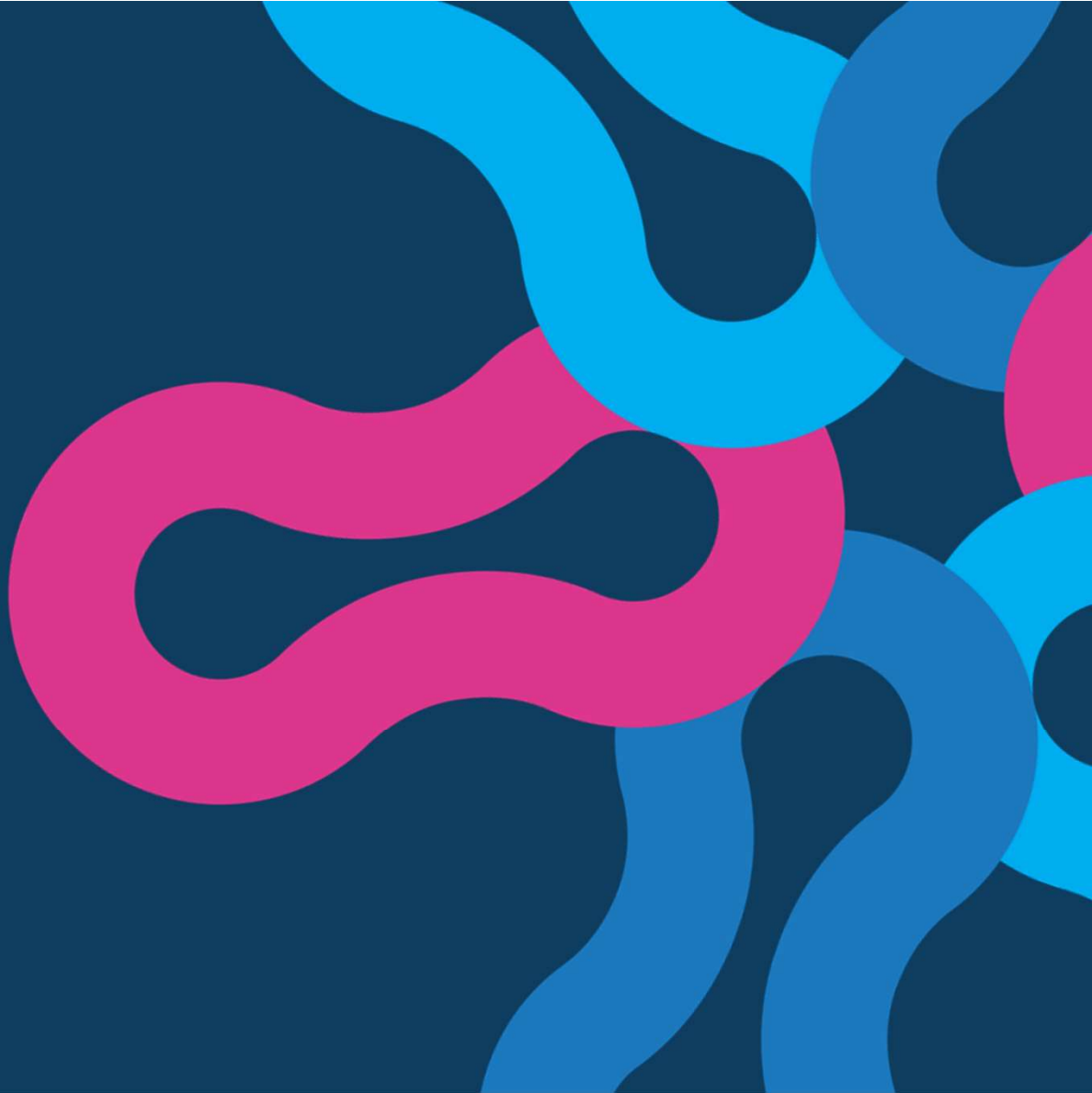


Consider relationships, perspectives, and boundaries (three key systems concepts)

The structures, processes, and exchanges linking **actors and factors** within a system
Different **perspectives** within a system
What is **in and what is outside** the system



**Highlight of MEL
Participatory Approaches**



Outcome Harvesting (OH)

WHAT IS OUTCOME HARVESTING?

Outcome Harvesting is an evaluation approach that enables us to identify, formulate, verify and make sense of outcomes. It does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

STEPS FOR ORGANIZING AN OH SESSION

1. Design the outcome harvest
2. Gather data and draft outcome descriptions
3. Engage change agents (our partners) in formulating outcome descriptions
4. Substantiate
5. Analyze and interpret
6. Support use of findings (validation, creation of recommendations, use)



When VS. When not to use Outcome Harvesting

Use it

1. Complex contexts & there is a disagreement about what is its solution
2. To explain how individual outcomes work together to create system-wide changes
3. As a monitoring tool, or in evaluations
4. High buy-in from the program team

Don't use it

1. Minimal bandwidth from program staff or local implementing partners
2. As a standalone MEL tool.
3. There is a lack of trust between direct participants/partners.
4. To claim an outcome that can be attributed solely to a program.



Outcome Harvesting – continued



Why we should use it

Flexibility: Outcome harvesting works well in complex, unpredictable environments where the project's exact outcomes might not be clear at the outset.

Focus on impact: This approach emphasizes identifying real-world changes in behavior, relationships, policies, or practices instead of just measuring outputs or activities.

Learning and reflection: Outcome harvesting encourages active dialogue and reflection among stakeholders, leading to deeper understanding of the project's contribution to change.

Cost-effective: Compared to more complex and data-intensive evaluation methods, outcome harvesting can be relatively inexpensive and quick to implement.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Internal Stakeholders:

1. Program beneficiaries.
2. Program implementers.
3. Program leadership.

External Stakeholders:

1. Donors and funders.
2. Evaluators.
3. Community representatives.



Outcome Mapping (OM)

What Is Outcome Mapping?



Outcome Mapping is a participatory method that focuses on changes in behavior, relationships, and activities among various actors involved in a program (the process can be enriched by stakeholder mapping)

STEPS FOR ORGANIZING AN OM SESSION

Stage 1 Intentional Design

This is the planning stage to identify the why, what, who, and how of programming

- **Step 1:** The **vision**
- **Step 2:** The **mission**
- **Step 3:** The **boundary partners- stakeholder mapping**
- **Step 4:** The **outcome challenge**
- **Step 5:** The **progress markers**
- **Step 6:** The **strategy map**

Stage 2 Outcome and Performance Monitoring

- **Step 7:** Monitor activities and the organizational practices).

Stage 3 Evaluation Planning.

- **Step 8:** Identify evaluation priorities.



When VS. When not to use Outcome Mapping

Use it

1. When working in partnership with various stakeholders.
2. When the program is operating in a complex environment.
3. When program teams have access to partners and stakeholders.
4. To create a holistic understanding of the outcomes the program achieves.
5. There is sufficient financial and technical resources to support OM implementation.

Don't use it

1. To assess and demonstrate the impact of a program.
2. When it would be difficult to get buy-in and commitment by partners and beneficiaries.
3. To claim an outcome that can be attributed solely to a program.
4. To evaluate the relevance or cost-effectiveness of one program approach compared to another.



Outcome Mapping – continued



Why we should use it



OM recognizes that people drive change processes, and seeks to understand what influences their behavior, mindsets and motivations



Creates a new idea of success that elevates the perspectives of partners and participants, acknowledges their contributions to results, and builds their MEL capacity



Collects useful information and feedback that is within the program's influence to adapt in real-time.



It can be a useful methodology when qualitative indicators are required.

Who Should Be Involved?

OM is a participatory process that involves program staff, partners, and participants (both direct and indirect). While the level of engagement by partners and participants can vary depending on factors such as funds, timing and actors' capacity and interest, the method is most beneficial with active engagement of key partners.



Most Significant Change (MSC)

WHAT IS MSC?

MSC is an approach where personal accounts (stories) of change are collected and analyzed to determine which accounts are most significant and why. Unlike conventional monitoring approaches, MSC does not solely collect quantitative data but also collects qualitative data. It can be used as a monitoring tool, assessing change throughout the lifetime of a project, and as an evaluation tool to focus on overall change (outcomes and impact).

STEPS FOR ORGANIZING AN MSC SESSION

Raising interest

Establishing 'domains of change'

Defining the reporting period

Collecting stories of change

Selecting the stories

Providing stakeholders with regular feedback about the review process

Setting in place a process to verify the stories if necessary

Quantification

Conducting secondary analysis of the stories

Revising the MSC process.



When VS. When not to use MSC

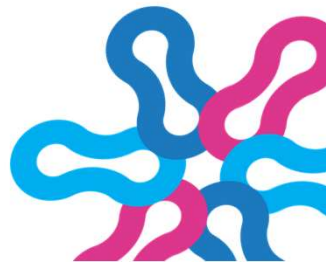


Use it

1. In complex programs with diverse and emergent (evolving) outcomes.
2. In participatory initiatives/programs.
3. When participants/partners have the buy-in and willingness to devote time to sharing and discussing stories of change throughout project implementation.
4. In programs where we have repeated contact with the same participants over time.
5. There is trust established between participants/ partners.
6. In programs that focuses on social and/or behavior change.

Don't use it

1. As a standalone MEL tool.
2. As a communications strategy for developing success stories
3. To solely verify expected outcomes.
4. There is a lack of trust between direct participants/partners.
5. Lack of opportunities for consistent follow up or willingness of participants/partners to devote time to participatory discussions throughout project implementation
6. Minimal bandwidth from program staff or local implementing partner



Pause & Reflect (P&R)



WHAT IS P&R?

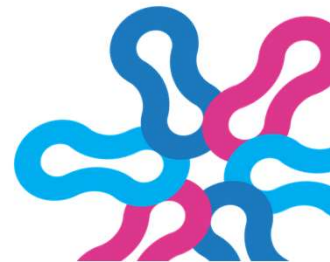
Pause & Reflect is often thought of as adaptive learning through the collection of information that can be analyzed for program improvement - so it also CAM!

Reflections enable learning about a project or intervention at key points in implementation to support adaptation and improvement.



When we should hold a P&R SESSION

1. Before a major reporting period.
2. When there are significant contextual shifts.
3. Dedicate the appropriate amount of time and resources to having P&R workshops.
4. When main stakeholders can participate, especially decision makers.



Participatory Approaches: Overview

	Most Significant Change	Outcome Mapping	Pause & Reflect	Outcome Harvesting
Purpose	Identifying most significant results of an intervention at different levels through stories and narratives collected from program staff and participants	Identifying intended behavioral outcomes of individuals that fall within a project's scope of influence	Facilitating adaptive learning and program improvement by collaboratively analyzing information and experiences at key implementation points	Objectively identifying intended and unintended outcomes and work backwards to determine whether or how a project contributed to the outcomes
When to Use in Program Cycle	Baseline, Implementation	Baseline, Implementation, End of Project	Throughout Implementation	End of Project
Stakeholders to Include	Program Staff, Direct Participants	Program Staff, Direct Participants	Program Staff, Key Partners, Decision-Makers	Program Staff, Direct Participants, Indirect Participants
Recommended Data Collection Methods	One-on-One Interviews, Written Submission	Desk Review, One-on-One Interviews, Group Discussion	Group Discussions/Workshops, Review of Monitoring Data, Team Reflections	Desk Review, One-on-One Interviews, Group Discussions, Surveys
Time Commitment	Medium	Medium	Low	High
Technical Commitment	Medium	Low	Low	High

Evaluation Utilization



Actionable Strategies:

Develop clear and actionable strategies from the Scope of Work (SOW).

Ensure strategies are practical and aligned with project objectives.



Resource Allocation:

Allocate proper resources to maintain a closed feedback loop.

Ensure continuous improvement by incorporating evaluation findings.



Integration into Design:

Encourage teams to use previous evaluations to inform new proposals.

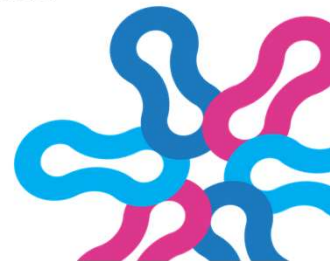
Consider results and challenges from past projects during design sessions.



Local Perspective:

Keep a local perspective in mind to ensure relevance and cultural sensitivity.

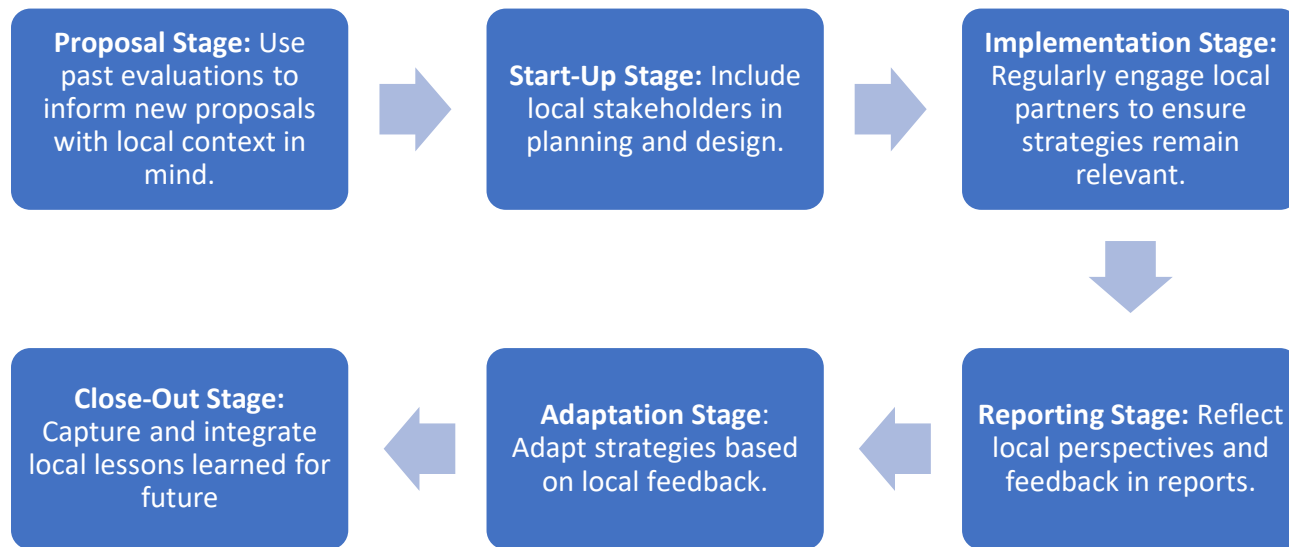
Engage local stakeholders in the evaluation and design process to foster ownership and alignment with community needs.





Evaluation Utilization

Centering local perspectives in project stages:



Key takeaways

Centering local perspectives in project stages:

Local Ownership:

- Instead of outsiders designing the MEL system, people in the developing country take the lead. They design a system that reflects their priorities and the specific context of their democracy promotion efforts.

Focus on Empowerment:

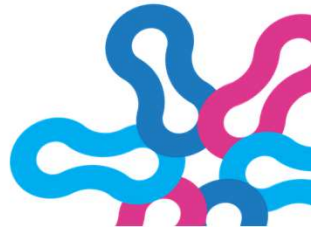
- MEL isn't just about measuring success by external standards. It's also used to identify challenges and areas for improvement, helping local actors find solutions that work best for them.

Multiple Ways of Knowing:

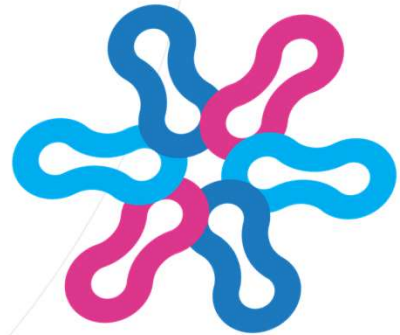
- Effective MEL considers both quantitative data (numbers, like voter turnout) and qualitative data (stories, experiences of citizens) to get a richer picture of what's working and what's not.

Long-Term Impact:

- MEL looks beyond short-term results. It focuses on how programs contribute to lasting positive change in democratic institutions and practices.



Questions?





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