



Managing for Impact

A Comprehensive and People Oriented Approach to Results Based Management

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Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation
Wageningen, The Netherlands
February 2010



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Cecile Kusters
Clare McGregor (editor)

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1. Setting the scene

Picture the development manager – head of a regional programme perhaps – as this booklet lands on her desk. She sighs: not another ‘how-to’ guide... Also in the post is the donor’s new (improved!) checklist for determining how far the programme has got towards its planned contribution to reaching the Millennium Development Goals in the region. In her inbox is a reminder from her Ministry of the deadline for a report that should show how the programme toes the national policy line. And knocking at the door is a district officer who is resisting the demands of the new extension system – and certainly doesn’t plan to meet them until he is provided with transport and an increased daily allowance. Meanwhile, on her to-do list is computer training for monitoring officers, a difficult discussion about the need to admit and deal with the virtual collapse of the programme in one district – oh and a visit to some farmer field schools to get an impression of how they are going.

Reality in development work is complex, yet our thinking about it is often linear and implies that problems can be solved by following a series of simple steps. For development managers, a new methodology often just adds to the demands made on them rather than helping them to meet or reduce them. So this booklet is not another ‘how-to guide’. Sound methodologies and useful tools are not what we lack. What we believe is lacking is a framework for analysing a particular situation and deciding how to handle it. Such a framework is offered by the approach to development described as ‘Managing for Impact’ (hereafter M4I), which has been applied in action learning sites in Eastern and Southern Africa. As so often, this work has left a wealth of experience and insights in people’s minds and memories and in documentation of various kinds, scattered over several programmes and organisations.

In Practice 1. A Zanzibar Farmer Field School facilitator describes agricultural extension before the introduction of M4I:

“All too often, the improved technologies identified by extensionists stay in their books and offices, while farmers’ problems and their indigenous technologies stay on their farms, unknown to anyone else. If government leaders such as the Minister of Agriculture visit villages and ask farmers about their problems, they say ‘We have never seen *Bwana Shamba* [an agricultural extension worker] in our location’. Farmers are not well organised to form groups based on common interests and enterprises, and even when their problems are addressed there is no feedback system to establish whether the solution worked or not. Moreover, methods used to disseminate knowledge are often outdated and not participatory. They tend to consist of commands to the farmers: ‘use fertiliser’, ‘plant your crops early’, ‘space properly’ etc.

Mohammed Faida Haj In: Kusters et al, 2009.

The aim of this booklet is to distil these experiences and insights into some reflections and tentative guidelines on how to increase the impact of development in terms of both livelihoods and empowerment. It is written in the belief that M4I has something to offer to development professionals: implementers, managers, M&E officers, financing organisations, and policymakers. We also want to ‘practise what we preach’ by reflecting critically on our experiences and sharing successes and challenges faced in the field with fellow travellers on this complex road. This booklet represents ‘work in progress’: a snapshot of ‘where we are at’ in our work with an impact-oriented approach to development. It also seeks to place M4I in the context of current development practice and thinking, without attempting a comprehensive survey of these.

This chapter gives a brief account of the origins of the M4I approach before outlining the rest of the booklet.

1.1. The origins of Managing for Impact (M4I)

For some years, innovation in development circles has been driven by a general consensus that development aid is not having enough impact on either poverty or power relations. In many places, poverty and disempowerment are undiminished. How this is felt at village level is expressed by Zanzibari extension worker Mohammed Faida Haji (see 'in practice 1'), who blames it partly on poor monitoring before the project introduced M4I. With the same idea, in 2002, IFAD commissioned a review of its monitoring practices that led to the publication of 'Managing for Impact: a Guide for Project Monitoring and Evaluation' (Guijt & Woodhill 2002). The guide aimed to provide project managers and implementers with sensitive management and monitoring tools and skills that would enable them to adjust their approaches as they went along, to work with rather than for the target group and other stakeholders, and to have a real and positive impact on their lives and livelihoods.

Between 2002 and 2005, Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation supported several IFAD projects in developing participatory M&E systems that put the ideas in the IFAD guide into

Box 1. SMIP explained

SMIP (Strengthening Managing for Impact Programme) is an IFAD funded regional capacity development programme working with pro-poor initiatives in eastern & southern Africa to build capacities to better manage towards impact. It does so through training courses for individuals, technical support to projects & programmes, generating and sharing knowledge, providing opportunities for on-the-job-training, experiencing M4I in action learning sites, and using all these experiences to contribute to policy dialogue.

SMIP is being implemented through a partnership between Wageningen International, and two Sub-Regional Institutions (SRIs), one responsible for the eastern Africa region and one for the southern Africa region. In eastern Africa, the SRI is a consortium involving the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Haramaya University. In southern Africa, the SRI is Khanya-aicdd. SMIP comes to an end in March 2010, and this booklet is part of the effort to ensure that its successes are built on.

practice, mainly in Asia. In 2005 a study in East and Southern Africa found little evidence of 'managing for impact' or of improved monitoring practices on the ground in IFAD projects, and concluded that a more systematic approach to capacity development on M4I was needed in the region. This perception led to the launching of the Regional Programme for Strengthening Managing for Impact in Eastern and Southern Africa (SMIP: see box 1). This programme set to work in May 2006 with the aim of developing capacity for managing for impact in the region through regional training workshops, action learning sites,

knowledge management and policy influencing. The three-year programme is a partnership between Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation (the programme coordinator), IFPRI-ISNAR and Haramaya University in Ethiopia, and Khanya-aicdd in South Africa. The international course on 'Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation – Managing for Impact' developed and run by Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation also focuses on M4I as the core approach.

1.2. What's in this booklet?

In this booklet we seek to distil some of the experiences gained from the SMIP programme to explore how the M4I approach can increase the scope for tackling complex and dynamic realities, and make it possible to achieve and track a wider range of kinds of impact, both targeted and unexpected. Chapter 2 will introduce the M4I framework, and chapters 3 to 7 will describe how the approach applies to each element of the framework: strategic guidance (chapter 3), operational management (chapter 4), monitoring & evaluation (chapter 5), creating a learning environment (chapter 6), and capacities and conditions (chapter 7). Throughout, boxes will draw on stories from the frontline in development practice, some of which were written up by managers and field workers in the course of 'writeshops' that were part of the SMIP programme. With these stories in mind, we will return in chapter 8 to a few last words.

2. What is managing for impact?

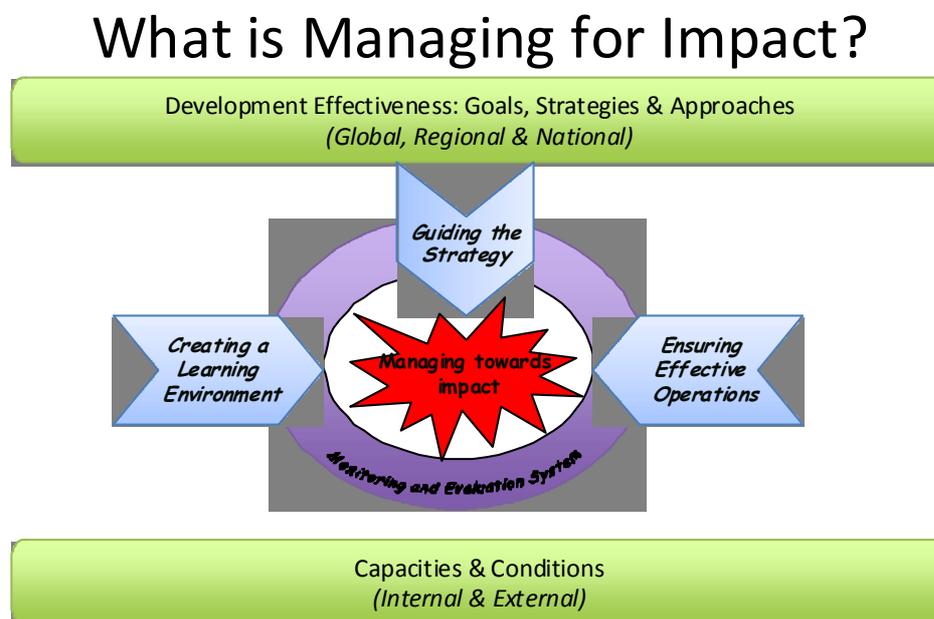
So what does Managing for Impact have to offer our development project manager, if it is not another how-to guide that will tell her what to do, step by step? She faces a very particular set of conditions, and has to tackle them in a team with particular capacities and limitations. Her experience has taught her that 'One size fits all' actually means one size, which fits some and not others. She has a shelf full of methodologies and needs a way of deciding what to use, when and how.

Managing for Impact offers a framework for analysis and, while it works with a toolbox of methods familiar to other approaches, it distinguishes itself from these approaches by being more empowering and less expert-driven. In this chapter we shall look first at the framework for analysis and then at the principles it embodies, to get an idea of what 'empowering' might mean in this context.

2.1. The M4I framework

A framework of this kind is not a route, but a map. A good map shows you the territory you're in, and what to look out for. You can use it to plan your own route. The map itself can generate questions (about the best routes, the opportunities and risk, the shortcuts...), but it does not tell you where to go or how to travel.

Figure 1



Let us take a look at the model of the M4I framework. In every sense, the bottom line is the internal and external capacities and conditions that an intervention has to work with and to work on. At the top is the development effectiveness the intervention is aiming for, with the goals, strategies and approaches this entails. M4I is a dynamic process going on in the space between the two, and it is made up of four interrelated areas. Briefly, these are:

Strategic guidance, which must be based on:

- An in-depth understanding of the specifics of the situation;
- Well defined and articulated theories of change;
- A capacity for adapting the strategy in response to learning and changes, both internal and external.

Effective operations: managing financial, physical and human resources to achieve impact. The core qualities that managers need here are the abilities to communicate and to manage the different interests of each stakeholder or partner.

Establishing a participatory & learning-oriented M&E system: - Putting in place systems and processes with which to regularly gather and process the information needed to guide the strategy, ensure effective operations and encourage learning. This monitoring and evaluation system therefore underpins and links the other three components of M4I.

Creating a learning environment: Establishing a culture of learning amongst stakeholders and a set of relationships that build trust, stimulate critical questioning and innovation, and generate commitment and ownership.

All four components are inextricably linked. You cannot design an effective monitoring and evaluation system without a sound strategic design for the programme as a whole. Nor can you guide and implement that strategy without managing operations effectively, including human resources, assets and budgets.

2.2. M4I as a response to complexity

As we mentioned in Chapter One, there is increasing recognition in development circles that change happens in complex, non-linear ways. These are often left out of the picture seen – or created – through linear models such as logical frameworks, which dominate development planning and monitoring. In seeking to address non-linear realities, M4I inevitably becomes less linear itself. There are several risks entailed in this, because it is unfamiliar, it is not as neat and tidy as some familiar approaches, and it entails shifts in power. Donors have to accept that financial accountability to them is not the only kind of accountability the programme seeks. Managers and planners have to accept that they are also just part of a system, with only partial influence. They are also asked to take the risk of openly discussing failures, as these are seen as inevitable and valuable learning material. Planners need to be aware that strategic planning may constrain spontaneous locally generated processes: what the programme ‘does’ in line with its plans is just part of a richer picture. All parties need to start to think differently, investing in relationships rather than in themes, and operating with conscious theories of change that they are prepared to continuously adapt (and if necessary abandon).

One attempt to engage with complexity is ‘systems thinking’: a holistic approach to the analysis of complex situations. The following table (1) shows the implications for development initiatives of a number of key principles of systems thinking which underpin efforts to manage for impact.

Table 1. Principles of systems thinking and their implications for development

Principle of systems thinking	Implication for development
Cause is not always promptly followed by effect. Decisions may yield results much later and somewhere else than expected.	Take a long-term perspective.
Actions do not just generate results in one linear direction, but feedback that bounces off in all directions and impacts back on action taken.	Expect the unexpected.
Results are not always proportional to effort. Abandon this linear expectation. We contribute to our problems through our assumptions, values, beliefs, and unintended consequences of our actions.	Bring assumptions to light and scrutinise their impact.
A system is as good as its weakest link.	Look for the weak links in the chain – and strengthen them.
There is more than what we can ‘see’. ‘Soft elements’, such as staff morale, commitment and respect for leadership, are powerful indicators of performance.	Look for the full picture, and don’t neglect ‘soft’ data.
The structure of systems determines their behaviour - there is a lot of interest in changing behaviour but this will not happen if attention is not paid to the structure driving the change.	See everything in context.

As we explore the principles and practice of M4I, we will see these implications at work in an approach that is open-minded and flexible. However, we do not propose to throw out any methodological babies with the bathwater, but to suggest ways of bringing together the demand for logical models, shared methodologies and accountability with the need for an ability to navigate programmes in an operational environment that is not only complex, but is partially unknown and unknowable.

The M4I principles

For M4I the key words are: people, empowerment, learning and responsiveness. Like the components they drive, these principles are inextricably linked.

A people-centred approach thinks in terms of people rather than of abstract entities such as sectors or regions. In people-centred development, instead of asking ‘what are our targets?’ actors ask ‘who is to benefit?’ and ‘whose interests are being met?’ They don’t stop at the question, ‘what are we going to change?’ Rather, they ask ‘how do we believe change will come about?’ The theory of change that they identify and consciously adopt underpins the strategy.

Empowerment becomes real when people are asked to define their own targets, to develop their own tools, and to take their own decisions. Stakeholders at all levels gain leverage – though some at the top of the hierarchy may feel they are losing their grip on things (we will encounter examples of this in Chapter 6.3, In Practice 20) and may need to taste success at the end of the process before they are convinced that they too stood to gain in the end, and that ‘win-win’ situations are achievable.

Knowledge is power, so it is not surprising that learning is at the heart of an empowerment-oriented approach to development. Learning is crucial to a model of development that doesn't start out with the answers. In fact, it doesn't believe that there are fixed, packageable answers at all. Instead, a group of stakeholders sets out together to navigate the realities, using a conscious process of reviewing and reflecting on experience to fine-tune their approach, to generate and share new knowledge and to feed new insights back into the strategic guidance. It is not just the ability to apply knowledge that is empowering, but the ability and opportunity to decide which knowledge to apply.

For this to come anywhere near to working, responsiveness is required at all levels, and certainly among those responsible for strategy. This may pose the biggest challenge to established programmatic thinking, as it needs a change of mindset. Stories from practitioners reflect difficulty, but also tell of inspiring 'aha moments' when they realised that responsiveness was getting things done.

2.3. Implications for an M4I approach

M4I distinguishes itself from other approaches that seek to make development interventions more effective in several ways. All these approaches focus on the question: how can we achieve better results in development? We define impact as 'changes in the livelihoods of people, as perceived by them and their partners'. Our definition of livelihood comes from the sustainable livelihoods approach, which says livelihood 'comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets' (Chambers & Conway, 1991). A programme may work with, say, two hundred farmers, with the aim of helping them to increasing their harvests of a staple crop such as rice. After a series of *outputs* (perhaps including training and the provision of inputs), a quantifiable result may be noted: farmers increase their yields by perhaps 20 percent. This *result* is a major factor in the *impact* the programme has on beneficiaries' lives and their environment. This *impact* could include things like improved health and nutritional status, more income, etc. ... any or all of which were brought about at least in part through the surplus generated by increased yields. Impact is what development efforts are really after, of course. Yet its relation to results is complex. It may be slower to emerge, diffuse and difficult to quantify. For many decades, development interventions have concentrated on results, which are gratifyingly measurable, on the assumption that they will lead to desirable impacts. A strong

In Practice 2. What M4I trainees said about it

What is M4I?

'Make a move, stop, think back and target ahead. Put milestones, start to move, reflect, change...'

'To me it is a holistic approach to management... The M&E component of the approach keeps all aspects together allowing for the feedback loop to occur.'

Why M4I?

'...because of its strong focus on learning, participatory methods such as 'rich pictures' that are not one-off like PRA. And it is not about 'compliance with what was agreed', but also learning in the context of where you are.'

'It is essential to invite people to define what it is when one talks of 'impact'.'

'It cultivates a culture of teamwork...'

M4I and complexity

'M4I is not complex. But by its nature it deals with complexity, due to the multidisciplinary, systemic, integrated nature of development processes. An M4I practitioner should be able to see and understand the various components.'

From Ofir, 2009

commitment to keeping an eye on the impact level and to applying and integrating a range of (often participatory and learning oriented) methods and tools is a key characteristic of the M4I approach. (Readers interested in comparing approaches can consult the table in Annex A).

In Practice 3. Testimonials on Managing for Impact training

Within the 'Strengthening Managing for Impact' Programme (SMIP) regional training workshops on managing for impact are being organised.

'...brings together all the different aspects of knowledge from different times and putting them and packaging them to manage impact....' Philips Limlim, Health & Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF Uganda

'....this course is rich in terms of sharing knowledge and experience, as well as bringing new insight into development.....' Absolom Masendeke, Team Leader, Reducing Vulnerability Programme, Practical Action Southern Africa

'....we will now be able to improve our projects in order to get the best (of it in terms of) performance.....' Omar Mangeira, Senior Programme Officer, Oxfam Australia, Mozambique Office

You can find podcasts of some testimonials at: <http://www.khanya-aicdd.org/action-learning/developing-capacity/training-on-managing-for-impact-a-holistic-learning-experience>

Managing for Impact is not in competition with other available approaches and methods such as Managing for Development Results or Results Based Management. Instead, it equips stakeholders at several levels – decision makers (such as managers or policy makers), implementers, beneficiaries – to draw on a range of tools and methodologies, choosing the one that seems appropriate to a particular context. This '**options approach**' is one of the consequences of an impact-oriented way of working. What are the others? Above all perhaps, a recognition of the equal value of **technical processes and people processes**, and the need for a balance between them. Like most approaches, M4I monitors and guides progress on the 'impact pathway' of guiding interventions towards their goals. Unlike some approaches, it also pays close attention to the 'people pathway': the interactions and interpersonal factors entailed. Technical problems can often be solved by following a series of predetermined steps. The 'people pathway' is less easily charted, though. Where people are involved, reality is messier, more complex and less predictable. M4I means a set of attitudes, such as **responsiveness**, accompanied by a set of capacities and tools, such as **critical reflection**. Capacity development is therefore central to the M4I approach, in keeping with its emphasis on **empowerment**, including through **creating a learning environment**. Learning, too, is not restricted to the technical sphere, but also engages with the messier realities of people processes. One of the consequences of this is that **qualitative information** is valued alongside more tidily measurable quantitative information. M4I may therefore appear to buck the trend towards pressure to meet development targets expressed in figures and percentages. It certainly resists this pressure and sees qualitative information not as 'soft' data but as providing a 'rich picture' that complements 'hard' data and may often provide a better basis for learning, as well as for guiding strategy – which is the part of the M4I framework we will look at first.

3. A Managing for Impact perspective on strategic guidance towards impact

Our development manager's role is that of a pilot or a captain on a ship: every development initiative needs navigation. The first requirement is a clear and agreed idea on where the development initiative is heading. Then, in order to navigate successfully in the agreed direction, you need a map of the territory and the appropriate instruments (a compass or nowadays a GPS) for establishing your current position. So the manager and her team set targets, which constitute the destination. The map takes the form of some kind of strategic plan and the navigating instruments include monitoring and learning tools. This neat analogy begs more questions than it answers, though. Who has decided on the destination, and what is the decision based on? Is the map complete? Is it a local map or does it give a broader context? Perhaps several maps are needed, or a new one should be drawn. And what happens during the journey? Maybe there are detours due to staff related issues such as illness or incompetencies; pirates; heavy weather; rescuing survivors from a sinking ship. Or the directions are not clear and we need to try out a few different options to see which one works best. Our manager needs to keep an overview of the situation and respond quickly to changes. We will need to be well connected to inform each other about unanticipated events that may hold us up, or alternative routes that may help us on our way.

A core pillar of the managing for impact framework is strategic guidance towards impact. This means keeping an eye on whether we are heading the right direction and what affects our journey. But how do we assess where we are, what this means, and where we are going? Who decides? Who is involved in this strategic guidance process and who is excluded and why? What are the consequences of this? Thinking this through is essential for managing towards impact.

3.1. Taking a helicopter view

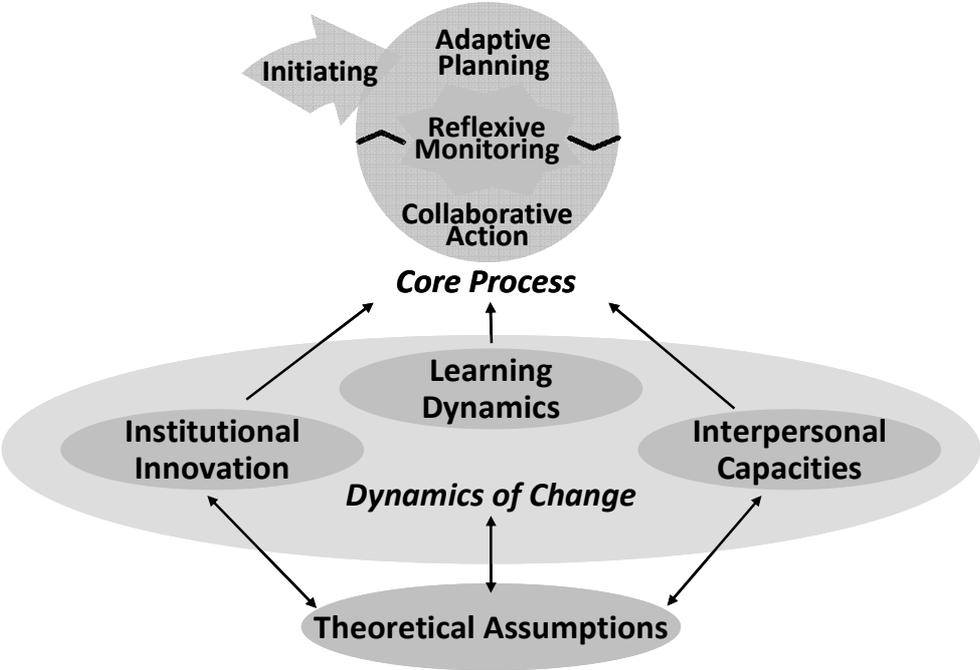
If a development initiative is to keep an eye on impact right from the start, its managers need to take a helicopter view of the territory in which they are working. This can be quite a challenge to professionals working in a familiar context. When the context is all too familiar we often 'cannot see the forest for the trees'. In other words, we can get bogged down in details and fail to establish an overview of the situation. The trees can be examined from close-up on the ground, but for an overview of the forest a helicopter ride can be the best start. A helicopter view enables development managers to take into account all the factors interacting with their work, from global economic trends through regional politics and institutions to local conditions and capacities. The following table (2) outlines some of the areas to be mapped.

Table 2. Internal and external dynamics to be kept in view from the helicopter

<i>Internal process dynamics</i>	<i>External environmental dynamics</i>
Individual capacities: skills, expertise and experience Institutional capacities: organisational assets, systems and structures Policies, leadership styles and group dynamics Values, principles and approaches Individual styles and preferences Roles / Relationships between key stakeholders	Global trends and developments: economic, social, political, environmental, etc. Governance, power and culture Technological and scientific developments and discoveries Conflict, war and other crises Natural disasters

The helicopter perspective should not just be used in initial planning stages of a development initiative, but should be returned to regularly throughout the lifespan of a development initiative. Figure 2 (below) depicts the dynamic process by which learning processes feed into strategic guidance towards impact. Learning processes can be facilitated using some of the many (participatory) tools available for situational analysis, among other things. Some of these are listed in Box 2 below. Development staff and stakeholders can select tools from this analytical toolbox. It is important that they adapt them to the situation at hand.

Figure 2. A framework for facilitating multi-stakeholder processes



3.2. The helicopter view in practice: internal and external dynamics

Two of the lessons drawn by the team working with the SMIP action learning site in Lesotho illustrate the need for a helicopter view that takes in the wider context:

1. “The importance of understanding fully the context within which one is working. Without an understanding of *the cultural dynamics, the vernacular, the way the bureaucracy works*, the process would not have been conducted within the anticipated time frame and with the required patience ...!”

2. “The success of the support to SANReMP as an ALS (Action Learning Site) cannot be limited to promoting M4I in the programme. SANReMP is an important programme which requires deep understanding of the politics and economics of national agricultural and rural development. This implies that ... success ... rests on factors beyond internal capacity to implement the programme – issues of *governance and the political economy* ... need to come into the fold of awareness as well if it is to succeed”. (Source: <http://mande4mfi.wordpress.com/2009/05/06/lessons-from-lesotho-sanremp-learning-site/>)

Box 2. An analytical toolbox

- Problem tree/ hierarchy
- Rich picturing
- Conceptual mapping
- Matrix ranking
- Livelihoods analysis
- Secondary data review
- Focus group discussions
- Historical analysis
- Issue analysis
- Card techniques

3.3. Responsiveness to change

This brings us to a second characteristic of impact-oriented strategic guidance: it is geared to responding quickly to changes in the development initiative and its context. The examples below show the importance of adapting technological innovations to the local context. Social innovations are often more complex and dynamic in nature and require an even higher capacity to respond to change. It does not assume that the situation analysed at inception will remain stable, nor (therefore) that plans drawn up at that point can or should be carried through to the letter until the moment comes to evaluate the results achieved. There is in fact a different paradigm at work, with a much more fluid conception of reality and of what it means to strategically guide a development intervention. We will now look at a framework for analysing the kind of reality we are dealing with and deciding on an approach with which to tackle it.

In Practice 4. The need for responsiveness to local situations

Story 1. In a monitoring session, a woman member of Cassava FFS group in Bumbwisudi shehia shared her experience of applying the training she received on improved cassava ridging. She said she felt helpless. She said: “It takes little effort for the men to do this work but for us women, building a soil ridge with 1.2 m width and 45 cm height was beyond our capacity; it really broke my back bone. This is not only my problem but a common problem faced by all women members. It was the support that we got from our men colleagues which helped us do something. Since it is not possible to ask for help every time, I don’t think I will try it again”.

Story 2. Poultry FFS group members in Vitangaji Shehia were reflecting during the biannual monitoring on their experiences of applying improved poultry technology. In the middle of the discussion one member rose from his seat and said, “The technology we got is beneficial. We have seen a range of benefits:

cleanliness which reduces exposure to diseases; easiness of feeding; better protection from wild animals. However, don't assume that the cost of constructing the poultry house is affordable. It cannot be the done unless we sell our valuable assets."

By Elias Zerfu, SMIP- ISNAR focal person. In: Kusters et al, 2009.

3.4. Assessing and managing the context in which we work

Much development discourse to date implies a mechanical and linear understanding of the way problems arise and are solved. Reality is sometimes that simple, but by no means always. To give managers a way of identifying the kind of reality they are dealing with and therefore a better chance of coming up with a successful strategy, David Snowden developed the Cynefin framework. It is worth taking a closer look at this framework, since it clarifies a distinction that is quite crucial to an impact-oriented approach to development: the distinction between simple, complicated and complex realities. One version of the framework is shown in figure 3.

On the right of the figure are two kinds of reality that are ordered. In other words, they are governed by observable cause-effect relationships that repeat themselves in the same conditions.

- *Simple situations* are like a bicycle: a relatively simple technology. If something goes wrong with a bicycle (say, a puncture) there will be an identifiable cause (a thorn in the inner tube) and a solution that will work every time. There are at most a couple of ways of going about it, and these 'best practices' can be comprehensively described so that most people could be trained to apply them.
- *Complicated situations* are more like a jumbo jet. They are highly technical, and they are knowable, but are beyond the grasp of all but the experts. There may be a range of possible answers to problems that arise. However, complicated situations can be mapped and solutions that work once will work again under the same conditions.

On the left of the figure are two domains of unordered reality. In unordered domains there is no observable cause-effect relationship and, although such a relationship may be identified with hindsight, it is a poor predictor of what will happen next time.

- The third domain that is of greatest relevance to the development context is that of *complexity*. A complex reality is like a frog: you can know a lot about it but you still never know which way it is going to jump. There are too many unpredictable factors involved. In the context of development, these include the people processes and issues like culture, institutions, trust, and leadership are important. There are cause-effect relationships in events in the complex domain, but they can often only be understood in retrospect and not at the time. Emergence is key. In complex situations, solutions that work once may not work again and each new set of circumstances has to be looked at afresh and a solution sought by those involved at the time – the stakeholders – through many small experimental innovations.
- The fourth domain is that of *chaos*. A house on fire, a flood: such emergencies call for immediate, unpremeditated action after which one may be able to reach one of the other domains and proceed with more planned interventions.
- Finally, at the centre of the figure is a fifth domain: *disorder*. In this state, people don't know what type of causality is in play or what approach will work, so they revert to their own comfort zone in making a decision.



Figure 3 The Cynefin framework

(From: Keith de La Rue: <http://www.slideshare.net/kdelarue/keith-de-la-rue-cynefin-03-presentation>)

The situations that development interventions aim to address tend to fall under the domains of the simple, the complicated and the complex. But complex issues are all too often tackled as if they were either simple or complicated, and this is a major cause of failure and frustration. For example, a strategy that will work fine for simple problems is to refer to available documentation of 'best practices'. By definition, best practices will only work for predictable situations which in all important respects will be identical to the one in which the best practice was devised. What are the characteristics and implications of complexity? Here are some:

- Complexity is highly sensitive to small changes, so attention to detail gains a new importance. Details that are missed can undermine the theory of change with which (consciously or not) we are working.
- The greatest impact is achieved when agents work in close contact with each other. This is because an understanding of the situation emerges through interaction. Reliance on best practices and good practice needs to make way for spreading ideas and innovations, which may come from anywhere in the groups of stakeholders. Interconnectivity is crucial.
- We cannot tackle a complex situation by insisting on assigning all data into neat categories, nor by assuming that past experience provides a good basis for future planning. It becomes important for decision makers to have direct contact with the raw data instead of receiving them through intermediaries.
- Instead of aiming for fail-safe design, we embark on 'safe-fail' experimentation (see box 3): we don't see failure as dangerous because we know we need and learn from our 'failures'.

Box 3. Fail-safe and safe-fail experiments.

Fail-safe: both the experiment and the problem area are low risk.

Safe-fail: the experiment itself is low risk but the problem area may be high risk.

(Adapted from: Snowden, 2009a).

More information on complexity (including the Cynefin framework) can be found at:

<http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/en/regulars/blogs/Strategy-and-Complexity>

The Managing for Impact perspective on strategic guidance is a response to the growing recognition that development initiatives often operate within the complex domain. Not that everything is complex, though: simple, complicated and complex issues are all in a day's work for the development professional. A key role for strategic guidance is to identify the domain in which particular issues are located, as this has important implications for the kind of strategy that will work. The Cynefin framework may help you to understand why different solutions are appropriate in different circumstances. If you can characterise your problem space using the model, you should have more idea what type of solution to design. In the example shown below (In Practice 5), staff of the ASSP/ASPD-L programme in Zanzibar reflect on some of the implications of their engagement with 'complexity', and thus with more issues that are more institutional in nature, not just technological.

In practice 5: Thinking through the people pathway in the ASSP/ ASPD-L programme in Zanzibar

K.M. Saleh, deputy programme manager gives an example of how the 'people pathway' can take you in unexpected directions:

"The consequences of participation did not end with challenges from stakeholders at district level, but have gone further down to the levels of researchers and farmer groups. The programme has supported a few on-station research activities that were intended for demonstration to farmers. It has facilitated visits by farmer groups to experimental sites for different crops, in order to learn and exchange experiences. But a couple of farmers did not like the idea of visiting the sites; instead, these farmers challenged the programme to consider the research questions identified by them and to conduct on-farm experiments at their homesteads. This idea had been emphasised during sensitisations on various occasions, so farmers wanted to see it being implemented on the ground. The result is that management has now started to initiate farmer-based research, where farmers and facilitators collaborate in undertaking research relevant to farmers' situations".

Andreas Mbinga from the Agricultural Services Facilitation Team looks at the empowering impact of involving stakeholders from the start, and the new roles and relationships that start to emerge when addressing issues in a more comprehensive way:

"Application of these participatory methodologies has brought about a noticeable change in the way farmers cooperate in exchanging information, as well as in their capacity to apply information for decision making. It has also increased their willingness to give information and their transparency. One of the factors at play here is the involvement of different stakeholders from the very beginning when the M&E system was formulated. This has helped them to understand the process and to be aware of the usefulness of data and information. Most of the farmers and livestock keepers can now make use of data and information collected to identify problems and make decisions. It is now very common for the extension and technical officers to be challenged by farmers based on data and information collected in participatory M&E".

From: Kusters et al, 2009.

3.5. From logical framework to theory of change and building up resilience

As indicated above, different problems need different kinds of solutions. This has implications for the way we think and plan strategically. For those issues where cause and effect relationships are easy to establish, the well known logical framework approach may be useful, although the logical framework matrix (see glossary and figure 4) should not be used as a static tool but rather as a flexible format for planning and implementation. It is particularly important to monitor assumptions well. However, where issues are complex in nature a logical framework may not work mainly due to its linear nature. The question is then: what do we use instead?

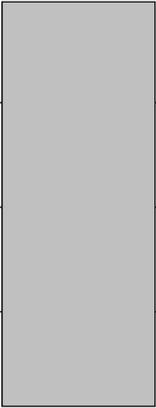
Project Structure	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Goal 			
Purpose 			
Outputs 			
Activities 			

Figure 4. Logframe matrix

The 'answer is that in the complex domain we need to stimulate many small innovations or 'safe-fail' experiments whilst expecting uncertainty and failure. Stakeholders need to be very well connected so they can share ideas and learning quickly. One channel for this process is the sharing of narratives, which can assist in making sense of the complex realities. Leadership has a key role to play in supporting the setting of boundaries for complex situations, in facilitating many small (safe-fail) experiments, in allowing and encouraging failure (in a safe environment) for learning purposes, in adapting quickly to changing situations, and in being prepared for uncertainty. It is important to be interconnected so as to learn from each others' challenges, successes and failures and adapt quickly.

Theories of change

We all have our theories about how change happens (see glossary). What does this mean in practice? Well, for example, we may believe that education on nutrition will lead to well-nourished children, yet the reality is that malnutrition often persists even after educational campaigns. So our theory does not seem to hold true. How come we still pump money into nutrition education programs without addressing other important factors that influence nutritional status? Mapping our theories of change is one way to expose deficiencies. It may also reveal that different stakeholders have different, sometimes incompatible, theories about how change happens. When this happens in a development intervention, we must be explicit about the pathway we choose and why and it has implications about the extent to which we can contribute towards impact.

What is really important in a theory of change is the underlying assumptions that we make about how change happens. So making these explicit is a key step, and the most critical assumptions will need to be tested. There are various ways to test critical (validity) assumptions, such as Assumption Based Planning (ABP) and Strategic Assumptions Surfacing and Testing (SAST). More information can be found at: <http://www.jiscinonet.ac.uk/tools/assumption-surfacing-and-testing>

and <http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/dstools/choosing/sast.html> and Dewar 1993 and 2002. Rogers (2008) describes very well how to deal with program logic or theory of change in simple, complicated and complex situations.

3.6. From situational assessment to planning

As a manager, where do you start? The first step is to analyse the situation you are in, and this should be done regularly. What are the critical issues to look out for? The following checklist may be helpful:

- Stakeholders: e.g. power relations, networks
- Issues, problems
- Biophysical setting
- Infrastructure
- Institutions (see glossary and <http://www.cdi.wur.nl/NR/rdonlyres/66764817-54E3-4DCB-BD4F-806B403F892C/66665/03understandinginstitutions.pdf>):
- Beliefs and values, frameworks for understanding (meaning)
- Formal and informal rules (control)
- Organisations arrangements (associations)
- Regular patterns of behaviour (action)

Situation analysis can help you to assess where you are at now. It can be followed by visioning to decide where you want to be, and then by strategising to review different pathways of change. Where the issues are simple or complicated, a logframe may be useful. When issues are more complex, a more flexible and dynamic approach to planning is needed and it is important to allow for the testing of many different theories of change so as to identify those that work and those that do not and proceed accordingly.

3.7. Strategic leadership capacity

Leaders aiming to manage for impact need the strategic thinking capacity to take a helicopter view, to sense quickly what is happening in the internal and external environment, and to respond to it quickly too. By leaders, we do not mean only 'the people in charge'. Field staff may not be developing the strategic framework of an organisation, but if they are to make those around them understand the importance of, for example, collaboration as community members, they will need to communicate, act, and inspire as leaders do. The bigger the picture and the more complex the environment, the less one person can know about all the elements that make up the bigger picture, and the greater the need to activate and combine the knowledge and expertise of all those who can make a significant contribution.

To contribute to managing for impact, leaders throughout the programme need certain qualities and competencies and may need support in developing them. In particular, the team needs a shared understanding of the importance of reciprocity, empathy and resilience to 'failure'. Box 4 below lists the 'sustainability competencies' needed by a leader who aims for impact.

Box 4. Sustainability competencies

- Thinking in a forward-looking manner, to deal with uncertainty, and with predictions, expectations and plans for the future
- Working in an interdisciplinary manner
- Developing an open-minded perception, trans-cultural understanding and cooperation
- Developing one's potential to participate
- Being able to feel empathy, sympathy, compassion and solidarity
- Being able to motivate oneself and others
- Being able to reflect in a distance manner on individual and cultural concepts

Adapted from: Michelsen and Adomssent, 2007.

The difference made by a leader with the competencies it takes is clearly shown by the example shown below (In Practice 6).

In Practice 6. The importance of leadership in assessing and managing complexity

Zaki K. Juma, programme coordinator of a large IFAD financed program in Zanzibar, is an excellent example of a leader with the necessary skills to manage complexity. Whenever there is a workshop for staff and partners, he is there if he can be, to encourage participants at the beginning to do their level best and to convince them of the importance of the workshop. Or to be with them at the end and see what came out of the workshop and encourage all to take up an active role even after the workshop. Each evening one of the staff from the programme gives him a call to update him on what's happening in the workshop. He is on top of everything, even when he is not present. And this is only the tip of the iceberg. Due to his openness to learning, his vision, and the way he connects with people and issues, he is able to bring about some really big changes in the programme. Under his strategic leadership, the M&E system in place changed to a participatory M&E system. Now a lot of information is coming up, including the unexpected and there is a need to respond to these issues. But the staff have the full support of a leader who is encouraging and motivating.

A key question to ask here, then, is how we can strengthen such strategic thinking capacity and create an environment that supports it? Various forms of situation analysis and scenario thinking, creative thinking techniques, narratives, and visualisation can all be helpful when formulating strategy for social change. At the same time, some of the strategic competencies will need to be strengthened through persistent practice, learning experiences (including 'strategic' errors) and other forms of formal and informal training. For this reason, the theme of learning runs through this booklet. Learning organisations will need to invest in these areas both for guiding strategy and managing operations effectively – our next topic.

4. A Managing for Impact perspective on ensuring effective operations

Our manager has great ideas and plenty of vision. He inspires me to aim high and to keep on top of things. He is always looking out for new opportunities and with all his ideas he brings in plenty of new work for us. But how do I cope? When I open my computer I find at least 50 mails to start with and they keep on coming all day. People frequently call into my office with requests for support or information. My work load is already huge and I would really like to be involved in new challenges. But how do I manage? I see that my colleagues are in the same boat, so I can't realistically ask them for help.

We can have great ideas and a great team, but if the necessary practical and operational conditions are not in place, it will be difficult to achieve impact. On the one hand, we must decide what is feasible with the kind of staff, equipment and systems we have. On the other hand, our organisation will need to be proactive in responding to changes in the environment, and have the flexibility to cope with these changes. This chapter offers a few tips and guidelines for making your operations management both proactive and flexible, and thus more impact-oriented.

4.1. The nuts and bolts of an Annual Work Plan and Budget

When a strategic plan has been developed (e.g. using a logical framework), the operational details can be worked out in the form of an Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB). To be operational, a development initiative needs to provide annual and half-yearly plans and reports detailing activities and budget use for six areas:

1. **Staffing:** do we have enough staff with the appropriate knowledge and skills? How do we assess and support staff performance?
2. **Equipment, goods, and office buildings:** do we have enough resources (e.g. vehicles, equipment), space and processes for carrying out our work?
3. **Managing contracts:** how is this done?
4. **Financial tracking and audits:** how is expenditure being tracked to produce financial audits?
5. **Work planning:** are plans produced and used monthly, half-yearly and yearly for staff and partners, for the different components of the development initiative?
6. **Communications:** how do we communicate internally and externally?

For all the above mentioned areas it is important to plan roles and responsibilities, timing and resources.

For each of these operational areas, a simple form of M&E is needed to ensure that resources, processes and quality are adequate. To avoid cluttering up the decision-making process with too much detail, it is important to focus on what you need to know rather than on what is 'nice to know'.

4.2. From logframe matrix to annual work plan and budget (AWPB)

This means transforming ideas into actions. The AWPB guides daily implementation and includes:

- Work plan: a logframe-based description of each activity/output/indicator per component;
- Schedule or time plan specifying when activities are to take place and in what order;
- Budget: identifying the cost of each output and activity per component;
- Personnel plan: identifying responsibilities, additional staff needs, staff training;
- Material/equipment plan: requirements for each output and activity per component, including procurement.

The strategic plan (e.g. described in the logframe matrix) is the basis for the AWPB, which often provides the legal endorsement and forms the formal basis for implementation and release of funds.

4.3. Going back to the drawing board

One of the characteristics of Managing for Impact is that it is impossible to talk about one component for very long without mentioning another. And so, when talking about impact-oriented operations we soon find ourselves referring to monitoring. The effectiveness of operations needs continuous monitoring, and the IFAD guide (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002) proposed three basic questions that should be asked about each operational area:

1. What has happened with the money used and the time that people have invested?
2. What is the overall performance of each of these areas – quality of output and quality of process?
3. Is it efficient enough or can we make improvements in how vehicles are used, staff performance, office supply procurement, etc.?

It's important to ensure stakeholder participation in these processes of reflection on and adaptation of the AWPB, which should be done on a regular basis to ensure timely action when needed. Just like the logframe, the AWPB should also be used flexibly in order to adapt to situations that arise and to what is realistically feasible.

In Practice 7. Reviewing the AWPB

Mr. Zaki K. Juma, ASSP/ASDP-L Programme Coordinator in Zanzibar, describes a change in the way the annual work plan is referred to since the programme set out to work in a more impact oriented way: "Previously the annual work plan and budget was seen only at the end of the year – to find out that one/two activities were not completed and there are cases where left out activities were done on ad hoc basis. But now we refer to AWPB as frequently as possible to ensure that we follow it". (Source: <http://mande4mfi.wordpress.com/2009/04/29/experiences-of-asspasdp-l-on-managing-for-impact/>)

4.4. Planning for learning and adaptation during implementation

Any development initiative will require adaptation during its lifetime. Therefore it is important not to provide too much detail in strategies as it will hinder adjustments during implementation. Here are some tips for building in learning and adaptation:

- Design the process and **higher level objectives**, and build in the **flexibility** to adjust them as you go along. Don't over-specify activities. Create space for adapting activities in the light of critical reflection on findings from ongoing monitoring.
- Think through the **pathway of change**, not only key activities and goals and outcomes, but also the intermediate steps to get there.
- Be **explicit about uncertainty**. Explain what is unknown and how and when management should be clear on the issues. Targets should be approximate.
- **Build in action research and focused research** to answer questions that may arise about the context of the development initiative.
- Make it explicit that the **strategy and plan** should be **revised yearly**.
- Make **'adaptive management' (see glossary) a key function** in the terms of reference for senior management and partner contracts.
- **Budget for experimentation, innovation and for the unexpected**. Many different small experiments can be the best way into complex problems: many hunches will provide a close to realistic 'answer'. Keep an eye out for the unexpected and an ear open to stakeholders' stories, as these can assist in making sense of complex realities and discovering the unexpected.

It is easy to talk about being open to the unexpected, but one of the reasons it is difficult to do it in practice is that the unexpected may also be unwanted! It might shake us out of our 'comfort zone'. The first story in the box below (In Practice 8) illustrates this. It describes a moment when a development programme team put aside their assumptions and looked at reality, and got an unpleasant surprise that would mean going 'back to the drawing board'.

In the short term, the unexpected can be an unwelcome interruption to the plans. But if we take it on, we will stand more chance of achieving an impact in the long run. You might like to test your ability to see the unexpected at:

http://growabrain.typepad.com/growabrain/2004/11/white_shirts_ex.html.

We need to develop additional skills to also see the unexpected. In the second story, Khalfan Saleh describes how in the ASSP/ASDP/L programme in Zanzibar, leaving the door even slightly open to the unexpected – in this case the surprising capacities of farmers – opened up new possibilities.

In Practice 8. Taking on the unexpected can be tough but rewarding

1. "A development programme team was running a workshop to set up a monitoring system in a sustainable livelihoods agricultural project. They made a point of starting by revisiting the strategy and comparing it with reality. What were the existing opportunities, what were the barriers? What changes were taking place? By the time this discussion was over, there was a horrified silence. It had become clear that there was one big gap in the strategy: marketing. If the project just steamed ahead, farmers could be left with a glut of rotting produce. Back to the drawing board... at least, if the project was to book much genuine impact".

(based on Mine Pabari, personal communication)

2. "Initially, few of us were convinced that M4I would fit the projects and make tangible contributions during implementation. We were not sure that beneficiaries would admit the shortfalls of previous projects and respond to the new approach. The use of participatory learning approach was also new to farmers and we were doubtful they would adopt it. Surprisingly, our perceptions of the approach began to change sooner than we thought.

During field visits where we exchanged information with farmers, it became clear they could understand the approach. This was shown by how they took part in drawing lessons and depicting inputs, activities and factors that would help them achieve their goals using the new process. They were ready to work towards sustainable outcomes. This greatly encouraged the programme management team and made us open up to M4I".

Khalfan Sale. In: Kusters et al, 2009.

4.5. Systematically sharing information

Clearly then, it is important to have the right information at the right time, so as to have the right discussion at the right time. Many programmes need to adapt their M&E systems to make them more systematic. The example below (In Practice 9) illustrates this.

In Practice 9. Systematising information helps in learning and adaptation

"A more systematised approach to generating and using information has now been introduced to the programme. This includes information on farmer field schools. The PM&E system developed with the help of SMIP allows all farmers engaged in Farmer Field Schools (FFS) to participate in monitoring and give their views on a range of issues: the training sessions; the progress and performance of FFS action plans and service provision; the use and usefulness of information and knowledge gained due to participation in FFSs; the sharing of information or knowledge with other farmers. Farmer field schools facilitators are responsible for facilitating M&E activities at FFS group level and summarising the information coming from farmers. These M&E activities also allow FFS facilitators to reflect with farmers on collected data and information and draw up recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, at district level, programme district officers and subject matter specialists coordinate the process and ensure that M&E is implemented as planned, compiling and summarising information coming from FFS facilitators. In addition, the M&E officers of the agriculture facilitation team periodically attend FFS monitoring sessions to cross-check if everything is going as planned, to identify any problems that arise, and to help address these problems".

Zainab Sale In: Kusters et al, 2009.

A systematic and genuinely participatory M&E system is crucial to the M4I approach, and we will look at this in the next chapter.

5. A Managing for impact perspective on monitoring and evaluation

As M&E officer of a large development initiative I am faced with so many challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluation. How do we decide the focus of our M&E system? Who should participate in designing and implementing the M&E system? Who needs to know what and for what purpose? How do we keep track of progress but also keep an eye on the unexpected? What are the consequences of our choices?

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are going up the development agenda for two reasons. Firstly, billions and billions of dollars are spent in the development sector, so we are keen to show the results of our efforts. At the same time, we are trying to better understand development in the light of a new recognition of complexity, emergence and the need for people-centeredness. So we aim both to prove (assess and show results) and to improve development. Monitoring and evaluation can serve both aims.

The M4I framework indicates a clear role for M&E: that of informing strategic guidance towards impact, operational management and learning.

How can we make good management decisions if we don't know where we are at, what works and what doesn't, and what contextual factors influence our development efforts? If we want to steer our development efforts towards greater impact, our M&E requires a fresh approach. This chapter will look at the things we need to pay special attention to when one of the main purposes of our M&E is empowerment. They include managing data flows appropriately, building in flexibility, responsiveness and organisational learning, while being systematic. The chapter is not a full guide to impact-oriented M&E; some of the details can be found at <http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/index.htm>.

5.1. Managing data flow from a utilisation focus and consequence aware perspective

Traditionally, the purposes of M&E are seen as relating to accountability (see glossary), strategic and operational management, policy making or influencing, and knowledge development. But there is also a growing set of evaluation theories that suggest other potential purposes of monitoring and evaluation: the empowerment of stakeholders, the development of learning organisations, the creation of democratic forums, the advancement of social justice, and the promotion of good practice (Mark, 2009). It is important to think through what an M&E system sets out to do, and who decides on this.

An empowering M&E system needs a well-targeted data flow, from identifying M&E questions and indicators to sensemaking, communication and decision making and ultimately utilisation. For example, particular stakeholders may be interested only in particular information. So there is no need to communicate all the information generated by the M&E system to all the stakeholders. Yet how often do we send thick reports to a wide range of stakeholders? Do these reports get read? How can stakeholders participate in the whole data flow, and how do they intend to use the findings? How can we think through the consequences of the M&E findings for different stakeholders? If we are designing an M&E system with the intention of empowering stakeholders in the process, stakeholders can help set the agenda for the M&E system. This is important as

this may enhance the utilisation of M&E findings. And we can tailor the way data is collected, analysed, and critically reflected upon, engaging stakeholders in these processes. This will not only increase their M&E capacity (e.g. for self-reflection and taking immediate action) but will also enhance their understanding of the development initiative and their use of the evaluation findings. In Practice 10 below we read of an exciting example of stakeholders developing new skills and insights through a degree of participation in monitoring that was new to them.

In Practice10. New skills

“We had developed the tools for data gathering. These were all tools that use symbols and are usable by literate and illiterate alike – we try and even the playing field in that sense. And now we were taking the tools out for training. As usual, people started to say, ‘it’s too difficult, no way can the facilitators use this, they only have a diploma’. And yes, for the first day or so people sat there in silence. They were terrified by the idea that they were going to facilitate these processes and use these tools themselves. But within three days, they were running away with it, amending the tools themselves, saying ‘this isn’t going to work’, or ‘we need to move this here’, ‘we need to introduce this...’ Whether they realised it or not, they were developing data collection tools. So it was no longer just an exercise in data gathering; it was about empowerment.

(Mine Pabari, personal communication)

Within the same programme in Zanzibar, two new methods of monitoring were introduced which raised the participation level of both beneficiary stakeholders and field staff as well as enhancing their capacity – and, noticeably, their self-esteem. These are described briefly in ‘In Practice 11’ below. The material generated was intended for use for policy influencing, among other things.

In Practice 11. Two participatory narrative monitoring methods

Participatory video

“The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique is one of the methods used for collecting stories from farmers on the impact of the programme. Farmers tell their stories and these are captured on video. This method has helped us to capture stories that indicate changes that we could not capture before. We knew that stories could help us in capturing unexpected changes but we did not have a good method for storytelling...

In these MSC and (participatory) video sessions, the women were so cooperative and willingly spoke in front of the camera revealing their successes, assets, how much they earned, how they complement their husbands' earnings to meet their families' basic needs, and property ownership in their households. None of them were reluctant when asked if we could go and take video shots of their properties, assets or anything that would support their stories. We were able to take shots, for instance, of a shop in which one of the ladies had invested money earned from sales of chickens and eggs over the last two years. Another lady even insisted that we should go to her place and take shots of her two sewing machines bought with profits from chicken and eggs sales, and now used to generate more income for her family.

Previously, it was not possible to obtain such rich information through interviews and conventional questionnaires. When we used interviews and questionnaires, farmers used to be suspicious because they did not know how the information they gave would be used. Farmers did not share information on issues of harvest, financial gains or property ownership. One of the reasons could be that they feared witchcraft. They were also reluctant to reveal their success, fearing that support would be stopped. It was not easy for a woman to speak in public of being a 'divorcee' because communities looked down on divorcees. Divorced women were considered failures in marriages, something seen as reflecting badly on the community, and their parents were often blamed that they failed to teach them good manners”.

By Andreas Mbinga (ASSP/ ASPD-L staff, 2009). For a story about the Participatory Video method, see <http://mande4mfi.wordpress.com/2009/08/11/an-evolving-story-on-msc-pv-in-zanzibar/>

Writeshop

“It wasn't an easy process. Participants struggled when asked to write a story that reflects one of their experiences in relation to Managing for Impact. You should have seen the frowns on their faces and the sweat on their heads when they picked up their pens or switched on their laptops. As Mr Saleh said at the end, 'A writeshop is more than a workshop!' Clear writing needs focused thinking. It takes practice, lots of practice. Participants wrote and rewrote... and rewrote.

And the result is a collection of stories. Stories about experiences gained and lessons learned by farmers, facilitators, planners, and managers at various levels. A programme adviser reflects on the steps and changes involved in institutionalising Managing for Impact at programme level. A farmer field school facilitator tells the story of farmer Yussuf and his rice mill in Kisongoni village, where impact can be seen and measured. The telling of these stories itself demands some of the openness to learning, critical reflection and responsiveness that is central to managing for impact”.

(Adapted from Kusters et al, 2009, preface).

5.2. A flexible M&E system that responds to emergence and complexity

The use of narratives in these two monitoring activities is a response to the need to capture issues as they emerge. This cannot be done without asking stakeholders what they want to know and why, and engaging them in data collection as well as in analysing and making sense of findings (see glossary on sensemaking). Development cannot always be understood by looking at fixed indicators. These work well where cause-effect relationships are based on evidence, such as vaccination against polio. But where issues are complex, unpredictable, emerging and dynamic in nature, cause-effect relationships are often unknown and the openness of participatory monitoring methods is a must.

5.3. M&E as a participatory and learning process

The extent to which M&E can contribute to learning depends on a range of factors, as suggested in box 5 below.

Box 5. Factors affecting learning from monitoring and evaluation (adapted from Preskill, 2007)

Several factors appear to influence the likelihood that those involved in an evaluation process will learn from their participation. These include the following:

1. *How monitoring and evaluation meetings are facilitated.* Do people intend to learn from the M&E process? How much dialogue and reflection is there, and what is the quality? How skilled are the meeting facilitators in guiding group processes? Do participants trust each other? How much time is given to discussing various issues?
2. *The extent to which, and the ways in which, management and leadership support participants' involvement in the monitoring and evaluation process.* Do managers expect participants to share their learning with others in the organisation or community? How they are rewarded for sharing and using what they have learned?
3. *Participants' personal characteristics and experiences with monitoring and evaluation in the programme.* Are participants motivated to engage in the monitoring and evaluation process? What is their position, their rank, and their previous training in monitoring and evaluation? Do they believe that monitoring and evaluation findings will be used?
4. *The frequency, methods, and quality of communications between and among stakeholder participants.*
5. *Organisational characteristics.* What is the current degree of organisational stability? What external demands, constraints, and threats affect the extent to which the organisation supports M&E work? If an M&E process is considered important in itself, and not just for the outcomes of the process, then M&E may lead not only to individual learning but also to team and organisational learning.

Sensemaking is a particularly important aspect of M&E. Here again, a key question to ask ourselves is: to what extent are stakeholders part of this process? And what are the consequences of including or excluding stakeholders in sensemaking (and other M&E processes)? One way of making sense of findings and thinking through decisions for change together is to make a habit of critical reflection. We go into this in Chapter 6 as we see it as central to learning throughout the work of a development programme, and obviously this includes M&E.

Throughout our discussion of both M&E and learning, we can also see how narratives can also play an important role in sensemaking by showing messy realities. When people tell stories, they set up a world with causes and effects, usually introducing some kind of disruption to the expected flow of events. Such a disruption, known in narrative discourse as a 'breach' is the focal

point for sensemaking. What does a protagonist do when confronted by a breach? What does a manager do when faced with protest from the 'ranks'? What does an extension worker do when farmers quietly sabotage an experiment? How do stakeholders react when their theory of change is challenged? All these situations have been faced by the staff of the ASSP/ASPD-L programme in Zanzibar: see In Practice 12 below (These situations are also referred to in Chapter 5, where fuller versions of the stories are given). We can only respond effectively to such situations if we make sure stakeholders participate in the process, express their ideas and experiences and help decide on ways forward. A sense of humour must have come in handy for Mohammed Ali, too.

In Practice 12 'Breaches' in the narrative during implementation in Zanzibar

"On another occasion, stakeholders raised their concerns through the programme steering committee meeting as to why district accounts have not been opened as stipulated in programme documents. The complaints were justifiable. As management team we were faced with yet another strong challenge".
By: Khalfan Masoud Saleh, Deputy Programme Coordinator ASSP/ASPD-L

"We planted cassava on mounds 1.5 metres apart. This is a good spacing for more production. When I came back the next day, the farmers had reduced the spacing to about one metre. I asked them why. They laughed and said, "We didn't do it on purpose".

By: Mohammed Ali, Farmer Field School facilitator

"At first, we had assumed that farmers would produce vegetables in the dry season. Now we realised that lack of water was a real setback. No water, no vegetables. Our theory of change did not work".
By: Is-hak Mahmoud Khair, District officer

From: Kusters et al, 2009.

5.4. The impact-minded M&E team

Formerly, M&E officers were hired to enter data into computer-based systems and to compile reports. Once they are seen as **facilitators of change**, they have to be jacks of all trades: collaborators, trainers, group facilitators, technicians, politicians, organisational analysts, internal colleagues, external experts, methodologists, information brokers, communicators, change agents, diplomats, problem solvers, and creative 'consultants' (adapted from Patton, 2008). Quite a list! Clearly no single individual can possibly offer all these qualities. This makes working in a **team** essential. Some of these roles can be performed by a manager, others by other team members such as programme officers, other M&E staff or even other stakeholders. The M&E roles of managers, M&E officers and stakeholders all change and should be complementary. Specific analysis of capacities present can be the starting point for a capacity development programme to strengthen knowledge and skills to carry out M&E (such as data collection, analysis), as well as skills to collaborate with others (e.g. facilitation, negotiation, learning), and skills to adapt quickly to what is coming out of a system. The story recounted in In Practice 12 below shows a monitoring team that was able to respond flexibly to an unexpected - and unwelcome - reality.

In Practice 13. An M&E team responds flexibly

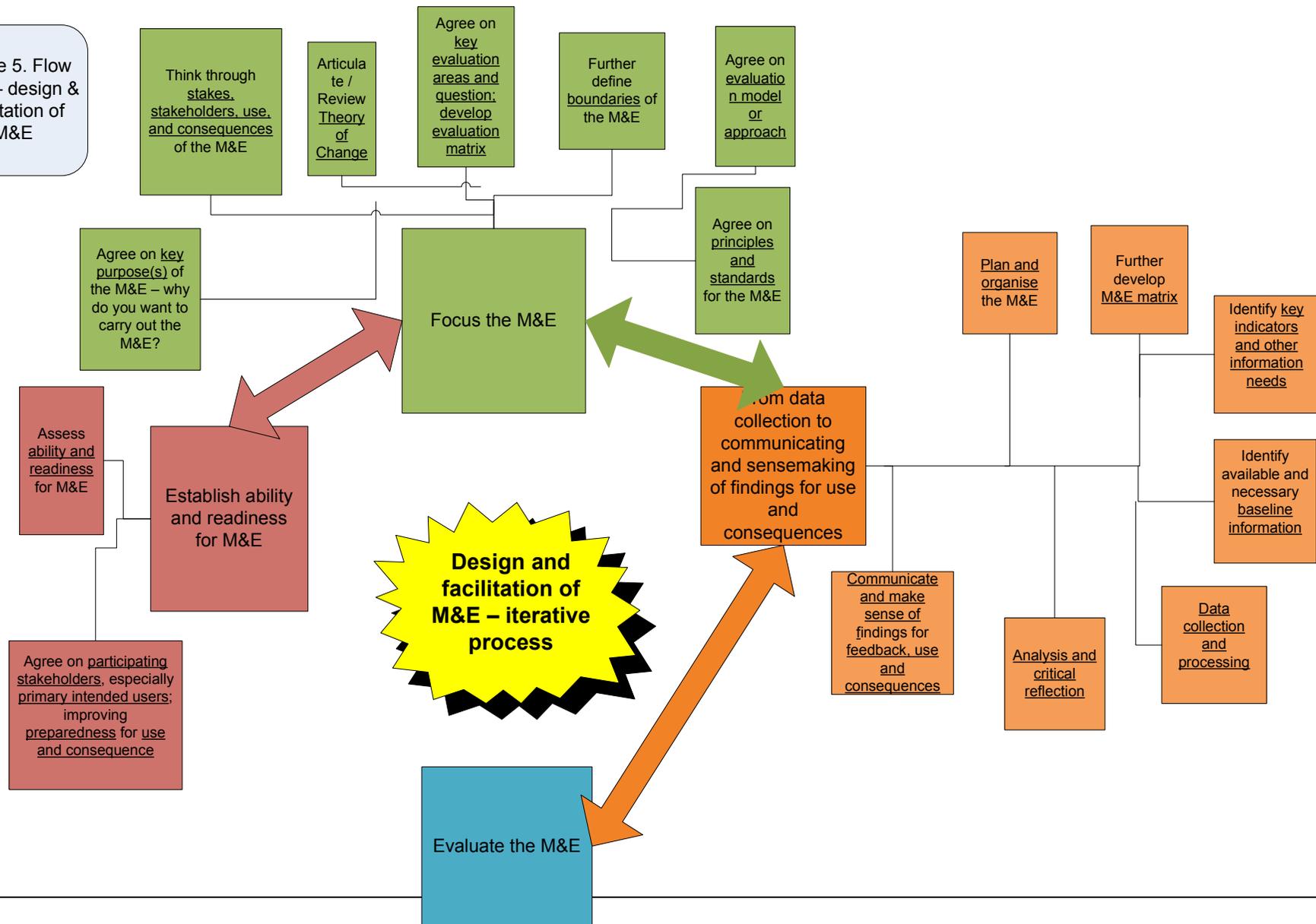
“An evaluation team arrived in the field ready to roll out their monitoring and evaluation tools. They were immediately confronted with a great deal of anger – directed at both the donor and the government – at the centre of which was a big conflict between traditional leaders and local government leaders. A major power struggle was going on and there was hardly any trust. So the team put aside their M&E plans and dipped into their Multi-stakeholder Processes toolkit. Power mapping offered a mechanism for getting some dialogue going in a non-threatening way, and getting at the history of the conflict. It was not plain sailing and there were constant attempts at sabotage by the traditional leader. And yet many issues were brought to the surface. When the team proceeded with the evaluation they had a better understanding of the people processes involved and, for example, how power relations could skew the data they obtained. But they would not have been able to do this if they had not been alert to people processes in the first place, and had tools and capacities for working with them”

(Based on Mine Pabari, personal communication)

5.5. Being systematic in developing an M&E system

We have seen that in the light of our awareness of emergence and complexity, there is a new need for M&E to be flexible enough to adapt to circumstances. However, it also needs to be systematic. The diagram (figure 5) below sets out some of the main steps in designing an M&E system.

Figure 5. Flow chart – design & facilitation of M&E



Here are a few key criteria and points for attention when taking the programme through these steps (from left to right in the flow chart).

5.5.1. Assess ability and readiness for M&E (the pink boxes in the flow chart)

Consider:

- Is the time right; are people ready to actively participate in the M&E process?
- Do you have enough information to work with?
- Are there financial restrictions?
- What benefits can you expect from the M&E system?
- Is there leadership support for the active participation of stakeholders in the M&E process?
- Is there openness to critical feedback and to acting on the findings?
- Have the consequences of including or excluding certain stakeholders in the M&E process been thought through?

5.5.2. Focus the M&E system (the green boxes in the flow chart)

Before embarking on any M&E, you need to be clear about the purpose, stakes, key stakeholders (especially primary intended users), intended use and possible consequences, theories of change, evaluation areas and questions, boundaries, M&E approach, principles and standards of the M&E system.

Consider:

- Why do you want to carry out M&E?
- What are the key stakes in the evaluation?
- Which stakeholders have these stakes?
- What are the key evaluation areas and questions that need to be addressed by the M&E system?
- Who will be using the findings and what for?
- What are the consequences of the decisions we make e.g. for those included or excluded?
- What theories of change do people have on the development initiative? Where are differences?
- What are the boundaries of the M&E system?
- What approaches will we use for M&E?
- To what principles and standards do we agree to adhere in the M&E process?

These questions provide a way in to stakeholder analysis. Our answers to them affect how we proceed. If stakeholders cannot commit themselves to the use of M&E findings, then what is the point of M&E? If stakeholders experience the M&E process negatively (e.g. because of negative experiences in the past) then how is this going to affect their use of the findings, particularly for social change? The conviction underpinning our commitment to the role of stakeholders is: *'Use concerns how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experience the evaluation process'* (Patton, 2008, p. 37).

Part of the work with stakeholders in the course of M&E is to **review** or (if it has not yet been done) **articulate the theory of change** (see also chapter 3) behind the development initiative. It is the role of an 'evaluator' to make people's assumptions about how change happens explicit, and to look for both common ground and any fundamental disagreements. Our decisions on which stakeholders to include have consequences for the theories of change being made explicit. Critically important assumptions will need careful monitoring.

When drawing up the **Evaluation areas and questions** that will focus an evaluation, we keep in mind that different stakeholders will have different (sometimes overlapping) evaluation or learning questions, and we negotiate our selection of questions. Besides the common focal areas of *relevance, impact, sustainability, effectiveness, efficiency and efficacy*, we may also want to address cross-cutting issues like gender and diversity, rights etc., often aligned to the key principles and approaches of an organisation (e.g. gender or rights-based approaches: a summary of the functions of some of the evaluation questions can be found in Guijt and Woodhill, 2002). For each evaluation question there will be a range of **indicators or other information** needed to answer the question. These indicators too should (as far as possible) be negotiated with stakeholders, participating in the M&E system, as their ideas may vary.

Where issues are complex the M&E system must be flexible and we need to be open-minded and to look not only for patterns, but also for surprise. The **boundaries** of the M&E system are influenced not only by the above but also by other factors, such as the level of stakeholder participation; the type of information needed and level of detail; capacities and conditions; geographical coverage, time period, and the overarching world view informing the intervention. In deciding on the **evaluation model or approach** we must always bear in mind that *'useful (monitoring and) evaluations must be designed and adapted situationally. Standardised recipes won't work'*. (Patton, 2008, p. 571). We always aim for an approach that best fits the situation and users of the M&E system. We will also have to agree on the extent to which general **evaluation standards** such as utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy are to guide and judge the M&E. (For the full set of detailed standards, please see <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>.) What principles do we based our M&E on? In M4I we strongly support the four **principles** outlined in box 6 below.

Box 6. Core principles for evaluation

Utilisation-focused and consequence aware evaluations. Utilisation-focused evaluation is done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses. This is an important principle that underpins much of the suggested evaluation process. We also encourage thinking beyond use and thinking through the consequences of an evaluation, at personal, interpersonal and collective levels. Traditionally, evaluations can lead to a change in knowledge, attitude or behaviour but recently, relational consequences have also been acknowledged, affecting relationships, structures and processes. It's important to think through the decisions we make around evaluation and the positive and negative consequences of these decisions for stakeholders who participate (or do not participate) in the evaluation.

Focusing on stakes, stakeholder participation and learning. What are the stakes in the evaluation, and in the development initiative under review? Who has these stakes? Which stakeholders can or cannot participate in the evaluation? Who is considered to have expert knowledge? What are the consequences of these choices? Stakeholder participation can enhance a better, more comprehensive, deeper understanding of development and thus make an evaluation more relevant and useful. The usefulness of an evaluation can be enhanced by allowing people to have a say when focusing the evaluation, such that their priorities for information will be addressed too, and in an appropriate way. Allowing people to speak for themselves, to reflect on their own and others' behaviour, experiences, actions, views and perceptions, and to think through possible actions for change, can create more ownership for an agenda for change. This can increase people's readiness to use an evaluation, and expand its influence. As an evaluator you can facilitate these processes, whilst keeping final responsibility for making good judgements of worth.

Situational responsiveness. As an evaluation unfolds, evaluators and stakeholders participating in the evaluation (especially intended primary users) must work together to identify the evaluation that best fits the information needs of stakeholders and the context and situation of the development initiative under review. This needs flexibility from all parties involved in the evaluation.

Understanding the development process in its context. Looking at the tip of the iceberg is not enough. Development can only be better understood and guided when we look underneath the tip of the iceberg. This means not only measuring whether planned outcomes have been realised but also understanding the process of working towards these changes, and looking at a wider spectrum of possible changes in the lives of people. This means that an evaluation should not be used as a single event to make sense or make judgements of worth. Evaluations need to be seen as part of a process of understanding (and influencing) development.

Multiple evaluator and evaluation roles, balancing content and people processes. This involves thinking through the evaluation process whilst allowing different perspectives and values to come out. Special evaluation skills are needed that go beyond methodological and technical expertise. The evaluator as a *facilitator, collaborator, and learning resource*; and participants as *decision makers and evaluators* would strengthen the use of evaluation findings. As an evaluator you will need to play different roles in evaluation, but the stakeholders participating in the evaluation process will also need to be flexible enough to play different roles. This requires capacity development for both evaluators and stakeholders in evaluative practice.

5.5.3. Getting from data collection to communicating findings for use (the orange boxes in the flow chart)

Planning and organising the M&E system (focus, approach, process, activities, timing, roles and responsibilities, human resources, material resources, finances, reporting) is not a one-off event, but an iterative process that runs through the M&E process. We pay particular attention to

the way the decisions made here affect who is in the evaluation and who is excluded. We may make use of an evaluation matrix (a detailed discussion of which can be found in the IFAD guide at http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexc/c.htm#c_3). Here again, flexibility must be preserved.

Baseline information is information about the starting situation before any intervention has taken place. If a baseline study is done well, it can help us assess what has changed over a period of time, whether it is a result of a development initiative, and how useful this has been. Other uses of a baseline study can be to redefine a development initiative at start-up, or to compare the situation with that of a control group (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002). In M4I we bear in mind that baselines are not 'the last word' when trying to make sense of a complex situation, where new issues emerge all the time.

When it comes to selecting **methods for data collection, collation and storing**, we adapt methods and methodologies after pretesting them (e.g. for appropriateness and accuracy) and reviewing the data generated (e.g. through daily reflection meetings with the evaluation team). If necessary, we train people in the use of the methods. The best option is often a mix of different methods, so as to ensure good quality data on different indicators.

After data collection, data need to be organised into a manageable form ready to be **analysed** efficiently in order to arrive at conclusions that can lead to action (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002, p. 6-22). Again, it's important to consider who will be involved in the analysis, how we will undertake the analysis and critical reflection on findings, and what the consequences of these choices are. In other words, to create 'space' (physical and emotional) for people to be able to **critically reflect** on M&E findings.

Our approach to critical reflection will depend on the nature of the issues that arise. Issues that are 'ordered' (the cause-effect relationships are known, cf. Cynefin framework, Chapter 3) can be analysed using deductive approaches. Issues that are complex, however, are better addressed through an abductive approach: looking for patterns and relationships but not necessarily causality, and working with many people's hunches about what does or doesn't work. The average will be close to reality. This pragmatic approach helps us reach quick decisions for action, based on 'rough' data. As we seek to understand and manage, we stimulate the things that go well and quickly discard what does not go well.

It is important that we ensure transparency in the way we communicate **findings** and organise **sensemaking**, of and **feedback** different levels (using feedback loops). What do the findings mean to us? How can we use them? How have they influenced me, our relationships, and our organisation? What are the consequences for different people, different stakeholders? 'Hard' findings are differentiated from value-based interpretations and judgements. The focus is on people: how has the evaluation influenced people, and what implications does it have for social change? Our 'field of vision' remains broad and findings from one evaluation are not the sole basis for judgement and sensemaking.

In Practice 14. Who decides? And on the basis of what information?

“The workshop on reviewing the existing M&E system in Zambia involved staff and stakeholders of an international NGO in Zambia. As people went through this participatory process they indicated the problems and opportunities for improving the system so that they could be more effective in their work. Everybody was around. Except the director. And he was the key to success. When visualising the information flow, the group realised that all the information would go directly to the director and only after that to the M&E officer. But what’s the point of having an M&E officer who could assist in compiling data and making initial objective analysis when he or she only gets this after the director has used it to make strategic decisions on the program? Surely, being an M&E officer isn’t just about compiling reports for accountability towards funders?”

(Cecile Kusters, Personal communication)

5.5.4. Evaluating and adapting the M&E system

Having completed the process of conducting an evaluation it is important to allow participating stakeholders in the M&E system to critically reflect on the M&E process itself and to what extent expectations have been met, e.g. in relation to their specific information needs. Where did we do well? Where is there room for improvement? What have we learned from this? It is appropriate to end with this question, as impact-oriented M&E activities are learning activities. And so we come to the question of how to create the kind of learning environment that is at the core of Managing for Impact.

6. A managing for impact perspective on creating a learning environment

Things are going pretty well, and our development manager's head is certainly buzzing with new insights, surprises, and ideas for taking things further. She knows she's not alone in this. But it is hard to find time to share what people are learning, and she is afraid a lot of it will get lost and never get applied. In practice, this could mean her staff are often 'reinventing the wheel'. So how can shared learning become part of the system and the organisation's working style?

This chapter surveys some ideas for creating a learning environment, drawing on theory and on experiences of practitioners working with the M4I approach. We'll start with a definition of a learning organisation:

'Learning organisations are organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together' (Senge, 2003).

In situations of rapid change only organisations that are flexible, adaptive and productive will be able to make an impact. In other words, the capacity to learn and adapt is not an optional extra, but is essential. This makes learning the most crucial pillar of the M4I framework, and one that is integrated into the whole development process from strategic and operational planning to monitoring and evaluation. We start this chapter by looking at the ways in which insights from current thinking about learning can help us in managing for impact. We then look at how **change management** can also assist in creating a learning environment, and at the crucial role of **leadership** and of **stakes and stakeholders**, before finishing with the issue of how to **manage diversity and differences**.

6.1. Key concepts for impact-oriented learning

So if we are serious about social change we need to be serious about learning. And we start by being clear what learning is. Increasingly, learning is not just seen as an increase in knowledge, skills or attitudes but also as a sensemaking process. Sensemaking is 'a motivated continuous effort to understand connection (which can be among people, places and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively' (Klein et al, 2006). There are many different views and theories on how the learning process works, but we do not intend to debate their merits here. (A lot of information on learning can be found at: <http://www.infed.org/ideas/index.htm>. And Annex B provides a brief definition of a learning organisation and a checklist for determining whether you organisation is one.) Instead we have picked out six key 'guidelines' that have emerged from applying some of these concepts in impact-oriented development practice. They are:

- Ask questions at all levels
- Make full use of the learning cycle
- Cater for learning preferences

- Make a habit of critical reflection
- Note and address barriers to learning
- Analyse the organisation's learning culture

6.1.1. Ask questions at several levels

In monitoring our work in a development intervention, we need to ask questions at three different levels. At the first level we ask: are we doing things the right way? Asking this helps to redesign practices. At the second level we ask: are we doing the right things? This helps us discern patterns and reframe our thinking. At the third level we ask: what assumptions and beliefs about how change happens have come to be questioned? At this level we are open to questioning our underlying values and may transform our view of our work. (For an outline of the theory on single, double and triple loop learning cycles referred to here, see Annex C).

6.1.2. Make full use of the learning cycle

Kolb's description of the learning cycle (Annex D) outlines four stages:

- Learning from concrete experiences;
- Learning from reflective observation;
- Learning from abstract conceptualisation;
- Learning from active experimentation.

When managing for impact, it is important to carry the learning through all these stages. In In Practice 15 Elias Zerfu shares three examples of moments that offer opportunities for learning from concrete experience: beneficiary stakeholders tell some hard truths about the effectiveness of an intervention, and assumptions on which it was based are challenged. The crucial point is that the programme takes time for joint reflection on what is being learned.

One of the areas in which the learning cycle is relevant is evaluation. In In Practice 16 below there is an example of how the evaluation process goes through all the stages of the learning cycle.

In Practice 16. An example of the experiential learning cycle applied to an evaluation

An evaluation of a food and nutrition security program was carried out in Uganda. Initially the evaluator team explored issues together with community members, divided into groups of men, women, boys and girls. During the evenings the team came together to discuss what data had been generated from the field (learning from concrete experiences). The different team members shared and compared this information every evening. This helped them to see some emerging patterns and possible gaps. These could then be addressed the next day with other groups of community members, and at a later stage with other stakeholders. At the end of the evaluation, the team analysed the findings and came up with some key conclusions about what worked and what did not work so well in the program. These conclusions were presented and discussed at a stakeholder workshop. Here stakeholders could indicate whether or not they agreed with the findings and make recommendations for action together. These recommendations were then integrated into the evaluation report. Some of these recommendations have been implemented since the evaluation. And so we have come full circle...

(Personal communication, Cecile Kusters)

6.1.3. Cater for learning preferences

It is helpful for facilitators of a development initiative to be aware of differences between people in the way they learn. Some people love exploring and developing theories but are less interested in applying them. Others draw their conclusions quickly and want to set up a programme to try out the ideas. And another group just wants to get on with the job of keeping things running smoothly without much reflection on the underlying theories. There is a lot to be said for playing to people's strengths, as well as for creating opportunities for people to learn from each other and from other perspectives. To do this throughout the programme cycle, we should try to use methods that cater for learning preferences. For examples of tools that we can choose from, please see figure 6 below.

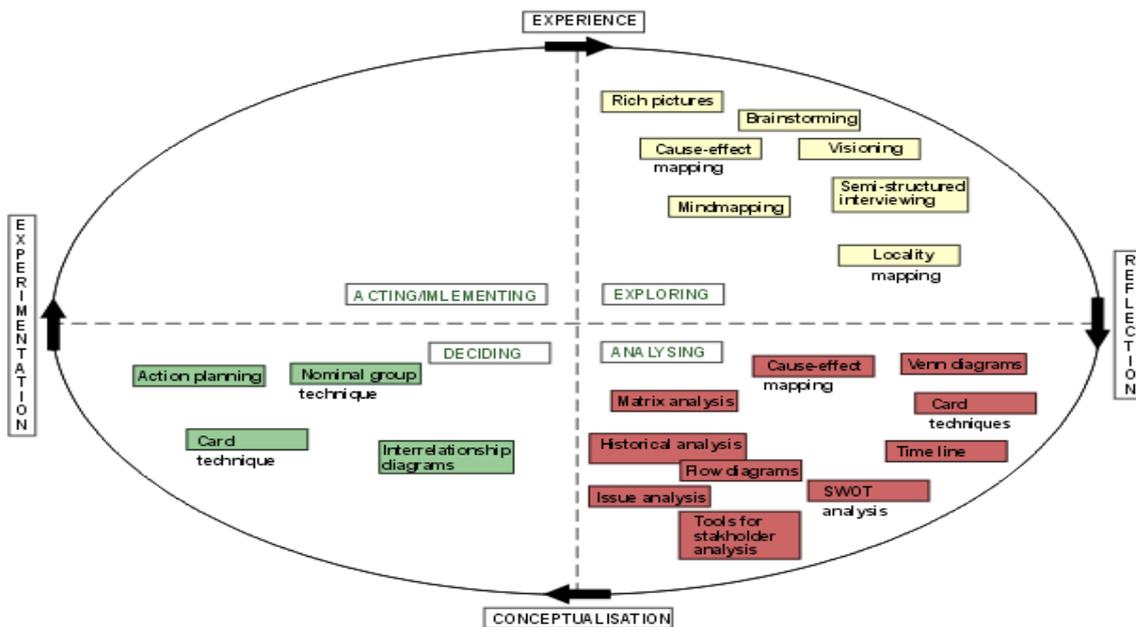


Figure 6. Tools that can be used to stimulate experiential learning

6.1.4. Make a habit of Critical reflection

Critical reflection is an important tool for ongoing evaluation and the learning that takes place within it. One definition of critical reflection is: 'the process by which adults identify the assumptions governing their actions, locate the historical and cultural origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative ways of acting' (Cranton 1996). Brookfield (1995) adds that part of the critical reflective process is to challenge the prevailing social, political, cultural, or professional ways of acting. Systematically applied in the context of a development initiative, critical reflection can assist in making sense of what is happening, relating it to reality and to existing learning, and coming up with ideas for improving the strategy and the way it is implemented. Critical reflection will need to happen throughout an ongoing evaluation process by questioning our assumptions about how change happens. Used like this, it can help us review our theory (or theories) of change. In Practice 17 gives an example of a theory of change being challenged by new information coming in from the field.

In Practice 17. Seeds are no good without water

"Other stakeholders should focus on the problem of water shortage, to boost vegetable production'. This view was expressed by farmers of four different shehias during routine participatory monitoring and evaluation sessions. At first, we had assumed that farmers would produce vegetables in the dry season. Now we realised that lack of water was a real setback. No water, no vegetables. Our theory of change did not work".

Is-hak Mahmoud Khair in Kusters et al, 2009.

In box 7 below, there are some critical reflection questions that can assist you in getting a deeper understanding of a situation being evaluated. You can see that these questions force you to engage with the data.

Box 7. Critical reflection questions

- What happened, to whom and in what circumstances?
- What generalisations do you draw from this; what exceptions are there; how can those exceptions be explained (and not explained away)?
- What contradictions do you observe (i.e. what could be fitted into the phrase 'on the one hand, on the other hand...')? Assuming these contradictions both to be true, what sense do you make of it?
- Which of these events did you not expect to happen? What does that say about the assumptions you made about the development intervention?
- What did not happen that you expected to see in your data? What does that say about the assumptions you made about the intervention?
- What remains a puzzle? What would you have to do to begin to resolve that puzzle?

From: Bob Williams, 2009.

This kind of critical reflection may be a departure from standard practice in two important ways. Firstly, there is a focus on the unexpected. Surprises are not seen as a bit of a nuisance, spoiling the picture, but as interesting material for learning. After all, if we see what we expect to see, we do not learn anything new. Secondly, there is an interest in problems and failures. Again, this is because we learn from our mistakes. So it is crucial to stimulate people to share not only success but also problems. This can be done in critical reflection meetings and reports (e.g. quarterly), by valuing innovation (e.g. through competitions), and by engaging stakeholders in strategic guidance etc.

In Practice 18. Critical reflection has helped to search for solutions

“Prior to the introduction of critical reflection, most of the meetings used to end up with the formation of task forces and fact-finding missions to go back and study situations presented and come up with recommendations. This consumed a lot of time and resources and therefore slowed down the response to the challenges. It also resulted in a series of further meetings to present the reports of the task forces and fact-finding missions, before reaching conclusions.

Now critical reflection has become very common among ourselves, and we even ask these kinds of questions in our daily informal conversation. Someone may come from the field, for example, and talk about a certain task he or she has managed to accomplish. S/he will be asked, “So what? What does that mean? Now what is your next step?” We have integrated critical reflection in our daily activities.

Introducing critical reflection has helped to reorient our meetings from ‘a forum to search for the problems and challenges’, to ‘a forum for solutions development’. This is made possible because challenges presented for discussion have already undergone a critical analysis at the farmers and facilitators level, which saves time and energy, allowing the meeting to focus on developing appropriate solutions and to avoid lengthy discussions”.

By: Andreas Mbinga in Kusters et al, 2009.

In In Practice 18 Andreas Mbinga talks about the introduction of critical reflection in the ASSP/ ASPD-L programme in Zanzibar, where it contributed to increased efficiency as well as to a noticeable culture change.

6.1.5. Note and address barriers to learning

A learning environment that facilitates all these processes is a tall order and we are bound to run up against barriers to creating it. So we need to be conscious of the various barriers to learning that can exist. Some barriers to learning are described in box 8 below. With these in mind we can consider how to enhance learning in our organisation.

Box 8. Some barriers to learning; learning disabilities:

External barriers

- Donor priorities
- Pressure to demonstrate low overheads
- Competition for funding resulting in a need for uncomplicated success stories

Internal barriers

- An activist culture - seeing learning as luxury
- Hierarchical, centralised, control-oriented structures
- Weak incentives and rewards for learning
- Underdeveloped, under-resourced and/or inefficient systems for accessing, storing, transferring and disseminating learning
- An inability to deal with challenges that learning poses to management, decision making, etc.
- Cynicism and previous bad experiences
- Lack of motivation and perceived lack of time

6.1.6. Analyse the organisation's learning culture

There are various factors that influence the likelihood that those involved in the development processes will learn from their participation. Key factors are:

- How meetings are facilitated
- How (and how much) management supports participation
- Personal qualities and experience
- Quality and kinds of communication
- The nature of the organisation

This list is taken from Preskill's list of factors affecting learning in an evaluation but it can easily be applied to planning processes as well. Some of these factors, such as the frequency and methods of communication, are easy to assess, while others, such as personal characteristics and experience, are less so. One may have to use a range of different methods to bring these factors to light during the development process.

Having analysed our organisation in terms of these factors, how can we set about making it more of a learning organisation?

6.1.7. Change management

Managing for impact is about managing change. Change is part of our daily lives. The ultimate aim of change processes/trajectories is often to consolidate or improve the performance of a development initiative. However, the 'practice of change' is much more complex, chaotic and unpredictable than most 'theories' suggest. About 75% of change processes are spontaneous! And about 70% of change processes fail. So we may think we can control development but reality proves us wrong.

The current definition of Change Management (see glossary) includes both organisational change management processes and individual change management models, which together are used to manage the people side of change'. There are many approaches to change management. John Kotter (1995 and 2002) describes a helpful model for understanding and managing change in terms of a number of stages. The eight key steps to successful change in Kotter's change model can be summarised as follows:

1. *Increase urgency* - inspire people to move, make objectives real and relevant.
2. *Build the guiding team* - get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels.
3. *Get the vision right* - get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy, focus on the emotional and creative elements necessary to drive service and efficiency.
4. *Communicate for buy-in* - Involve as many people as possible, communicate the essentials, simply, and to appeal and respond to people's needs. De-clutter communications - make technology work for you rather than against.
5. *Empower action* - Remove obstacles, enable constructive feedback and lots of support from leaders - reward and recognise progress and achievements.

6. *Create short-term wins* - Set aims that are easy to achieve - in bite-size chunks. Manageable numbers of initiatives. Finish current stages before starting new ones.
7. *Don't let up* - Foster and encourage determination and persistence - ongoing change - encourage ongoing progress reporting - highlight achieved and future milestones.
8. *Make change stick* - Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion, and new change leaders. Weave change into culture.

The central challenge in all eight stages is changing people's behaviour – not systems, not structures, not cultures. According to Kotter, 'People change what they do less because we give them *analysis* that shifts their *thinking* than because we show them a *truth* that influences their *feeling*. In an age of turbulence, when you handle this reality well, you win. Both thinking and feelings are important but the heart of change is in our emotions'.

In In Practice 19 below there are two examples in which people's feelings play a role in their resistance to change, but at the same time point the way to the kind of change that is needed and sensitive ways of introducing it.

In Practice 19 Two examples of the need to change calling for new structures or systems

"The programme has supported a few on-station research activities that were intended for demonstration to farmers. It has facilitated visits by farmer groups to experimental sites for different crops, in order to learn and exchange experiences. But a couple of farmers did not like the idea of visiting the sites; instead, these farmers challenged the programme to consider the research questions identified by them and to conduct on-farm experiments at their homesteads. This idea had been emphasised during sensitisations on various occasions, so farmers wanted to see it being implemented on the ground. The result is that management has now started to initiate farmer-based research, where farmers and facilitators collaborate in undertaking research relevant to farmers' situations".

By: Khalfan Masoud Saleh

1. "Our biggest challenge may be to change the attitude of facilitators so that they see M&E as part of their job and not a secondary activity. This will take time. The pre- and post-M&E meetings have been set up to get people used to this new idea. It is also important for facilitators to realise the importance of PM&E, and to get feedback on the information provided. The programme is in the process of establishing district resource centres. These will serve as a place for information sharing both within and between the districts, and with the management team. We hope feedback mechanisms will improve, and with them motivation for M&E".

By: Vuai Yahya Lada in: Kusters et al, 2009.

6.2. Leadership for change

6.2.1. Leadership and critical feedback

Development managers cannot do much about the wider cultural context affecting efforts to create a learning environment in a development initiative, but they can influence the internal culture of the initiative. A crucial quality for such managers is to be open to feedback and critical reflection, next to strategic competencies including sensemaking. But how many managers ask their staff or stakeholders to provide them with feedback on how they perform? In some organisations, asking for feedback on each other's performance is integrated into standard work practice, as is shown in In Practice 20 below.

In Practice 20. 360 degrees feedback

At the Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation we have introduced the system of 360 degrees feedback. A colleague can request feedback from 3 other colleagues on their work behaviour and relationship by scoring a range of criteria for each of the following areas: strategic development; process facilitation; conceptual analysis knowledge broker; team work; project management. There is also an opportunity to explain the reasons for the scores given. The results are discussed during the annual work review, although they have no formal implications. However, the process has proven very valuable in terms of seeing oneself through the eyes of colleagues and learning about one's personal strengths and weaknesses.

(Personal communication, Cecile Kusters)

This kind of system requires openness to criticism and to learning from mistakes: demands which jolt people out of their comfort zones. This is honestly reflected in the comments in In Practice 21 below about coming to terms with the consequences of more open, participatory management.

In Practice 20. Is management ready for critical feedback?

"On another occasion, stakeholders raised their concerns through the programme steering committee meeting as to why district accounts have not been opened as stipulated in programme documents. The complaints were justifiable. As management team we were faced with yet another strong challenge. In their quarterly meeting, a member of the steering committee raised the fact that district offices did not have qualified accountants who could reliably handle donor funds according to the required guidelines and acceptable standards. That was a bitter statement for the steering committee member responsible for the districts, who retorted, 'So just train them, isn't there a training component in your programme?' Somebody from the management whispered to me, 'That is the consequence of participation: knowing everything gives them the right to challenge the programme. We'd better go back to our old practice!' I told him, 'No, this is a new world of transparency and accountability. Let's accept the reality'".

Khalfan Masoud Saleh, in Kusters et al, 2009.

6.2.2. Leadership styles

Saleh's story shows established management styles coming under fire. Effective management for impact requires managers who can adapt their leadership style to a particular situation. This is called situational leadership. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory (more detail in Annex E) rests on two fundamental concepts: Leadership Style and the individual or group's Maturity level. The key idea behind Situational Leadership Theory is that there is no single 'best' style of leadership. The most successful leaders adapt their leadership style to the maturity of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence, as well as to the task, job or function concerned.

6.2.3. Stakes, stakeholder participation, power and empowerment

What are the stakes? Who has these stakes? What are the consequences of including or excluding some of the people that have important stakes? Who decides and why? Who benefits and who loses out? When engaging in development initiatives it is important to ask these questions as the answers affect learning and the capacity to manage for impact.

Let us look at an example. Imagine a rural area in Upper East Region, Ghana. This is largely a farming area. Now what are the stakes involved in, for example, tomato growing around a big dam? Economic gains, for instance? Farmers want to gain extra income from producing tomatoes. Traders (or women such as the 'big mamas') from Southern Ghana come to the North to buy the tomatoes and sell them at a higher price in the South. And the consumers in the South want to buy tomatoes at a low price. Health is another stake. Women farmers in the north work long hours at the farm to produce tomatoes that often do not sell at a high price. And who produces the tomatoes and who sells them? When the tomatoes are sold, who controls the money? So what are the health costs of these productivities, particularly for women who are more vulnerable due to pregnancy and lactation? Health is an issue for the consumers too. What inputs (e.g. insecticides) are used to protect the tomatoes from pests and diseases? Are these safe enough for consumers? Other stakes can also play a role, such as a sense of belonging in a women farmers' group, or access to or control over land for tomato production. Different people have different stakes that will be juggled daily. A farmer may decide to spray the tomatoes with unhealthy insecticide if this leads to a higher production of tomatoes. Another farmer may decide to sell the tomatoes at a lower price than hoped for as she needs the money now to be able to send her sick child to hospital. Explaining this to a trader may not help to get a higher price. The trader has power at that moment. An extension worker may decide to come in to provide support in terms of negotiation but may at that moment choose to spend time on his own farm activities to provide food for the family.

This example illustrates the importance of thinking through who gets included or excluded and why. Which farmers get access to land, to water, to information, to inputs, to loans? And why? What are the consequences of these choices for these farmers and their families but also for those being excluded? Who is being 'empowered' here, what does that mean for these people and their families and what does this mean for other farmers' families? Managing for impact means empowering people, especially the more vulnerable ones. In development initiatives, we will need to understand how people arrive at their

decisions, which stakes are in play, and what power people have to manage their own lives. People make decisions all the time, but what factors influence these decisions?

As we saw in Chapter 4 in relation to monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder participation is essential in managing for impact. Here again, managers need to be aware of the level of participation they are operating with and whether it is symbolic and partial or genuine and wholehearted. (See table 3 below.)

Table 3. Types of Community Participation

Levels	Types	Characteristics
Genuine Participation	Empowerment	All stakeholders are equal partners in decision making processes.
Symbolic Participation	Partnership Interaction Consultation	Stakeholders are asked for their views on what should be done and how, but there is no guarantee that these are taken into account.
Non-Participation	Informing Manipulation	Stakeholders are told what is good for them and what is going to be done.

Adapted from: Leksakundilok, A. (2006). Community Participation in Ecotourism Development in Thailand. University of Sydney. Geosciences.

There is a variety of tools that can help us to analyse the stakes and stakeholders involved in a programme. Some of these can be found at <http://portals.wi.wur.nl/ppme/> and <http://portals.wi.wur.nl/msp/>

6.3. Dealing with diversity and differences

Managing for impact involves engaging with people and this entails managing diversity. Even the members of one stakeholder group are by no means all the same. Some are men, others women, some young, others old, some educated, others illiterate, some skilful in agriculture, others skilful in other areas, some are healthy, some are not... not to mention their many different beliefs and values. Stakeholder analysis is important but we need to be careful not to group people together too easily. We also need to find out about their personal interests, history and beliefs, particularly when that is relevant for a particular development initiative they engage in. In the box below (In Practice 21) we see attention being paid to matching the capacities (in this case language skills) of staff to a cultural context.

In Practice 21. Speaking the same language

“The entire process was mostly facilitated using the local language, Sesotho. This was to ensure that the SANReMP facilitators understood the value of facilitating community-based planning processes using the local language to ensure maximum participation by community members. The training was also facilitated by Basotho, from Khanya, to ensure that it was done by people who understand the cultural dynamics of the country, and that the community was involved and not alienated through the planning process.

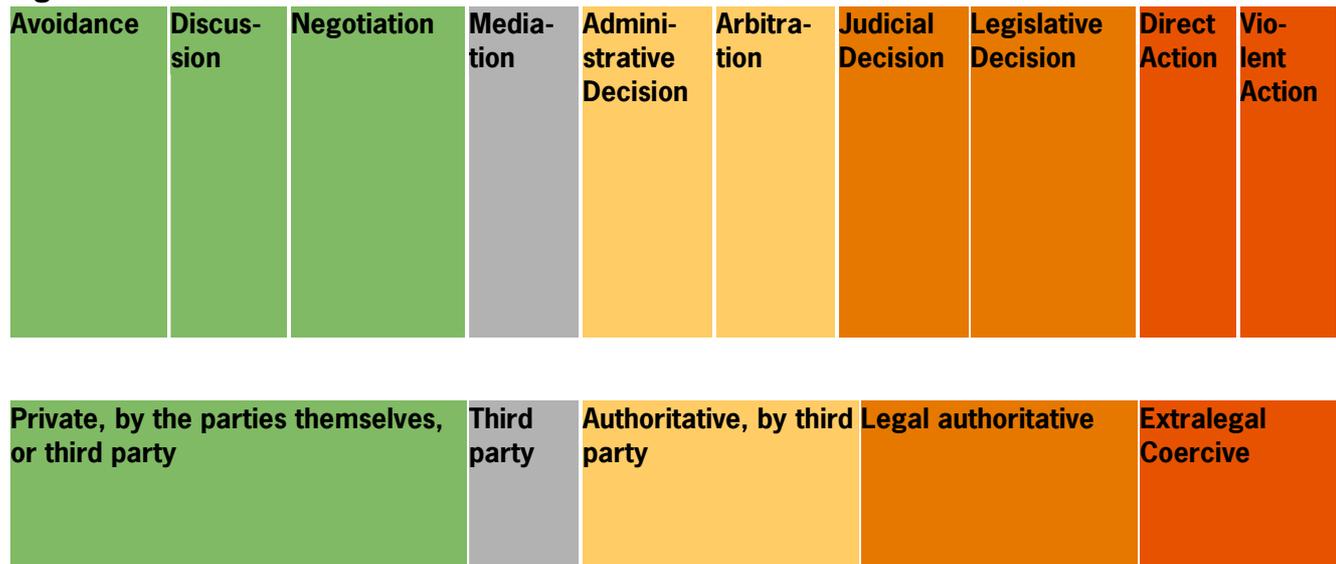
Keneilwe Thipe and Thevan Naidoo

<http://mande4mfi.wordpress.com/2009/05/06/lessons-from-lesotho-sanremp-learning-site/>

Managing diversity does not always mean searching for common ground. It can mean accepting and working with differences. Sometimes **conflicts** arise. How can we learn not only from what we have in common but also from where the differences lie and what this means for the development initiative? We may learn even more from the dialectic of conflicting views and interests than from harmonious dialogue. Yet managers often want to avoid rocking the boat, while their more junior colleagues may be afraid of sticking their necks out. The challenge is to manage conflict in a constructive way.

A starting point is to understand the reasons for the conflict. There are various conflict typologies, dividing conflicts into categories according to whether they focus on issues of data, interests, structural matters, values and relationships (see http://portals.wi.wur.nl/ppme/?Conflict_Management). What kind of conflict are we facing and what would be the best strategy for resolving it? Where does the conflict come on a continuum from passive resistance and simmering interpersonal conflict through legal battles to war? Can we use mediation to contain the conflict in its early stages while it is still somewhere on the left of the conflict continuum below?

Figure 6. Conflict continuum



The importance of catching conflict in its early stages is illustrated by the example in the box (In Practice 22) below of how avoided conflict can sabotage a development intervention:

In Practice 22. Passive resistance

“A fisheries project on the East African coast had been collecting data on catches for nine years. Now an evaluation team arrived to review the system. The evaluators talked to villages and were struck by how often they were asked what was being done with the data. Witchcraft was even mentioned and the evaluators realised there was widespread suspicion. Delving further, they discovered that for every boat being brought in at the official place and submitting its data, several others were coming ashore undetected elsewhere. So data that would be used for fisheries policy was seriously unreliable. And conflict had been successfully avoided for nine years!”

(Mine Pabari, personal communication)

Perhaps if the kind of listening and dialogue this evaluation team engaged in had gone on in the earlier stages of this programme, this issue would have come to light earlier. And if the fishers and their families had been involved in the planning, the suspicion might not have arisen in the first place.

Passive resistance is a frequently used way of avoiding or hiding conflict. Ali Mohammed Ali's story in the box below (In Practice 23) illustrates this too.

In Practice 23. Not-so passive resistance

“I am the FFS facilitator in Maotwe, a remote and scattered community in the Kangani shehia on Pemba island. One day, I worked with twenty farmers on the Farmer Field School demonstration plot as part of our participatory action research. We planted cassava on mounds 1.5 metres apart. This is a good spacing for more production. When I came back the next day, the farmers had reduced the spacing to about one metre. I asked them why. They laughed and said, ‘We didn't do it on purpose.’ But I knew they did it to save time and labour. They doubted if it was worth the investment. In other words, they were not convinced of the value of this new knowledge”.

Mohammed Ali in Kusters et al, 2009.

Principled negotiation

Once conflicts have been brought out into the open, they can often be resolved between two parties. An approach that can be useful here is called Principled Negotiation (Fisher and Ury, 2006). The idea is to teach ‘wise agreements’ which satisfy the parties' interests and are fair and lasting. The four principles of principled negotiation are:

1. Separate the people from the problem;
2. Focus on interests rather than positions;
3. Generate a variety of options before settling on an agreement; and
4. Insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria.

These principles should be observed at each stage of the negotiation process. The process begins with the analysis of the situation or problem, of the other parties' interests and perceptions, and of the existing options. The next stage is to plan ways of responding to the situation and the other parties. Finally, the parties discuss the problem to find a solution on which they can agree.

A learning process

As we have seen, learning is a crucial pillar of managing for impact and needs to be integrated in both the impact pathway and the people pathway. Learning must be part and parcel of the way we think and act strategically, ensure effective operations, and set up and manage an M&E system. When we look at the capacities and conditions required for M4I, learning is once again the key word.

7. Capacities and conditions for Managing for Impact

We know where we want to be in five years time, and we have set out a pathway of change, with milestones along the way. We know how we will measure whether we are on track, and have discussed how to make sure we see and respond to the unexpected. Our strategic plan is great, our AWPB is detailed, our M&E system is in place and we have thought through how to learn from our experiences. But how do we motivate our staff to carry out these seemingly additional tasks? Our program is large and involves many farmers and stakeholders with widely varying backgrounds, skills and attitudes. Getting them all facing the same direction is easier said than done. So is keeping up motivation levels, whilst dealing with changing policies, agenda's and emerging issues.

If the necessary capacities and conditions are not in place, none of our great ideas about strategy, operations, monitoring and learning will work. In Chapter 6 we looked at what it takes to be a learning organisation that develops the capacities it needs. The question now is how to manage the available capacities and create or maintain the right conditions for being strategic, for managing our operations, for ensuring our M&E system works well and for supporting a learning environment. Some of these conditions are more external in nature, such as emerging issues (e.g. disasters) , policy changes or other institutional issues such as paradigms, or cultural practices. We can try to minimise their negative impact on our work or work hard to influence them, but we can not control them. Others are internal and are more subject to influence. In this chapter we will pick out some key points for attention and share some experiences of practitioners aiming for Management for Impact. There are many issues we could discuss, such as finances, or systems in place (or not). We focus on the pragmatic management of capacities and conditions, and the empowering role of capacity development in providing incentives, whilst being attentive to the institutional environment that affects our efforts in managing impact. .

7.1. Managing human capacities and conditions

In development we work with people. When managing for impact, these people will need not only the relevant knowledge and skills but also motivation and certain attitudes. Ideally, particularly managers and leaders (not exclusively the same people) will need to have strategic capacities which include: having a vision; being able to scan the internal environment (such as internal politics) and the external one (such as opportunities that arise, national and international policies, emerging issues) quickly; adapting quickly to issues that emerge (e.g. staff leaving or getting ill; sudden outbreak of diseases). To do all these things, they need a helicopter view, flexibility and good networking skills. Ideally. In practice, all this cannot of course be acquired from a few weeks' training. Management will need to ensure such training is followed up and supported out the job, but will also have to make pragmatic choices about putting the right people in the right jobs. We saw this in relation to M&E officers in Chapter 5: of all the staff engaged in a development intervention, perhaps an impact-oriented approach makes the most new demands on the M&E officers, as they have to be able to perform different roles (from data analyst to facilitator and mediator).

But with the increasing demand for stakeholder participation, various stakeholders will find themselves needing to extend their knowledge and skills: to learn how to be open and

provide and receive constructive feedback; to learn how to collect and analyse data and critically reflect on findings; to learn how to look for the unexpected; to learn to appreciate failure; to learn to adapt quickly to changes in the environment. Just in case we thought that developing these new skills and attitudes was a matter of a few well-designed training courses, the following anecdote from Thevan Naidoo strikes a sobering note: old attitudes die hard.

In Practice 24. Putting 'aha moments' to work

"A ten-day M4I training for the Community Liaison Officers from different districts in the province and key management personnel was conducted... There were some 'a- ha!' moments when people realised the importance of guiding the project strategy towards impact, having the correct conditions in place, and inculcating a culture of learning.

Just as we facilitators thought our journey with participants was a smooth ride, we encountered some bumps! When we introduced participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluating for impact, suddenly our destination was not as clear. Participants questioned the need for communities to participate in project design and monitoring. They felt the practitioners should know better than the poor what was good and right for them. Others thought that including the voices of the poor in the process would waste valuable time. An element of paternalism emerged and there was resistance to the benefits of a participatory approach."

Thevan Naidoo, Khanya-AICCD.

To even begin to meet these sorts of capacity needs involves the following steps:

1. **Acquire the right people**, by: hiring already trained people; training staff and participating stakeholders; hiring external consultants for focused inputs.
2. **Build capacity for M4I**, by: M4I training for and with all stakeholders, through external courses, internal courses (tailor-made), on-the-job training/mentoring etc. This also includes agreeing on e.g. roles and responsibilities for M4I.
3. **Maintain capacity and its effective use**, by: removing disincentives and introducing incentives for learning; being clear about what you expect; keeping track of staff and stakeholder performance through regular M&E; outsourcing data verification; striving for continuity of staff and key participating stakeholders; finding a highly qualified person(s) to coordinate M4I, and in particular PM&E and learning. This can include both managers and M&E officers (adapted from Guijt and Woodhill, 2002). Land et al (2009) have developed a useful policy brief on capacity development between planned interventions and emerging approaches.

7.2. Incentives for M4I

Managers/leaders may have great ideas but to what extent are people motivated to put these ideas into action? What stimulates one person into action? What holds another person back? Incentives are not necessarily financial, such as salaries or other rewards (e.g. housing, vehicle use), although these can be important. An amusing example of how financial incentives might work a little too well is given in In Practice 25 below.

In Practice 25. Too many caregivers...

"Eight community based organisations work in Port Nolloth. Their volunteers receive a stipend of 1000 Rand each month on condition they each provide care to at least eight of the organisation's beneficiaries every day. Recently widowed seventy-year-old Oom Gert now benefits from their visits. Despite his protests, he gets to wash three times a day, all provided by different caregivers! Asked what he thinks of the attention from the young women caregivers. He responds 'Ek so skoon, ek moet nader my God is' ('I'm so clean I must be near to God')....

Itumeleng Kwenane, DSD, South Africa.

There is much more to motivation than pay, though. A few of the other factors come out in the account below of a programme management planning for incentives.

In Practice 26. How incentives can impact on operations

"A workshop was conducted in May 2008 to develop a participatory M&E system, with farmers, facilitators, researchers and private service providers. One of the topics was the incentives the participants would expect from the programme, to actively engage in the M&E activities. In summary, the incentives they suggested included: clarity on M&E responsibilities for each stakeholder and staff; the material support required to perform the assigned responsibilities; payment or other kinds of reward such as a short training or a trip; short-term or long-term professional development such as diploma and degree courses; and mutual trust.

In an effort to address the problem of low motivation for M&E activities, the monitoring and evaluation team rescheduled the monitoring activities to follow the financial calendar. Also, two new meetings were introduced to boost the monitoring activities; one before and one after the latest quarterly meeting...

In terms of incentives, we have organised a few things like M&E training, clear roles and responsibilities, transport and materials...The programme is in the process of establishing district resource centres. These will serve as a place for information sharing both within and between the districts, and with the management team. We hope feedback mechanisms will improve, and with them motivation for M&E".

From: Incentives: A challenge for effective Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, By Vuai Yahya Lada, in: Kusters et al, 2009.

This account reflects a holistic approach to incentives that bears in mind that people's motivation can be increased by opportunities to learn, logistical support, prompt feedback and follow-up on what they do, and clarity about roles and responsibilities. Lack of these things can function as a disincentive, as it did for an M&E officer in Zambia who got very discouraged when all the M&E information would flow to the director first for decision making, whilst her role was limited to compiling data and providing an initial analysis for decision making.

We have said that we should bear in mind people's capacities and backgrounds when allocating roles and planning capacity building. However, management too must be open to surprises here and give people opportunities to develop entirely new – and perhaps unexpected – skills that may traditionally have been the preserve of another group. The story from Zanzibar cited in Chapter 4.1 (In Practice 10) showed programme staff moving

from scepticism about involving village extensionists in using monitoring tools to amazement as they watched them get the hang of it and start not only to use but also to redesign the tools for their specific purposes.

This story of the Zanzibari village facilitators suggests what a difference it makes how we work with the capacities and conditions we 'inherit' in a development programme. It also illustrates two more points worth making about an impact-oriented approach to capacities and conditions. One is that it entails taking risks. In this case, the facilitators could have proved incapable of using the tools and programme staff would have had to go back to the drawing board. The second point concerns empowerment. People came alive, they had fun, and they learned new skills and saw new sides of themselves. All these things are great motivators and thus serve as incentives. But empowerment goes beyond incentives: it is a key part of the impact we are aiming at. Many of the stories from practice in this booklet have this in common: they show people, whether programme staff or beneficiaries, empowered by new challenges, newly developed capacities, and goals achieved or brought nearer. Which brings us full circle to the added value of keeping impact in our sights in the management of development.

8. Not the last word

Although we have referred throughout this booklet to Managing for Impact, and have described a framework and certain guidelines developed in the practice of this approach, we hope we have kept our promise not to proclaim a unique new methodology or sweep aside the readers' hard-earned and valuable wisdom and experience. At the same time, we hope that we have succeeded in sharing some of the excitements, discoveries and successes experienced along the 'road to M4I', as well as being honest about challenges, dilemmas and failures that still face its practitioners. These stories and the insights and suggestions we have drawn from them make up a small milestone along the path. In keeping with the nature of this booklet we do not end with any 'final' conclusions, but by revisiting the key words in M4I that were mentioned in Chapter Two: People, Empowerment, Learning, and responsiveness. They are not new words but they can be given new meaning – or a new emphasis – through the application of the M4I approach. M4I is an approach that is constantly being adapted with new insights and learning. We would like to encourage other development professionals to share their insights and help us improve the approach. We would like to leave the last word (in this booklet!) to two development practitioners.

Firstly, we return to farmer Yussuf and the Farmer Field School in Zanzibar where shared **learning** by stakeholders and a **responsive** attitude by facilitators has led to real impact.

In practice 27. From results to impact (via learning and responsiveness)

"Farmer Yussuf was known for his skilled farming and high paddy production. When Yussuf joined the farmer field school (FFS), his fellow farmers were happy as they could **learn** from him.

One of Yussuf's suggestions was that all the farmers should produce paddy for seed purposes. This seed could be sold at a higher price than they would get for their food crop because the demand for paddy seeds was high. The idea of seed production was discussed with the facilitators, who **responded** by providing training. As a result, rice seed production has increased, and so has the farmers' income.

Farmers were able to pay school fees for their children; they also bought clothes. Extra income also helped farmers to bring more variety into their diets by buying wheat flour, sugar, fish, or beef. It also helped them to buy other items like kerosene. All these benefits came from their participation in the FFS, and drawing out Yussuf's expertise in the monitoring meetings. Yussuf himself has managed to buy a rice mill".

By Mkubwa A. Hamza, PDO North District, in: Kusters et al, 2009.

And finally, we are taken back to Oom Gert as Itumeleng Kwenane reflects.

In Practice 28. Helping people navigate through life

“While it is important to create and develop monitoring systems, approaches and frameworks to enhance development, we should keep in mind that **people** are the focus of all development initiatives. In the end, what we really want is for people like Oom Gert (see In Practice 25) to have access to good services such as clean water, electricity and good health care. Development work seeks to help individuals navigate through the shocks and stresses of life. One way in which this happens is when people have a sense of belonging to **a community that is empowered** to successfully manage what affects them”.

Itumeleng Kwenane, DSD, South Africa. SMIP writeshop 2008, Nairobi

Glossary

Accountability: The obligation of government, public services or funding agencies to demonstrate to citizens that they have done what they were expected and paid to do. This usually includes accurate reporting and may entail a legally defensible demonstration that the work is consistent with the contract terms. Projects commonly focus on upward accountability to the funding agency, while downward accountability involves making accounts and plans transparent to the primary stakeholders. In Managing for Impact priority is given to internal 'self-accountability', where evaluations aim to make clear what has gone on to programme stakeholders and the community first, and only in the second place to external parties.

Adaptive management: a process that integrates the design, management and monitoring of a development initiative to provide a framework for resting assumptions, adaptation and learning (adapted from Guijt and Woodhill, 2002).

Change management (in relation to organisational management and people): 'a structured approach to transitioning [individuals](#), [teams](#), and [organisations](#) from a current state to a desired future state The current definition of Change Management includes both organisational change management processes and individual change management models, which together are used to manage the people side of change.' Wikipedia.

Development initiative: initiatives focused on empowerment and on eliminating poverty. This can be a project, a programme, a network, or any other initiative.

Empowerment: the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organisational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. (worldbank.org).

Institutions: these include formal and informal 'rules', regular patterns of behaviour, and various forms of organisation across the state, business sector and civil society. Language, beliefs, values and theories about how the social and natural world 'works' are also institutions. Some institutions are formalised, such as laws, while others, such as social customs, are informal. Institutions, both formal and informal, create stability and order in society. From: Vermeulen et al, 2008.

Logical framework approach (LFA): an analytical, presentational and management tool that involves problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, developing a hierarchy of objectives and selecting a preferred implementation strategy. It helps to identify strategic elements (inputs, outputs, purpose, and goal) and their causal relationships, as well as the external assumptions (risks) that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates planning, execution and evaluation of a development initiative (adapted from Guijt and Woodhill, 2002).

Logical framework matrix (or logframe): a table, usually consisting of four rows and four columns, that summarises what the project intends to do and how (necessary inputs, outputs, purpose, objectives), what the key assumptions are, and how outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated (Guijt and Woodhill, 2002).

Managing for Development Results (MfDR) and Results Based Management

Both MfDR (Managing for Development Results) and RBM (Results Based Management) are related to results-oriented approaches. MfDR relates primarily to development aid and RBM mainly to internal organisational practices.

MfDR aims to gear all human, financial, technological and natural resources - domestic and external - to achieving the desired development results. It shifts the focus from inputs ('how much money will I get, how much money can I spend?') to measurable results ('what can I achieve with the money?') in all phases of the development process. At the same time, MfDR focuses on providing sound information to improve decision-making.

As the name suggests, RBM is a management strategy that seeks to ensure clearly stated results. RBM provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving learning and accountability. It also aims to improve the way institutions operate by defining realistic expected results, monitoring and evaluating progress towards them, integrating lessons learned into management decisions, and reporting on performance.

Managing for Impact: A holistic approach to management. The aim is to increase the impact of development work by focusing on it in strategic planning, ensuring effective operations and establishing a monitoring and evaluation system that provides information to all stakeholders engaged in making both strategic and operational decisions. Learning and participation are important principles in the approach, and this is reflected in the close collaboration with target beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the planning and monitoring and evaluation processes. Managing for impact requires a development initiative to be responsive to the needs of these stakeholders, made explicit through a (participatory) monitoring and evaluation system. This responsiveness requires a management style that is open to learning and feedback, and is flexible enough to adapt so as to have more impact. This not only requires a lot from people, but also makes special demands in terms of leadership, partnerships and incentives.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E): a process through which stakeholders at various levels engage in monitoring or evaluating a particular project, programme or policy, share control over the content, the process and the results of the M&E activity and engage in taking or identifying corrective actions. PM&E focuses on the active engagement of primary stakeholders. (Worldbank.org)

Sensemaking is the ability or attempt to make sense of an ambiguous situation. More exactly, sensemaking is the process of creating situational awareness and understanding in situations of high complexity or uncertainty in order to make decisions. It is 'a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively' (Klein et al., 2006).

Stake: What a person or group has invested in a venture, or in a development context, in a programme. Whether material or not, this investment makes up their interest in the programme's success.

Stakeholder: A stakeholder is any entity with a declared or conceivable interest or stake in a policy concern... Stakeholders can be ... individuals, organisations, or unorganised groups. In most cases, stakeholders fall into one or more of the following categories: international actors (e.g. donors), national or political actors (e.g. legislators, governors), public sector agencies (e.g. MDAs), interest groups (e.g. unions, medical associations), commercial/private for-profit, non-profit organisations (NGOs, foundations), civil society members, and users/consumers.

Theory of Change: a set of assumptions about how change can be achieved. In a development approach based on Theories of Change, we identify the theory in play as a basis for setting goals and planning a 'pathway of change' or a 'change framework' (which is a graphic representation of the change process). A Theory of Change methodology maps out interventions and the outcomes they aim at, revealing the often complex web of activities that is required to bring about change. It pays particular attention to the assumptions of stakeholders about the change process represented by the change framework. Such assumptions are often tested by research, strengthening the case for the plausibility of a theory and the chances of achieving the set goals. Stakeholders value the use of Theories of Change as part of programme planning and evaluation as it helps to create a shared vision on the long term goals, how to reach them and how to measure progress along the way. (Partly from: ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (2007). www.theoryofchange.org.)

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Appendix A. Plotting your theory of change

A ToC provides the means by which someone can say, ah this is why, where, when and with whom our intervention will create change. A ToC does not necessarily need to include any information about the intervention itself (Bob Williams, personal communication, 2009).

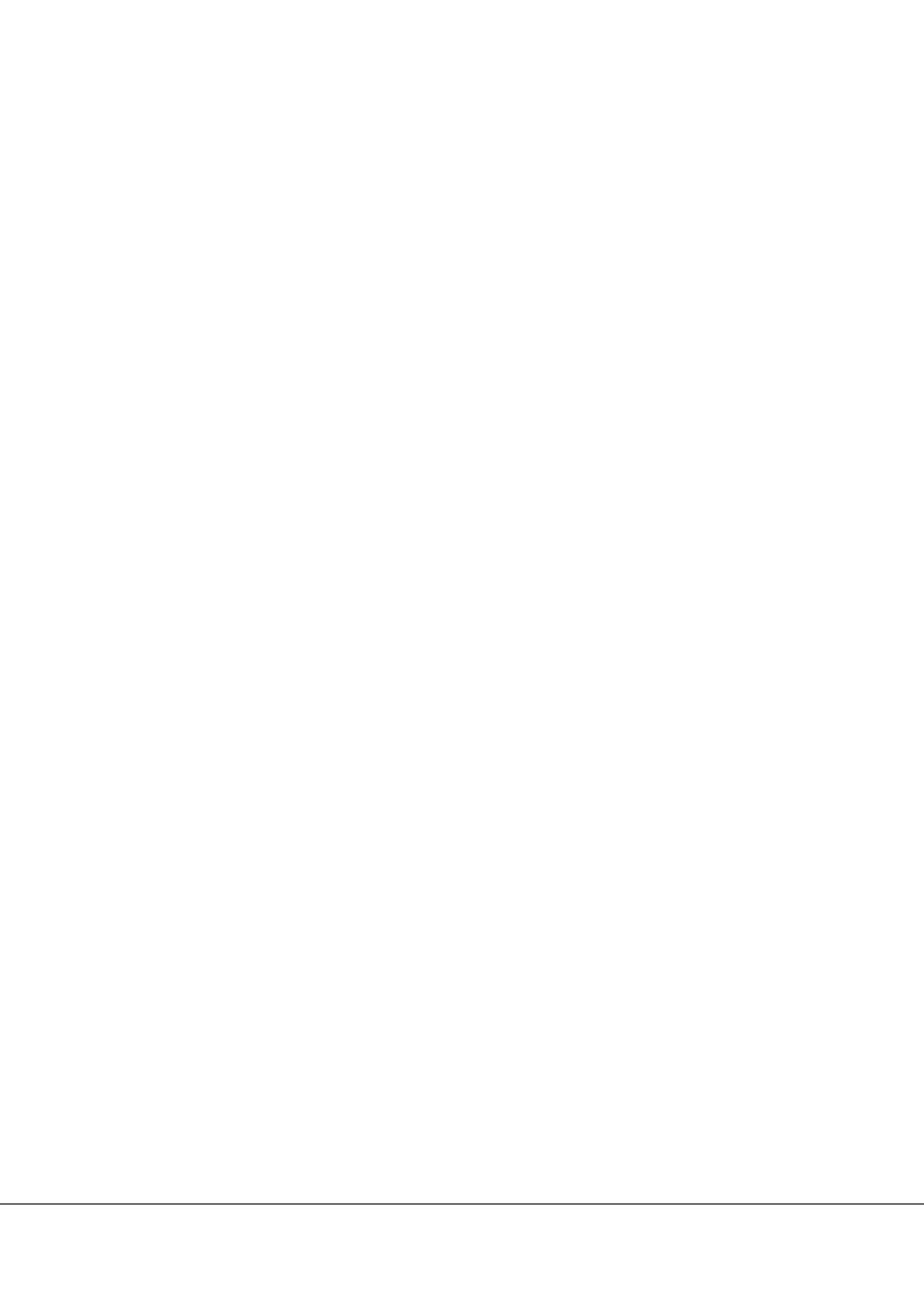
If you decide to represent this visually then you should pay attention to the following points (Funnel and Rogers, forthcoming):

Ensure the diagram is logical and consistent:

1. Make every arrow meaningful;
2. Indicate the direction of expected change;
3. Clearly show sequential and consequential progression;
4. Avoid dead-ends.

Communicate the main messages clearly:

1. Structure the diagram, table or narrative to focus on the key elements;
 2. Explain how the intervention contributes to the results;
 3. Avoid too many lines – don't use feedback lines indiscriminately;
 4. Avoid overly detailed standards (except in rare cases);
 5. Remove anything that does not add meaning;
 6. Ensure readability;
 7. Avoid trigger words and mysterious acronyms.
-



Appendix B. Standards for Evaluation

UTILITY

The Utility Standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the practical information needs of intended users.

FEASIBILITY

The Feasibility Standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.

PROPRIETY

The Propriety Standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

ACCURACY

The Accuracy Standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated.

From: Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation 1994

For the full set of detailed standards, please see <http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/jc/>



Appendix C. The functions of evaluation questions

Evaluation / performance / learning questions

- Help to focus information gathering on what will truly advance understanding and improve performance of the development initiative in relation to specific objectives and therefore helps guiding strategic learning.
- Help to get a more integrated and meaningful picture of the overall project achievement.
- Activate cross-cutting issues & principles and assumptions/risks.
- Make it easier to specify which specific indicators are really necessary.
- Are not just about *what* has been achieved but also about *why* there is success or failure, *who* exactly has been impacted and what has been *learned* to improve future action.
- Evaluation questions need to be developed for all levels in an objective hierarchy.
- Evaluation questions may lead you to rephrase the objective(s) to make it sharper in its definition.

Adapted from: Guijt and Woodhill, 2002.



Appendix D. Four orientations to learning (after Merriam and Caffarella 1991)

Aspect	Behaviourist	Cognitivist	Humanist	Social and situational
Learning theorists	Thorndike, Pavlov, Watson, Guthrie, Hull, Tolman, Skinner	Koffka, Kohler, Lewin , Piaget, Ausubel, Bruner , Gagne	Maslow, Rogers	Bandura, Lave and Wenger , Salomon
View of the learning process	Change in behaviour	Internal mental process (including insight, information processing, memory, perception	A personal act to fulfil potential.	Interaction / observation in social contexts. Movement from the periphery to the centre of a community of practice
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Internal cognitive structuring	Affective and cognitive needs	Learning is in relationship between people and environment.
Purpose in education	Produce behavioural change in desired direction	Develop capacity and skills to learn better	Become self-actualised, autonomous	Full participation in communities of practice and utilisation of resources
Educator's role	Arranges environment to elicit desired response	Structures content of learning activity	Facilitates development of the whole person	Works to establish communities of practice in which conversation and participation can occur.
Manifestations in adult learning	Behavioural objectives Competency - based education Skill development and training	Cognitive development Intelligence, learning and memory as function of age Learning how to learn	Andragogy Self-directed learning	Socialisation Social participation Associationalism Conversation



Appendix E. Comparing Managing for Impact to other approaches

This table compares the Managing for Impact approach with several other currently popular approaches on a number of points. The number of 'X's in each column indicate the degree to which the approach focuses on this issue. For example, M4I and Outcome-mapping are seen as highly process-oriented, while Results-based management and Logframe approach are only slightly so.

Focus	M4I	RBM	LFA	Outcome Mapping
Results-oriented	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
Learning-oriented	xxx	xx	x	xxx
Processes (the 'how' change is realised)	xxx	x	x	xxx
People processes (relationships)	xxx	x	x	xxx
Engaging with complexity	xx	x		xx
Empowerment & participation	xxx	xx	xx	xxx
Managing resources & operations	x	xxx	x	x
Integrating different methods & tools	xxx	?	-	-

By: Mine Pabari, 2009.



Appendix F. The Experiential learning cycle

Learning and the change it leads to go on at the levels of the individual, the organisation and the society or institution in which they are located. The learning cycle developed by Kolb (1984) brings together these three dimensions in a full spiral of action and reflection. According to this theory, learning involves a four-stage cyclical process. An individual or group must engage in each stage of the cycle in order to effectively learn from their experience. The four stages are (see figure 5):

- Learning from concrete experiences;
- Learning from reflective observation;
- Learning from abstract conceptualisation;
- Learning from active experimentation.

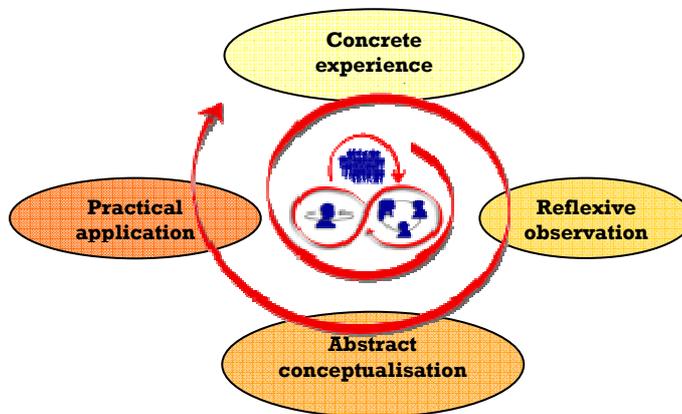


Figure 5. Stages of experiential learning cycle

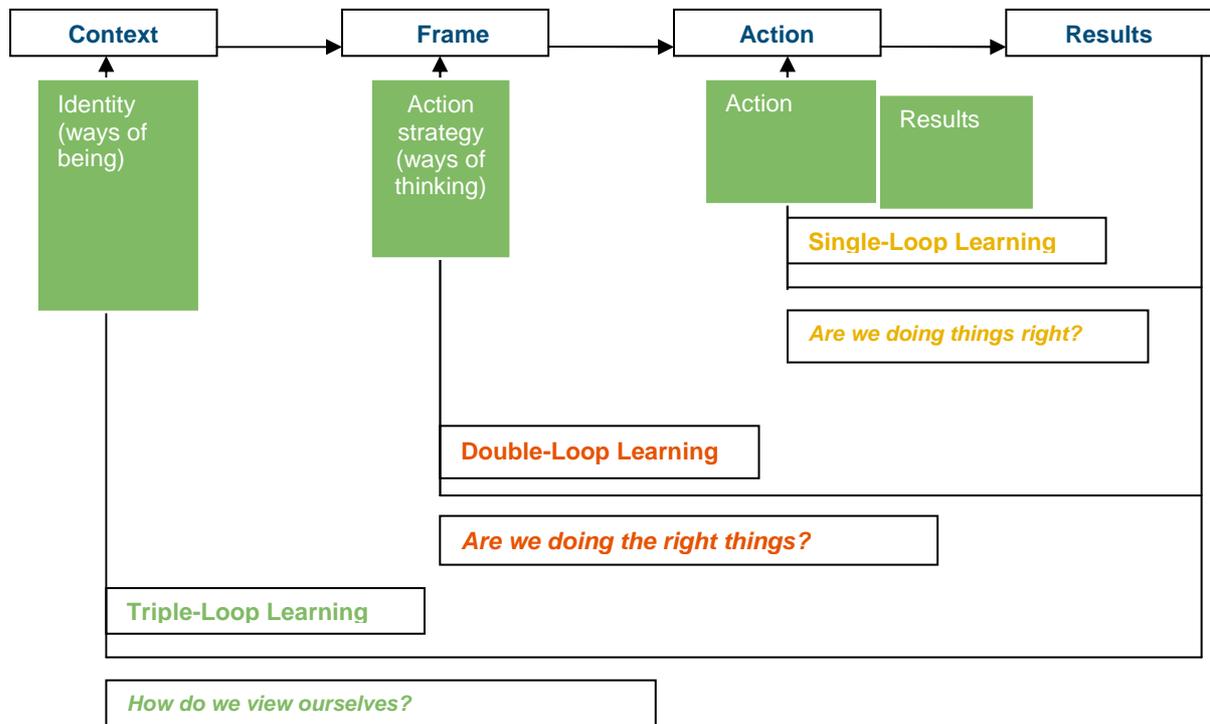
The cycle starts with individual or group experiences of events (or things). In themselves, these experiences do not lead to learning. To learn from them, we need to reflect on these experiences. This means exploring what happened, noting observations, and paying attention to your own and other people's feelings. It means building up a multidimensional picture of the experience.

The second stage of the cycle involves analysing all this information to arrive at theories, models or concepts that explain the experience in terms of why things happened the way they did. This theorising or conceptualising about experience is very important to learning: it is where solutions, innovative ideas and lateral thinking come from. We start by drawing on existing theories. Armed with an understanding of past experience, we progress to the third stage, which involves deciding what is most important and working out how to put what has been learned into practice. Finally, in the fourth stage, we put these new ideas or solutions into practice. This will result in a new experience, and so the cycle continues. Being explicit about moving through each stage of the learning cycle has proven to be a very helpful tool in problem solving and project management. This learning cycle can be applied in evaluation as well as throughout the project cycle.

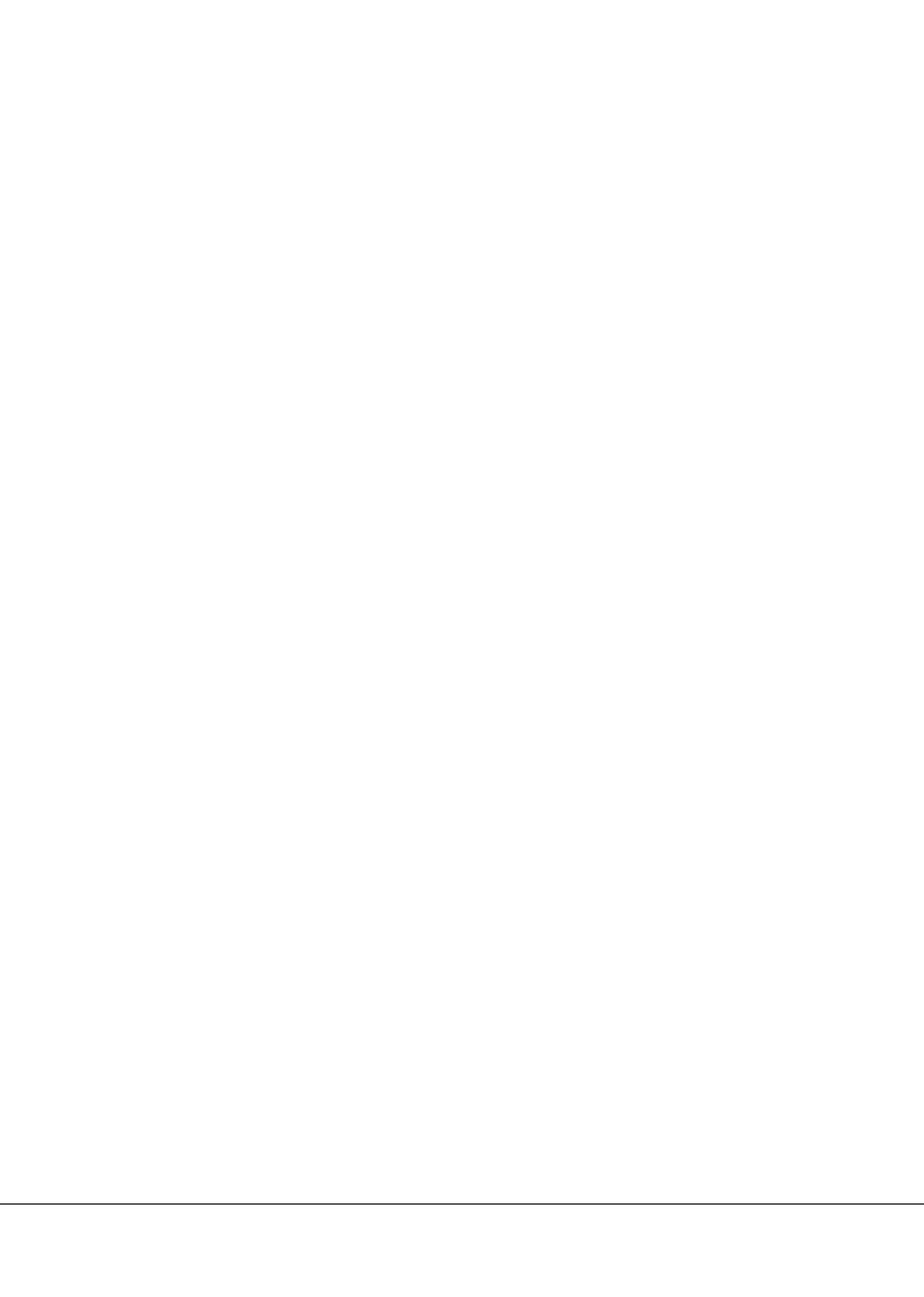


Appendix G. Triple loop learning

The triple loop learning model offers a way of looking at learning which help us to provide focused learning opportunities. The model shows three levels of learning characterised by three kinds of questions.



- Single-loop learning is based on following the rules. It is an incremental mode of learning which entails learning new skills and capabilities, and getting better at doing something without examining or challenging any underlying beliefs and assumptions. In evaluation, the question asked is: are we doing things the right way? This helps to redesign practices.
- Double-Loop Learning goes one step further than incremental learning to question and change the rules. This is the level of process analysis where people become observers of themselves: 'What's going on here? What are the patterns?' In evaluation, the question asked is: are we doing the right things? This helps to reframe our thinking.
- Triple-Loop Learning looks beyond the rules to question beliefs and perceptions they are based on. It involves transforming who we are by creating a shift in our context or point of view about ourselves. In evaluation, the question asked is: what assumptions and beliefs about how change happens have come to be questioned? This helps to transform our view of ourselves.



Appendix H. A learning organisation

Learning organisations can be distinguished by the following qualities:

- They make use of systems thinking (e.g. the importance of feedback; see also chapter ...);
- There is personal vision and commitment to truth among the stakeholders;
- The mental models ('deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action', Senge 1990) in play favour questioning and distributing responsibilities whilst keeping coordination and control, and fostering openness;
- The organisation works on building shared vision, e.g. thinking through pictures of the future;
- Team learning ('the process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire', Senge 1990) goes on, through shared actions and dialogue, which seeks common ground, but just as importantly through dialectic, which confronts differences.
- People are seen as agents, able to act upon the structures and systems of which they are a part.

So how do you know whether you can describe your organisation as a learning one? Box 9 below, gives some guidelines.

Box 9

Your organisation has a culture of learning through critical reflection if it fits the following description:

- Individuals feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued;
- Everyone involved sees mistakes and failures as important for learning and not as shameful;
- All the key groups involved in project implementation communicate openly and regularly;
- Development initiative implementers, including primary stakeholders, regularly discuss progress, relationships and how to improve actions
- Managers listen carefully to others and consciously seek solutions together
- During regular meetings and workshops, time is set aside for discussing mistakes and learning lessons
- The question 'why is this happening' appears often in discussions.

Adapted from Guijt and Woodhill, 2002.



Appendix I. Hershey and Blanchard's leadership styles

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory identified four levels of Maturity: at level 1, someone is neither willing nor able to undertake a task, at levels 2 and 3 they can work on the task without taking responsibility for it, and at level 4 they are capable of full responsibility. Maturity Levels are also task specific. A generally skilled and motivated person could have a Maturity level 2 when asked to perform a task requiring skills they don't possess.

Hersey and Blanchard characterise **leadership style** in terms of how task-oriented or relationship-oriented it is. They categorise all leadership styles into four behaviour types:

S1: *Telling* - one-way communication in which the leader defines roles and sets out the what, how, when, and where of the task;

S2: *Selling* - the leader is still providing the direction, but uses two-way communication and makes more effort to influence the individual or group to buy into the process;

S3: *Participating* - shared decision making in which the leader is more focused on relationships and less on tasks;

S4: *Delegating* - The process and responsibility has been passed to the individual or group. The leader stays involved to monitor progress.

No one of these styles is considered optimal for all leaders to use all the time. Effective leaders need to be flexible, and must adapt themselves according to the situation and the people they are leading.

(Hersey and Blanchard 1972 and 1977).