United Nations Inter-agency Resource Pack on Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in Communication for Development

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Research, Monitoring and Evaluation in Communication for Development

Part I

Researching, Monitoring and Evaluating Communication for Development:

Trends, Challenges and Approaches

Report on a literature review and

Consultations with Expert Reference Group and UN Focal Points on C4D

Prepared for the United Nations Inter-agency Group on Communication for Development by

June Lennie and Jo Tacchi

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About the authors

This report was written by June Lennie and Jo Tacchi. Dr June Lennie is a Senior Research Associate in the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, in Brisbane, Australia. Jo Tacchi is Professor and Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation in the School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

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A 15 member Expert Panel and 11 C4D Focal Points in seven UN agencies, funds or other bodies contributed relevant resources and suggestions and provided valuable comments on an earlier draft of this report. They also provided extensive feedback on drafts of the Principles that are set out in Section 2 of this report. Their names are listed in Appendix 1. Various UN staff provided feedback on a draft of a detailed online questionnaire which was used in the research process. Along with six members of the Expert Panel and five members of the C4D Focal Point group, 13 other specialists from UNICEF and UNIFEM provided feedback on a draft of this report. A number of them also assisted in developing strategies and plans to take this work further at a series of meetings in New York in December 2010.

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June Lennie and Jo Tacchi

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List of acronyms

AC4SC	Assessing Communication for Social Change project
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
C4D	Communication for Development
CFSC	Communication for Social Change
EAN	Equal Access Nepal
EAR	Ethnographic Action Research
ECD	Evaluation capacity development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
ICD	Information and Communications for Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KABP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviours and Practices surveys
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSC	Most Significant Change technique
P, M&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PRCA	Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
R, M&E	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
SSMK	*Saathi Sanga Manka Khura* ('Chatting with my best friend') radio programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WCCD	World Congress on Communication for Development

Researching, Monitoring and Evaluating Communication for Development: Trends, Challenges and Approaches

Executive summary

This report highlights a number of important trends, challenges and approaches associated with researching, monitoring and evaluating Communication for Development (C4D) within the UN context. It is a key component of the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (R, M&E) Resource Pack for C4D Programmes. This Resource Pack is being developed as part of an ongoing series of strategies that aim to institutionalise C4D within the International Development Agenda, demonstrate the contributions and impacts of C4D, and thereby strengthen C4D's institutional position within the UN.

To prepare this report, we undertook a major literature review and consultations with 11 C4D Focal Points or M&E specialists from seven UN agencies and a 15 member Expert Panel, who provided extensive inputs into the project, including suggested revisions to a draft of this report which was discussed at a series of meetings at UNICEF headquarters in New York in December 2010 (see Pamer et al., 2011).

Principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D

Based on the key themes and issues in the literature review and our consultations, this report details a number of principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D, which are summarised in Table 1. These principles provide a foundation for the approach that is advocated in this report and in the Resource Pack.

Table 1: General and specific principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D

General principles	Specific principles
Is consistent with the underlying values and principles of C4D and appropriate for different types of C4D initiatives	Uses a participatory approach that respects, legitimises, contextualises and draws on the knowledge and experience of local participants. Methodologies and methods selected are culturally appropriate, complementary, and the most appropriate for different issues and purposes, different types of C4D initiatives, and the aims of the evaluation.
Is meaningfully participatory and inclusive	Facilitates active participation of stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation and ownership of the initiative and its evaluation. Is as inclusive as possible of a diversity of groups; addresses issues of gender, class, race and unequal power and voice.
Is integrated into the programme cycle from the conception, design, and planning stages	Uses openness, freedom and flexibility in developing evaluation frameworks and plans. This process begins by agreeing on the initiative's objectives and outcomes and clarifying the evaluation's purpose and stakeholders' expectations.
Is provided with sufficient funding, time and resources	Takes a long-term view of the process and the benefits of a participatory, mixed methods approach and the use of longitudinal studies to assess impacts and outcomes. The evaluation is

	proportionate to the scale of the programme and timeframes to achieve outcomes are realistic.
Aims to lead to sustainable outcomes, including strengthened organisational systems and evaluation capacities and more effective policies, strategies and programmes that address development goals.	Staffs at all levels are involved in long-term capacity development which focuses on organisations as a whole and the development of learning organisations. Evaluation capacity development aims to increase understanding of the fundamentals of R, M&E, and provides practical guidance and simple, user-friendly information for managers, field staff and community members.
Goes beyond a focus on individual behaviour to consider social norms, policies, gender and power relations, culture and the specific and general development context	Takes the wider social, economic, political, cultural and communication context, issues and barriers into account, the complexity of human systems, and the interrelationships between different interventions. Data is disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity and other relevant differences.
Attempts to understand how and why social change happens, using a rigorous participatory, mixed methods approach	Involves developing locally and externally derived indicators and a dynamic, moving theory of change. Considers the short-term, intermediate and long-term impacts of initiatives. Adjusts baseline information to recognise changes in the context. Triangulates findings to increase rigour and ensure that a diversity of voices and views are included.
Involves continuous critical reflection and learning. Includes an action component and a process of ongoing improvement through feedback loops as a programme is implemented.	Engages in continuous monitoring of the communications environment. Identifies process outcomes to learn lessons. Learns from negative findings, weaknesses and 'failure' and looks for unplanned and unexpected results. Appropriate, effective and open communication and feedback systems are used to share findings, learnings, outcomes and experiences.
The evaluation is based on a high level of independence, integrity and honesty	Positive, negative, intended and unexpected findings are shared openly and honestly with participants, donors and funders and the larger development community.

Challenges, issues and tensions

Our research identified a number of significant and fundamental challenges, tensions and issues that need to be addressed in order to better meet the UN's development goals (particularly the Millennium Development Goals) and the aims and objectives of C4D and related development activities. These have been summarised below in a series of tables that aim to highlight the key characteristics of, and the critical differences between dominant and alternative approaches to C4D, R, M&E for C4D and evaluation capacity development, in the interest of ensuring that more informed and effective decisions are made. Although the dichotomies presented in these tables may appear suggest a strong polarisation between the two approaches, we emphasise in the report how a mixed methods approach that draws on contrasting methodologies and methods can richly complement each other to give a fuller and more realistic picture of change.

While our research demonstrates the benefits of alternative approaches, this report highlights the strengths and limitations of both dominant and alternative approaches and methods. We also recognise the need to be realistic about the process of changing current policies and practices. Effective use of alternative participatory approaches is clearly more difficult within hierarchical and

inflexible organisational structures and cultures. However, we believe that there is a need to critique ineffective practices such as donors setting unrealistic timeframes for outcomes to occur and the use of processes that tend to discourage learning from negative findings and 'failures' in order to improve initiatives.

It is not the approaches to R,M&E themselves, but *how they are applied* and that is critical here. For example, participatory approaches can be implemented in very top-down ways. They can also present many challenges for time and resource poor UN agencies and their partners whose staff may need to strengthen their evaluation capacities in order to produce more useful and rigorous research.

The findings and issues identified by this research are summarised under the following headings:

- Approaches to communication for development
- Approaches to research, monitoring and evaluation of C4D
- Assessing the impacts of C4D
- Indicators for C4D impact
- Key approaches, methodologies and methods for R, M&E of C4D
- Evaluation capacity development

Approaches to Communication for Development

There has been a shift (in rhetoric at least) from vertical one-way, top-down models of communication for development to horizontal models that aim to facilitate participation, inclusion and empowerment. However, many approaches refer to both perspectives in contradictory ways, resulting in confusion and inappropriate compromises that limit the effectiveness of C4D initiatives. For example, communication is often marginalised, while at the same time, it is heralded as a major pillar for development and change. In practice, communication, as understood by decision-makers, is often reduced to vertical information delivery or public relations, rather than part of a process of meaningful engagement in development processes. Diverse approaches to C4D are taken across UN agencies but the following four main 'strands' have recently been identified:

- Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)
- Communication for Social Change (CFSC)
- Communication for advocacy
- Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment (McCall et al., 2010)

Long-term research highlights a recurring problem with decision makers in development organisations not appreciating what C4D means, or its important role in development. Decision makers in the UN often do not understand that C4D includes two-way communication systems that enable dialogue, 'allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development' (UN Resolution 51/172, 1997).

Inclusion of people on the ground in all stages of development processes is seen as a fundamental principle by progressive proponents of C4D. However, institutions which excluded communities might engage with through communication are often structurally unsuited for listening, and development generally positions the poor and marginalised as listeners rather than speakers. In

addition, participatory approaches are often considered costly and time consuming; they challenge entrenched power structures, and are seen by some as incompatible with dominant organisational cultures and dominant R, M&E and planning approaches. We have therefore argued that a long-term perspective on the use of participatory approaches is needed, given the many benefits that they bring.

Table 2: Approaches to Communication for Development

Dominant approaches	Participatory approaches	Tensions and issues
Vertical, top down models, sending messages or disseminating information via one-way communication or public relations	Horizontal models based on meaningful participation, engaging people in dialogue, sharing knowledge and learning from each other, in a multi-way process.	Many C4D approaches refer to both perspectives in contradictory ways. This results in confusion and inappropriate compromises.
Communication is seen as marginal in the development process. Lack of high level support and understanding, in some UN agencies, of C4D as dialogue and community participation in decisions that affect their lives.	Communication is seen as major pillar for development and change. Some UN agencies strongly support horizontal communication for social change and participatory development approaches.	Institutions are often structurally unsuited for listening to the community. Many C4D units are located in corporate communication and external relations departments. The wide range of C4D approaches and meanings suggest a need to focus on common C4D goals and to reduce confusion about the meaning of C4D.
'Participation' in development is often only rhetoric, not put into practice, or implemented in top-down ways.	View that people on the ground need to be included in all stages of the development processes. Participation and ownership are seen as vital for sustainability.	Full and direct participation is incompatible with dominant organisational cultures and practices. It challenges entrenched power structures and is difficult to achieve, given issues of power and inclusion of a diversity of stakeholders, politics and perceptions of the greater time and resources required.

Approaches to research, monitoring and evaluation of C4D

A wider and more holistic perspective based on systems thinking and participatory approaches to R, M&E is increasingly seen as important to address complex social problems. This has significant implications for the evaluation of C4D, which is seen as requiring more organic and flexible strategies and methodologies and methods that match the dynamics of the system in which they are implemented. The impact of wider contextual, structural, institutional, and organisational issues also needs to be taken into account more in the evaluation of C4D.

Less dominant approaches to development and social change make explicit connections among power, what is legitimized as 'knowledge' and the social hegemonies that constitute social norms. Burns (2007: 36) suggests that if interventions do not attend to local social norms, 'many policy initiatives will fail to win community support, rendering them unsustainable'. This has major

implications for C4D initiatives within programmes that aim to change harmful social and cultural practices and prevent the spread of major health problems such as HIV/AIDS.

Compelling arguments have been made for a long time about the value of participatory and mixed methods approaches in the R, M&E of development programmes. Our research suggests that the evaluation of C4D needs to be based on an appropriate combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, complementary approaches and triangulation, in recognition that different approaches are suitable for different issues and purposes, and different approaches to C4D. However, there is a often lack of appreciation, funding and support for alternative, innovative R M&E approaches among management and mainstream M&E specialists in the UN. Commitment to participatory processes often remains rhetoric rather than translating into meaningful or appropriate practice. Funders tend to place greater value on narrow, quantitative measurement-oriented approaches and indicators that better fit their own management systems and tools, but that take insufficient account of the complexity of culture and the context of particular C4D and development initiatives. The benefits and rigour of alternative R, M&E approaches need to be better demonstrated.

Table 3: Approaches to R, M&E of C4D

Dominant approaches	Alternative approaches	Tensions and issues
Narrow focus on individual behavior change, short-term changes; use of linear cause-effect models of social change that do not foster understanding of the complexity of culture and the context of development programmes.	The complexity of social change is seen as requiring a participatory, holistic approach, incorporating insights from systems thinking and complexity theories and including a focus on gender, power and wider social norms. This approach draws attention to the underlying dynamics of social change.	There is a lack of funding and support for alternative R, M&E approaches that are often more appropriate for C4D. Since policy makers and managers often have a hard science background, they tend to lack an understanding and appreciation of the potential of alternative approaches and question their rigour and validity.
Dominance of quantitative, measurement-oriented approaches that limit the ability to ask important questions about social and behavior change.	A pragmatic, participatory, mixed methods approach, guided by appropriate principles and key evaluation questions, is needed to move beyond unhelpful qualitative/quantitative dichotomies. This would increase the strength and rigour of evaluation and impact assessment findings.	Funders typically have a preference for numerical data but do not appreciate the value of participatory tools for eliciting information that is often more credible and useful to communities themselves. A participatory, mixed methods approach requires a wider range of skills and knowledge to use effectively. There are other particular challenges to rigorously using this approach in some developing countries.

Assessing the impacts of C4D

Demonstrating the impact of C4D is a crucial part of moving C4D up the development agenda and achieving institutionalisation of C4D. However, this is often much more complex and difficult than for other development initiatives. Challenges identified in our research included:

- The challenge of attribution of impact in a complex and rapidly changing world.
- Donors often wanting to see results in an unreasonably short time frame.
- While the best way to assess lasting and sustainable change is to use longitudinal studies undertaken some time after projects end, donors are reluctant to fund such studies as there is 'no strongly established evidence base of past experience on which to build' (Souter, 2008: 164).
- The high cost of impact assessment – there are problems with inadequate funding, weak capacity and inadequate resources, including time to undertake impact assessment of C4D programmes.
- Approaching M&E in a vertical rather than an integrated manner - monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment need to be integrated into the overall project cycle, including programme and project design.
- The complexity of change – social and behavioural change often needs to be assessed against a moving baseline, which is inconsistent with dominant organisational practice.

Participatory, flexible and holistic approaches to evaluation based on systems thinking, complexity theory and action research are advocated since they enable us to consider the multiple paths to achieving impacts and the contributions of the intervention towards achieving impact, in relation to the macro and micro contexts. Such approaches encourage ongoing critical reflection and learning. This new way of thinking has led to shifts away from the dominant focus on measuring and proving impacts, towards understanding of the actual process of social change and continually improving initiatives and practices. This implies a greater focus on programme delivery, innovation, sustainable results, *progress towards* social change, the *contribution* of C4D to outcomes and impacts, and the impacts of evaluation processes themselves.

In addition, this approach suggests that it is often more important to understand negative and unexpected impacts and what has not been achieved, as this leads to better learning and programme improvement. However, the politics of aid means that implementing agencies are 'often tempted to claim credit for impacts because that is what those they are accountable to want to hear' (Souter, 2008: 162) and reporting focuses more on 'successes' than on 'failures'.

Table 4: Approaches to assessing the impacts of C4D

Dominant approaches	Alternative approaches	Tensions and issues
Dominance of instrumental, accountability-based approaches that focus on proving impacts, using linear cause-effect logic and reporting results. Alternative approaches are not adequately resourced or supported and are often critiqued for lacking 'objectivity', 'rigour' and 'validity'.	Flexible, holistic interdisciplinary approach based on ongoing learning, improvement and understanding. Takes the complexity of social change and the particular context into account.	Demonstrating the impact of C4D is notably more complex and difficult than for other types of development initiatives. Dominant accountability-based approaches discourage ownership of the evaluation process and learning from evaluation and a focus on unexpected and negative impacts and 'failure' that are often more significant for learning and improvement. Results are often biased towards positive outcomes and evaluations are not independent.

Pressure to produce short-term results within rigid and unrealistic timeframes. This results in a focus on more tangible, short-term changes that are not good indicators of long-term social change.	Seen as more important to focus on *progress towards* long-term social change and the *contribution* made by C4D. This is a more realistic measure of effectiveness and provides practical recommendations for the implementation of policies and programmes.	Longitudinal studies are required but they are costly and one of the most difficult challenges in impact assessment. Donors are reluctant to fund them. This means that there is a lack of strong evidence on which to build C4D research, which fuels skepticism.
Indicators are often set without input from key participants, are quantitative and unrealistic and do not fit C4D outcomes.	Indicators need to be selected and developed through dialogue with key stakeholders, to be most useful and appropriate. Qualitative C4D indicators are often most effective and appropriate.	Indicators are unable to capture complex realities and relationships and the reasons behind social change. In some C4D evaluations it may be more useful to use alternatives to indicators.

Indicators of C4D impact

There are many challenges and issues associated with developing and implementing indicators of C4D impact. Our research suggests that indicators themselves are largely unable to capture complex realities and relationships. They can be useful ways of measuring some change, but not of capturing the reasons behind social change. In C4D, and in particular the Communication for Social Change approach, indicators should be developed through dialogue and negotiation between key participants, so that they are chosen based on local assessments of what key participants need to know and why, and they are more realistic and useful. While quantitative indicators are emphasised in mainstream M&E approaches, in C4D qualitative shifts are often most appropriate to capture. Alternatives to indicators which are flexible and which better encompass complexity, such as stories of significant change and 'verifying assumptions', are often more appropriate and effective.

Key approaches, methodologies and methods for R, M&E of C4D

There is a need for openness, freedom and flexibility in the selection and use of R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods to ensure that they are appropriate and fit the underlying aims and values of the C4D initiative. They also need to take into account various constraints such as time, resources and organisational challenges. Participatory approaches to M&E have been advocated given their many benefits, including strengthened capacity in R, M&E, greater utilisation of findings and learnings, and the empowerment of participants. They are also seen as 'open approaches that can be adapted locally'.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (P, M&E) is recommended as an effective way of actively engaging key stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation of C4D and strengthening evaluation capacities and ownership of the process. Our consultations found that the following participatory, qualitative or mixed methods approaches and methodologies were considered to be the most effective for assessing the impacts of C4D:

- Case studies
- Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal
- Rapid Rural Appraisal

- Outcome Mapping
- Most Significant Change technique
- Ethnographic Action Research

Other participatory, qualitative or mixed methods methodologies that were nominated by respondents as effective included Developmental Evaluation, rights-based approach methodologies, contribution assessment and Appreciative Inquiry. Quantitative survey-based methodologies and cost benefit analysis were also seen as effective for assessing the impacts of C4D. The following approaches and methods were generally considered to be the most effective for planning impact evaluations of C4D within programmes: Causal analysis/problem analysis, the Theory of Change approach and the logical framework approach. Commonly used qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and participatory tools such as community/village mapping were seen as particularly effective in assessing the impacts of C4D. However, as the table below indicates, all of these M&E approaches, methodologies and methods have particular strengths and limitations or constraints.

Table 5: Approaches, methodologies and methods for R, M&E of C4D

Dominant approaches	Alternative approaches	Tensions and issues
Dominant quantitative survey-based methodologies are limited in their ability to ask important questions about the social, cultural and political context within which development problems are embedded. They miss the level of detail required to understand the nuances of impact. They do not allow for qualitative analysis and change over time in a given context, and are more suited to short-term activities.	They highlight openness, freedom and flexibility in the selection and use of various R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods, which should fit with the underlying aims and values of the C4D initiative. Participatory, qualitative and mixed methods approaches and methods are seen to have much value, if they are effectively used.	There is a need to strengthen capacities in using participatory, qualitative and mixed methods approaches so as to increase the rigour of M&E for C4D. Each of the approaches, methodologies and methods that were considered effective for evaluating C4D have strengths and limitations or constraints that need to be considered. All are best used in tandem with complementary approaches.
The logframe has been widely criticised as inflexible and unable to capture unexpected outcomes or changes. It represents the simplification of complex social processes and avoids the importance of process. There is a growing awareness that the logframe and similar tools squeeze out data related to local culture and context, and do not provide a space for an analysis of informal interactions and external influences that can be important to successful interventions.	A Theory of Change approach to evaluation enables a more detailed analysis of different stakeholders, communication flows and processes. It makes explicit the values that underpin the perspectives of more and less powerful stakeholders and enables targeted project design and M&E. It is good for expressing assumptions about causal changes and for deeper analysis of what is working or not, for whom etc.	While adaptations of the logframe have been developed, and some have called for more participatory use of the logframe, questions have been raised about whether this tool can be reconciled with goals of empowerment and giving voice to the most marginalised. A number of practical, political, theoretical and systemic limitations have been identified to applying the Theory of Change approach in practice. Particular context and programme specifics will help to determine which approaches and methods are most appropriate.

Evaluation capacity development

Our research identified a significant need to strengthen capacity in C4D and R, M&E at all levels. Evaluation capacity development (ECD) can be seen as part of the process of institutionalising evaluation and developing an evaluation culture within UN agencies and other organisations involved in C4D. This process is anticipated to generate more high quality M&E and impact assessments of C4D and to improve the design and outcomes of C4D initiatives. Our research also highlights the value of adopting a holistic, participatory, learning-oriented approach to managing and improving capacity development within organisations and initiatives, one which aims to develop planning and evaluation capacities at all levels, from community to management level. However, the use of participatory evaluation methods for ECD raises various critical challenges, issues and contradictions. Developing, implementing and sustaining ECD often present particularly difficult challenges and issues for time, skill and resource-poor organisations in developing countries. Challenges and issues that have a particular impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of ECD in the C4D and development context, include:

- The complexity inherent to assessing the impact of C4D.
- Attitudes to M&E among donors, C4D organisations and NGOs.
- Senior managers taking a short-term view of evaluation and not being open to alternative learning-based approach to evaluation.
- Unrealistic timeframes, project cycles and the demand for 'quick' results.
- The need for practical, flexible and sustainable impact assessment frameworks for C4D.
- The diversity of C4D approaches.
- Maintaining, supporting and sustaining evaluation capacity.
- The need to facilitate wide participation in M&E for C4D.
- Coordinating M&E with C4D programme content and improvement processes.
- The wide range of skills required to effectively monitor and evaluate C4D programmes.

Table 6: Approaches to evaluation capacity development

Dominant approaches	Alternative approaches	Tensions and issues
Narrow, short-term focus on training in key tools such as the logframe and development of individual staff members. A one-off 'workshop culture' dominates, as opposed to longer term capacity development and sustained support over time.	Holistic, participatory, long-term approach to capacity development that seeks to develop learning organisations and strengthen capacities (including in a wide range of R, M&E skills) at all levels, from community to management. These processes are long-term, interspersing fieldwork with desk based studies.	A participatory approach to ECD is often effective and appropriate, but can require greater time and planning. Developing evaluation capacities and achieving a high level of participation in ECD and 'buy-in' and ownership of M&E can be particularly difficult in pressured and resource constrained organisational contexts.
M&E is separated from other functions in organisations and lacks status and power. There are issues with communications and programme staff not seeing the value of M&E. This reduces	The effective development of learning cultures in organisations requires good communication, cooperation, collaboration and trust between M&E and other staff	There is a need for management to act as models of learning and organisational change, and greater funding and support for long-term, sustainable capacity development. However, this is often difficult to

the overall effectiveness of M&E and discourages the development of a learning culture.	and the integration of M&E into the whole programme cycle, which participatory and systemic approaches can offer.	achieve, particularly for organisations based on hierarchical or bureaucratic structures.

Framework for research, monitoring and evaluation of C4D

Drawing on new thinking, approaches and trends in this area, this report presents an emerging Framework for R, M&E of C4D which incorporates the principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D outlined in this report. This can be summarised as follows:

1. Conceptual and theoretical framework

- A holistic perspective based on complexity and systems thinking
- Takes the wider context into account
- Focuses on gender, power and social norms
- Takes a holistic approach to evaluation capacity development that aims to develop learning organisations
- Evaluation is seen as an ongoing learning and programme improvement process
- Takes a long-term, sustainable perspective on evaluation and evaluation capacity development.

2. Methodological and reporting framework

- Adopts an open, flexible approach to designing evaluations and selecting R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods
- Uses participatory approaches as appropriate
- Uses a mixed methods approach and triangulation
- Impact assessment uses contribution assessment and a dynamic, moving theory of change and involves longitudinal studies
- Makes more use of qualitative and participatory indicators
- Evaluation is independent and learns from 'failures' and negative results
- Establishes open communication and feedback systems.

Implementing both the conceptual and methodological parts of the framework requires a clear strategy. The strategy is required to address a number of challenges:

- There is a clear need for advocacy across the UN and with other organisations and donors, to highlight the importance of C4D and R, M&E in development.
- There is a need for greater understanding of the appropriateness and long-term benefits of participatory approaches.
- There is a need to create a common understanding of C4D and its various benefits.
- There is a need to provide sufficient budgets, resources and time, including for longitudinal studies.
- There is a need to improve capacity in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D within the UN, and with partners.
- Long-term capacity development for staff at all levels is required, with high quality and yet accessible training and reference resources.

- Creative and innovative strategies need to be employed to develop the framework, using participatory and collaborative methods.
- In addition to the need to collect and present good examples of highly effective R, M&E for C4D, there is also benefit in undertaking meta-evaluations of these examples.
- The open sharing of positive and negative, intended and unexpected findings needs to take place within an environment that understands the benefit of learning from success and failure.
- There is a need to establish a community of practice with online access to expert advice.

Strategies and plans for developing the Resource Pack

At the New York consultation it was agreed that as part of the first phase of the development of the Resource Pack, the report on the literature review and consultations would be completed, with the executive summary widely circulated as a stand-alone document. A revised outline of the Guide to Designing the R, M&E Process for C4D in the UN will also be completed.

Once funding has been obtained, Phase 2 of the development of the Pack will take place between May and November 2011 and will concentrate on developing and testing a workable version. The version will be developed around the theme 'Advancing the Rights of Adolescent Girls through Communication for Development', which is the theme for the 12th UN Round Table on C4D. Extensive consultation and feedback with UN programme staff will be sought. It is hoped that a regional joint UN meeting in Kathmandu in mid 2011 might take place where the Pack can be discussed and further developed. Regional Round Table meetings might also be used to further develop and obtain feedback on the Pack. A final workable version of the Resource Pack will be presented to the 12th UN Round Table meeting in Delhi in November 2011.

Researching, Monitoring and Evaluating Communication for Development: Trends, Challenges and Approaches

1. Introduction and methodology

This report highlights a number of important trends, challenges and approaches associated with researching, monitoring and evaluating Communication for Development (C4D) within the UN context. It is a key component of the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (R, M&E) Resource Pack for C4D Programmes which is currently being developed.

Based on a wide-ranging literature review, and an extensive research and consultation process, this report sets out a framework for R, M&E of C4D, which incorporates a proposed set of Principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D. These principles were developed with significant input from an Expert Panel and C4D Focal Points or M&E specialists from seven UN agencies who collaborated in this project (see list in Appendix 1). Through this process, strategies and plans were developed that aim to promote a greater appreciation of the role of C4D in international development, further develop the R, M&E Resource Pack for practical use at country and field level in order to strengthen evaluation capacities, and begin the process of further refining and implementing the R, M&E of C4D framework outlined in the conclusion to this report.

We hope that this report will be of interest to M&E and C4D specialists, academics and consultants working in this field and others with an interest in the latest thinking in this area. Specific sections will have different uses and will be of more interest to some groups than others. This report was largely written for a UN audience and this should be kept in mind.

Background

Since 1988, the UN has been promoting C4D as an approach to development work that facilitates the inclusion and participation of people in decision making. UN Round Tables have advocated that C4D be mainstreamed as an integral part of the UN's work and mindset, and that communication is central to achieving the MDGs (see FAO, 2005). The 11th Round Table (held in March 2009) discussed the institutionalisation of C4D within the UN system under two main themes:

1. Assessing and demonstrating the impact of C4D and
2. Institutionalising C4D.

The UN agencies and key non-UN partners at the Round Table reinforced the importance of demonstrating the impact of C4D for furthering the institutionalisation of C4D within the UN system.

A background discussion paper, prepared by Andrew Puddephatt and others for the 11th Round Table, provided an overview and analysis of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches of UN agencies. It recommended indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of C4D. The paper concluded that there is no systemic use of M&E to demonstrate C4D impact among UN agencies. It recommended:

- The need to identify the strategic intent of C4D initiatives.
- Using M&E to establish all the outcomes of the initiative.
- Development of a Resource Pack of M&E Approaches in C4D (using quantitative and qualitative methods) to fit the different C4D objectives of various UN agencies at different stages of programming.

The paper also put forward a recommendation for developing five categories of indicators for measuring C4D. Following the 11th Round Table, UN agencies agreed to develop a C4D R, M&E framework based on the suggestions made in the background paper. UNICEF has led this process in collaboration with other UN agencies.

Overview of the Resource Pack

Aims and expected results

Designed to benefit C4D practitioners and programme staff in the UN as well as their partners, the original aims of the R, M&E Resource Pack were to:

- Aid in demonstrating the impact of C4D approaches ranging from Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) to community-led Communication for Social Change (CFSC) to Social Mobilisation and Advocacy.
- Provide a review of literature and bibliography of hyperlinked state of the art references, tools and examples of completed research and M&E that demonstrate outcomes and impact of C4D programmes.
- Provide a roster of specialists (with resume on relevant work) who can be tapped to provide technical assistance and training on R, M&E in C4D.
- Make available a Resource Pack on C4D R, M&E that could be used as a learning resource by UN agencies and partners.

Current contents and project collaborators

The Resource Pack currently includes:

- A literature review and findings from the research and consultation process (i.e. this report).
- The executive summary to this report, which UNICEF plans to publish as a stand-alone document.
- An outline of a guide to designing the R, M&E process for C4D in the UN, which will be further developed during 2011.
- An extensive electronic bibliography of publications, reports, toolkits and other resources related to C4D and R, M&E of C4D.
- An initial directory of consultants who can provide training and advice on R, M&E of C4D.

This initial version of the Resource Pack was developed by Jo Tacchi (RMIT University) and June Lennie, with the assistance of Kirsty Martin (both from Queensland University of Technology). They worked on this project in close collaboration with Teresa Stuart and Paula Claycomb from UNICEF's C4D Unit in New York. Paavani Reddy at UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre also provided some input. An Expert Panel which included two M&E specialists from UN agencies and C4D Focal Points or M&E specialists from seven UN agencies, funds or other bodies contributed relevant resources and suggestions and provided comments on and revisions to the draft outputs.

Development of the literature review and this report

The original brief for this project indicated that the Resource Pack would include the following:

1. Review of the literature to detail various qualitative and quantitative R, M&E approaches and tools that can be used in C4D approaches.
2. Detail various qualitative and quantitative R, M&E approaches that can be used in all four C4D approaches to:
   - establish the strategic intent (i.e. recognise key questions that the M&E approaches should answer to demonstrate the impact of the C4D initiative)
   - measure the outcomes of the C4D initiative and
   - establish baselines
3. Elaborate on the selection of the following five categories of result indicators and how they fit into the mandates of UN agencies and the C4D focus. These categories include: 1. Evidence of local awareness; 2. Evidence of direct impact on behaviour change and social change related to programmes; 3. Local participation and empowerment; 4. Scope and scale of coverage of media and communication strategies; 5. Country capacity ownership and resources for C4D for sustainability and scalability. Propose indicative process indicators for each of the five categories and propose appropriate methodologies to measure the result indicators that agencies can adapt.
4. Clearly lay out the challenges of each of the R, M&E approaches in C4D.

The shape and content of the literature review emerged from a wide literature search and extensive consultations. Following phone meetings and discussions with our UNICEF contacts, feedback and input from the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel members, and initial work on the literature review, the content, scope and focus of this original outline was revised.

As well as a review of the literature, this report also includes extensive data and responses gathered from two online surveys and interviews about approaches, challenges and issues in RM&E for C4D. It retains the original focus on various R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods and includes some feedback about the five categories of result indicators and issues related to C4D indicators, and the challenges and issues in using various R, M&E approaches in C4D. However, it became clear that a broader focus on the trends, challenges and issues in C4D and R, M&E in C4D, and in the development context more generally, was essential. This was partly due to our findings about inconsistent understandings of C4D and the lack of appreciation of the important role of C4D in development and partly due to the lack of understanding of the complexity of the process of assessing the impacts of C4D and the need to outline new thinking about more effective and appropriate ways to address these significant challenges and issues.

This process led to the development of a set of draft Principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D which were revised based on extensive feedback from the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel. These principles guided the focus of this report and are a key component of the Resource Pack.

It was also clear that the literature review needed to take wider contextual, structural, institutional, and organisational issues into account, given the many complexities, tensions and contradictions between dominant and alternative approaches to R, M&E that were emerging. Another significant issue that emerged from our consultations was the urgent need to strengthen capacities in R, M&E of C4D from community to management level. A review of the literature on evaluation capacity

development (ECD) in the international development context was therefore also included. Specific issues related to ECD in the C4D area are identified in this section.

Methodology used in the research

To prepare this report we undertook a wide-ranging literature review and consultations with a 15 member Expert Panel from UNICEF and various research and consulting organisations and universities from around the world, and 11 C4D Focal Points or M&E specialists from seven UN agencies funds or other bodies (FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank). As well as providing references and relevant literature for the bibliography, this consultation and data gathering process involved analysis of the following data and feedback:

- Qualitative and quantitative data from two detailed online surveys completed by 14 Expert Panel members and 10 UN Focal Points.
- Interviews conducted with five UN Focal Points (one face to face and four by telephone).
- Feedback received from seven Expert Panel members and two UN Focal Points on the background paper for the 11th UN Round Table on M&E for C4D by Puddephatt et al. (2009).
- Feedback on a draft of the principles for M&E of C4D set out in Section 2 of this report, provided by nine Expert Panel members and four UN Focal Points.
- Feedback on a draft of this report[1] provided by six members of the Expert Panel and five members of the C4D Focal Point group, and other specialists from UNICEF, UNIFEM and elsewhere at a series of meetings in New York in December 2010 (see list of participants in Appendix 1 and Pamer et al., 2011). Some further feedback was provided following this meeting.

Process used to develop the literature review

An extensive literature search was undertaken as a first step in preparing this literature review. The following process was used to identify and gather relevant literature, tools and resources:

1. We prepared a list of relevant literature and other resources that had previously been gathered by the consultants (Jo Tacchi and June Lennie) as part of the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* (AC4SC) research project.

2. Our Research Assistant Kirsty Martin then conducted searches of the following:
   - 292 references in an electronic Endnote bibliographic library developed by the AC4SC project.
   - Reference lists in key documents and reports, including the background paper by Puddephatt (2009).
   - Websites of a range of relevant organisations including: Institute for Development Studies, Communication for Social Change Consortium, International Development Evaluation Association, INTRAC, UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank, and AIDS Alliance.
   - Other relevant resource-based websites such as MyM&E, The Communication Initiative, Media Development + Monitoring and Evaluation, Eldis and MandENews.
   - Google Scholar - to find information on M&E for C4D with a specific focus on the following areas of interest to the UN: changing harmful social norms such as child marriage and female

[1] It should be noted that this draft did not include a conclusion to the report.

genital mutilation, governance, climate change, employment, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, and child and adolescent participation.

- Various academic library databases and the Sage journal search engine.

3. We also obtained a large number of UN publications and toolkits and other relevant materials from our key contacts in UNICEF, Teresa Stuart and Paula Claycomb, as well as from members of the Expert Panel and some C4D Focal Points.

As this literature was collected it was entered into in an electronic Endnote library. The literature search was mainly focused on literature published within the past seven years. However, the bibliography also includes some older publications and toolkits that were seen as relevant or useful. Given the consultants' and UNICEF's commitment to participatory approaches to development, and the often, more widely expressed importance of participation in C4D and development by all mainstream development agencies, the bibliography includes a predominance of publications about the use of participatory approaches, methodologies and methods.

Limitations

We identified a vast amount of literature in our searches, far too much for us to cover in detail in this report. It is possible that we have missed some key texts. It was also not possible, due to time constraints, to review and include a range of good examples of R,M&E of C4D.[2] The current aim is that a wider range of good examples will later be added to the practical 'Guide to designing the R, M&E process for C4D in the UN' section of the Resource Pack which is expected to be further developed and piloted during 2011 and beyond. Some useful examples of C4D in practice in the UN context, including the use of various participatory methodologies and the outcomes of these C4D activities, can be found in UNDP (2009a) and McCall et al. (2010).

Definitions of some key terms

Our consultations highlighted the need for clear definitions of the terms 'approach', 'methodology', and 'methods' as they relate to evaluation, since they are sometimes used in conceptually confusing ways. In this report, we have used the following definitions of these terms:[3]

By '**approach**' we mean conceptually distinct ways of thinking about, designing and conducting evaluations. Examples of evaluation approaches are the results-based management approach (see, for example, UNDP, 2009c) and stakeholder-based participatory approaches.

By '**methodology**' we mean the process, design or framework that underpins your choice of methods. In some cases you may be informed by more than one methodology. The methodology you use affects decisions about the most appropriate methods to use in achieving your desired outcome.

[2] However, where relevant, we have drawn extensively on examples and learnings from the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* project which we have worked on over the past four years in collaboration with Andrew Skuse and Michael Wilmore from the University of Adelaide and Equal Access Nepal.

[3] These definitions of methodology and methods were also used in the online surveys for the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel, following a consultation process.

By '**methods**' we mean techniques or tools used to plan an evaluation, gather and analyse data. More than one method will usually be used in an evaluation plan, chosen according to the methodology.
For example, your methodology might be Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal, and you might use a mix of participatory techniques and focus group discussions as your methods.

Overview of this report

This report consists of nine sections, which are described below:

Section 1: Introduction and methodology: This sets out the background to and aims and scope of the literature review and consultations and locates them within the wider aims of the R, M&E Resource Pack. We explain the process used to search for and review the literature and conduct the consultations, included who was involved, the methods used, and the process involved in developing the contents of this report. We also explain some limitations and issues that need to be taken into account, and provide definitions of some key terms.

Section 2: Principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D: Based on other related sets of principles, our research, and an extensive consultation process, this section presents a detailed set of principles or criteria for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D programmes. These principles provide a foundation for the approach that is advocated in this report and in the Resource Pack.

Section 3: Approaches to Communication for Development: This explores and summarises approaches taken to C4D. It draws on survey and interview data we collected as part of this project, discussions with C4D Focal Points and the Expert Panel around key documents, literature in the field, and the major themes in C4D described in the recent UN publication *Communication for Development: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the United Nations* (McCall et al., 2010). We present and discuss definitions of C4D used in the UN, explore issues concerning the institutionalisation of C4D, reflect on the link between communication and participation in C4D work, and briefly consider some of the issues raised for R, M&E of C4D.

Section 4: New thinking and trends in R, M&E and impact assessment: We review a number of new trends and ways of thinking about research and evaluation and their value for the assessment of C4D. They are: the value of taking a holistic, systems approach and the significance of complexity thinking in addressing complex social problems; the benefits of participatory and mixed methods approaches to R, M&E; the need to focus on power relations, gender and social norms; seeing evaluation as an ongoing learning process and the related need to develop 'learning cultures' within organisations and programmers; and the shift from measuring and 'proving' impacts to 'improving' and better understanding programmes.

Section 5: Challenges, issues and strategies: This outlines some of the many complex challenges and issues surrounding the evaluation of C4D. In addition to reviewing relevant literature, this section extensively draws on findings from our online surveys, as well as and some strategies suggested in consultation and planning meetings in New York. We begin by considering the need for a greater appreciation of the importance of taking the wider contextual, structural, institutional, and organisation issues into account and issues related to the attitudes and policies of funders and

management. Key challenges in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D programmes are then briefly considered. This is followed by a more in-depth review of the many challenges and issues involved in assessing the impacts of C4D programmes. Finally, we outline suggested strategies for overcoming these challenges, and some strategies that could be used at different stages in the programme cycle.

Section 6: Evaluation capacity development in C4D: This begins with an overview of various definitions of evaluation capacity development (ECD) within the development context and a discussion about the various levels, groups and networks that are seen as important to engage in this process. This is followed by a brief discussion about the increased focus on ECD in the development context and a summary of the key issues and findings from our consultations about the need for ECD among UN staff and others involved in C4D. Next we review the benefits of taking a participatory, holistic approach to ECD and some of the challenges and issues that need to be considered. We then outline a number of challenges and issues that are particular to ECD in the C4D context. Finally we review some more general ECD challenges and issues and outline some recent learnings about increasing the effectiveness of ECD in the C4D context.

Section 7: Key approaches, methodologies and methods for R, M&E of C4D: We begin this section by reviewing four key themes and issues related to R, M&E frameworks and approaches that are important in C4D programmes. We then present a detailed overview of the key approaches, methodologies and methods that were considered effective for planning impact evaluations and assessing the impacts of C4D programmes by the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel members we consulted and in the literature. A summary of the strengths and limitations of some key approaches, methodologies and methods, identified by those we consulted, is also presented in a series of tables. Finally, we briefly outline factors and questions that need to be considered in selecting the more useful and appropriate approach, methodologies and methods in R,M&E of C4D.

Section 8: Indicators of C4D impacts: We review the literature on indicators of C4D impacts. We begin by introducing the idea of indicators, and their roles. Different types of indicators are presented before looking at some general indicators developed specifically for C4D, and the kinds of indicators that might suit the four main approaches to C4D used across the UN. Some of the challenges in the areas of new thinking in the field are presented, followed by a summary of some key ideas on indicators in C4D.

Section 9: Conclusion and ways forward: In this final section, we begin by presenting a summary of the key challenges, tensions and issues that were identified in the report. Drawing on new thinking, approaches and trends in this area and the principles set out in Section 2, we then present a proposed Framework for Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of C4D. Next we list various strategies that aim to address the many challenges and issues that were identified in this research, and to gradually refine and implement elements of this framework. Finally, we outline plans for the further development and implementation of the R, M&E for C4D Resource Pack and related capacity development strategies.

2. Principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable research, monitoring and evaluation of Communication for Development

Introduction

Based on key themes and issues in the literature review and our consultations with the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel, in this section we outline a number of principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D programmes (within the context of the relevant UN General Assembly resolution). In developing these principles we have drawn on M&E principles set out in Chavis et al. (2001), Mayoux and Chambers (2005), Parks et al. (2005) and Regeer et al. (2009).

A set of draft principles was circulated to the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel. Feedback and suggested revisions were received from four UN Focal Points and nine Expert Panel members. The draft principles were then revised based on this feedback. Most of those who responded thought the draft principles were 'comprehensive', 'holistic', 'useful' or 'impressive'. Further feedback and suggested revisions were provided during and after consultation meetings in New York in December 2010 (see Pamer et al., 2011).

A simplified list of these principles was also prepared. They are included in the Guide section of the Resource Pack and in the Executive Summary to this report. They will be further revised and refined as part of the process of developing the Resource Pack.

1. General principles

The research, monitoring and evaluation process:

- Is consistent with the underlying values and principles of C4D in the context of the relevant UN General Assembly Resolution
- Is **meaningfully participatory**. The aim is that participants develop an ownership of the initiative and its evaluation and are active and equal partners in decision making, which is an honest and transparent process. As well as local ownership, the process should aim to foster national ownership of the initiative and the evaluation. Participatory approaches can be linked to human rights such as the right to be heard and to be empowered, based on various UN conventions.[4] It also means being open with communities and the researcher/evaluator having an obligation to explain the evaluation and feedback results to participants.
- Involves participants working together to **actively integrate R,M&E into the project/programme cycle from the conception, design, and planning stages**, rather than seeing these as separate processes. This means that R, M&E becomes a responsive and integral part of the iterative process of developing, implementing, improving and adjusting C4D initiatives.
- Enables participants to effectively engage in initial discussions about the **meaning of fundamental C4D and R, M&E concepts** (including participation, ownership, sustainability, equality and equity). Researchers and evaluators take responsibility for being explicit and clear about the meaning of concepts used so as to demystify the theory and practices of research and evaluation.

[4] These include UN conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

- Sees people as actors and **agents of their own change**
- Sees research and evaluation as a **continuous critical reflection and learning process** that focuses on policy, programme and organisational improvement, process outcomes and capacity strengthening, as well as assessing the contributions that C4D programmes make to wider impacts and outcomes. Researchers and evaluators take responsibility to gather lessons from across evaluations and contribute to the wider body of knowledge about how C4D is undertaken and works.
- Is provided with **sufficient funding, time and resources** to be done effectively and appropriately. This requires taking a **long-term view** of the R, M&E process and the long-term benefits of adopting a participatory approach.
- Aims to **develop capacity** and ensure that findings are used to inform learning and programme improvements which lead to **sustainable outcomes**. This includes nurturing longer-term evaluation and learning processes that are an integral part of wider organisational development and change processes, in which process and content findings are actively used to inform programme improvement, and R, M&E practices strengthen evaluation capacities and capabilities.
- Is **open to negative findings, weaknesses and 'failures'**, as well as 'success stories'. This means that the process should seek to ensure a high level of **independence, integrity and honesty** of the evaluation.
- Looks for project/programme specific objectives and intended and expected results, but is also **open to unplanned and unexpected results** at both the community level and the institutional level.
- Includes an **action component** in order to be useful to the initiative's end users. In a participatory evaluation approach, this would entail evaluation participants producing 'action-oriented knowledge about their reality, clarify[ing] and articulate[ing] their norms and values ... reach[ing] a consensus about further action ... and constructing ...'a common vision of a desirable future' (Brunner & Guzman, 1989: 11).
- Where appropriate, **goes beyond a focus on individual behaviour** to consider local social norms, current policies, gender and power relations, culture and the general development context.
- Where appropriate, attempts to **understand how and why social change happens**.

2. Contextual issues

The following contextual issues are acknowledged in the R, M&E process and in the choice of methodologies and methods used:

- The wider social, economic, political, cultural, communications, technological and environmental context and the **macro and micro issues and barriers** that have an effect on the initiative and are of concern and interest to end users of the initiative.
- The **complexity of human systems** - this means looking at problems with multiple perspectives, studying the micro and macro issues, and understanding how they are interdependent (Lacayo, 2006: 23). Systems thinking and complexity theory are seen as important to addressing complex social problems and understanding the dynamics of social change.
- The impact of other programmes or interventions and the **interrelationships** between them and the initiative being evaluated.

3. Participation, power and inclusion

The R, M&E process aims to:

- Develop **positive relationships** between those involved, based on high levels of interpersonal and organisational trust and open communication.
- Facilitate the **active participation** of programme participants and others with an interest in the programme in all stages of the evaluation cycle, as appropriate.
- Be as **inclusive** as possible of a diversity of social groups and make every effort to include the voices and experiences of the very poor and most marginalised.
- Actively and explicitly address issues related to **gender, class, race and unequal power and voice** among participants.
- Ensure that the **vulnerability of the most vulnerable is not increased.**
- **Openly acknowledge the differences** between those involved.
- **Openly communicate** the principles, values and commitments of the researchers/evaluators to the goals of the initiative, so as to increase transparency and trust.
- **Validate** evaluation results through the participatory process.

4. Capacity development

- Capacity development focuses on **developing learning organisations and strengthening the capacity of organisations as a whole**. This involves participants and staff at all levels being **actively involved** in strengthening their R,M&E capacities, including staff who are involved in conceptualising, planning and managing R,M&E of C4D programmes and field staff and community members who participate in the process. It also involves managers acting as models for learning and organisational change.
- Appropriate and effective **long-term capacity development** in a range of key skills is provided as part of the evaluation process. These key skills include collaboratively planning R, M&E, developing a theory of change, facilitation, active listening, the collection, management and analysis and triangulation of a range of qualitative and quantitative data and report writing (as set out in the Guide part of the Resource Pack).
- Capacity development aims to increase understanding of the fundamentals of R, M&E, and **provide practical guidance and simple, user-friendly information** on evaluation.

5. Developing evaluation frameworks and plans

The development of an evaluation framework involves:

- Using **an approach that is not rushed**, allowing dialogue to begin the process.
- At the start of the evaluation process, participants **reaching agreement about the objectives and outcomes** of the initiative and their roles in achieving these outcomes.
- At the start of the process, participants clarifying the **purpose of the evaluation** and **making their expectations for the evaluation clear.** This includes what information they need to know, when they want it by, the forms in which they want it, for whom they want it and how they plan to use it. The aim is that the evaluation is useful to the end users of the initiative and that results and findings are used to improve initiatives and understandings about social change.

- Taking the **scale of the project or programme** into account when planning the evaluation so that the evaluation is proportionate to the programme. Considering the extent to which it involves using untested approaches, which might be high risk, high cost and weighing these against potential gains if it goes well.
- Considering the **possible risks and benefits** of the evaluation.
- In consultation with a range of participants, developing **flexible and realistic plans and timeframes** for the whole R, M&E process, using an organic approach that is responsive to unfolding developments.
- Seeing **indicators** as just one part of an R, M&E strategy. **Locally derived indicators** (including indicators of social change) are developed using participatory methods, as well as externally derived indicators. **Programme responsiveness and adaptation** can also be seen as measures of success. Indicators should be meaningful and flexible, kept quite small in number, and strongly linked to programme aims and objectives. They should reflect the need for gender-disaggregated data and aim to encompass complexity. **Alternatives to indicators,** such as most significant change stories, should be used as appropriate.

6. Design and methodology

The R, M&E process involves:

- Using a participatory approach that respects, legitimises, contextualises and draws on **the knowledge and experience of local participants.** The aim is to enable the voices of diverse groups of participants to be given an equal share and the evaluator/facilitator sharing power with participants. Participants create **shared meaning** of their experiences over time.
- Focussing on **both intended beneficiaries and other social groups or communities** that may be affected by the initiative, either directly or indirectly.
- Using **openness, freedom and flexibility in selecting frameworks**, approaches, methodologies, methods and tools. This means that if some methodologies and methods prove unsuitable others are readily available for use in the evaluation. They should be **the most appropriate** for different issues and purposes, different types of C4D initiative, and the aims of the evaluation, and match the dynamics of the system in which they are implemented. They should also be **culturally appropriate** for the people involved, used in culturally sensitive ways, and as **simple and practical** as possible. Constraints of the programme and the organisational context and resources need to be taken into account.
- Clarifying the **particular research and evaluation paradigm** that is being used since mixing paradigms can result in confusion and inappropriate compromises.
- Using a **mixed methods approach** that combines complementary and varied ways to collect, analyse and interpret data.
- **Continuous monitoring of the communications environment**.

7. Impact assessment process

The impact assessment process includes:

- Drawing on **previous research and the knowledge and experience of community members** to inform the process of identifying indicators, outcomes and impacts, including indicators of social change, community dialogue, participation, empowerment and capacity development.
- The use of **longitudinal studies** to assess lasting and sustainable change.
- If appropriate, developing a **dynamic, moving theory of change** which is tracked and adapted as part of the ongoing evaluation process.
- Considering the short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts of initiatives, based on the program's **vision of success** and **theory of change**, which is regularly reviewed and revised by participants.
- Reaching agreement with participants on a **realistic timeframe** that is likely to be needed to expect some evidence of the proposed outcomes. This timeframe may need to be adjusted over time, given changes to local, national and global contexts and other factors.
- Identifying **process outcomes** (associated with the implementation of an initiative) so that **lessons can be learned** about how the objectives of the initiative were achieved and the conditions required to achieve them.
- Looking for **unexpected, indirect and negative impacts** as well as intended, direct and positive impacts.
- **Adjusting baseline information** as necessary to recognise changes in the social and communication context. Using a moving baseline as necessary to track change.

8. Data organisation, analysis and validation

- M&E **data is disaggregated** by gender, age, caste, education and income level and other relevant differences, which are taken into account in the analysis. This is built into the design of M&E systems and plans from the beginning.
- Data analysis and interpretation is conducted in collaboration with key participants and stakeholders such as programme staff in order wherever possible, to **increase the rigour, trustworthiness and utilisation of findings**.
- Findings from the use of different methods and researchers and other aspects of the evaluation are **triangulated to increase the rigour of the results** and to **ensure that a diversity of voices and views are included** in reports and other feedback methods.

9. Communication and information sharing processes

- Open, appropriate and effective communication and feedback systems and processes are established at the beginning of an evaluation to **regularly keep participants informed and involved** in the R, M&E process.
- A **range of communication methods** are used to feedback findings to participants, senior management, funders and others, and to share learnings and experiences. Creative and engaging communication methods such as digital storytelling and sharing stories of significant change are used where possible.
- Positive and negative, intended and unexpected impact assessment **findings are shared openly and honestly** with participants, donors and funders and the larger development community.

10. Outcomes of the R,M&E process

The R,M&E process aims to contribute to:

- **Demonstrating the impact** of C4D programmes, based on expected and unexpected outcomes.
- **Ongoing capacity building**, and increasing empowerment, human rights, gender equity, dialogue and other C4D aims.
- **Improving** C4D initiatives, and broader development initiatives that C4D activities are attached to. This would include creating **feedback loops** of outcomes to help improve a project as it continues to be implemented.
- **Strengthening** organisational cooperation, collaboration, coordination and performance and the **development of learning organisations.**
- **More effective decision making and learning** about C4D and related development programmes.
- The development and implementation of **more effective** policies, strategies, programmes and initiatives that address development goals.

3. Approaches to Communication for Development

Summary of key findings

- Communication for Development is about people rather than technologies, and while it has multiple meanings, is generally understood to be about the use of communication in participatory processes for social change.
- Current approaches and understandings of C4D define communication as a two-way system, promote the importance of enabling dialogue and discussion and the sharing of knowledge and skills, rather than information or message delivery.
- Many C4D approaches confuse, or use both vertical and horizontal models, in contradictory ways.
- Participation is an essential and intrinsic component of C4D.
- Participation in development is often only rhetoric, or implemented in top-down ways.
- Full and direct participation is often hard to achieve within dominant organisational cultures and R, M&E approaches.
- C4D can be a mechanism for achieving participation in development more broadly.
- Successful C4D challenges inequitable power structures.
- Across the UN, understanding and support for C4D varies. As an outcome of the 11th Round Table, the UN has set out the four main approaches it takes: Behaviour Change Communication; Communication for Social Change; Communication for advocacy; and Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment.
- There is a need to institutionalise C4D within the UN, and to strengthen its institutional position by finding ways to demonstrate impact.
- The M&E needs of C4D are different to the mainstream. It is important therefore to demonstrate the rigour of participatory and mixed methods approaches.
- There is a need to build capacity in R, M&E of C4D, and to advocate for C4D with senior staff and donors.

Introduction

This section explores and summarises approaches taken to C4D. It draws upon the survey and interview data collected as part of this project, other discussions with the UN C4D Focal Points and the Expert Panel around key documents, the literature in the field, and the major themes in C4D described in the recent UN publication *Communication for Development: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the United Nations* (McCall et al., 2010). It presents and discusses the definitions of C4D used in the UN, explores issues concerning the institutionalisation of C4D, reflects on the link between communication and participation in C4D work, and considers some of the issues raised for R, M&E of C4D.

Communication for development or development communication is essentially about people rather than technologies, and is both a field of knowledge and of practice (Waisbord, 2008; Wilkins, 2000; Wilkins & Mody, 2001). Waisbord (2001), surveying its multiple meanings, describes development communication as 'a sort of umbrella term to designate research and interventions concerned with improving conditions among people struggling with economic, social political problems in the non-Western world' (Waisbord, 2001: 28). Servaes suggests, in his introduction to *Communication for*

Development and Social Change (2008) that while the words used to define C4D might change over time, since the mid 1970s the intent is reasonably constant. Taking some of the examples Servaes (2008) cites, and adding others, there is a sense of a general trend:

- Rogers (1976) described development communication as the study of social change brought about by communication research, theory and technologies to bring about development, with development understood as a participatory process of social change.
- FAO (1984) defined C4D as a social process towards common understanding and concerted action of all involved in a development initiative (in Servaes, 2008).
- Fraser and Villet (1994) considered the planned use of communication techniques, activities and media that allow people to both guide and experience change and intensify the exchange of ideas, can bring people together in a common cause. This, they state, is a fundamental requirement for appropriate and sustainable development.
- The UN resolution 51/172 (1997: 2), stresses 'the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development'.
- The World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) *Rome Consensus* (2006: 2) defines C4D as a 'social process based on dialogue', as 'about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change'.

The underlying theories of development communication have changed quite significantly over time, with modernisation theory and diffusion approaches being replaced by dependency, and participatory theories and approaches. Although participatory communication can nowadays be considered a dominant paradigm, older modernisation paradigms have not been completely displaced. While, in 1976, as Waisbord (2008) points out, even Everett Rogers, the most prominent proponent of the diffusion paradigm, recognised the limitations of diffusionism and the importance of an approach that foregrounds community participation (Rogers, 1976), in his review of recent trends in empirical research on C4D, Inagaki (2007) shows that the modernisation paradigm and diffusion approach have a persistent influence.

Over time, the idea that communication is about meanings and about processes, rather than about the transmission of messages, has concretised, even if it is yet to be as widely or fully practiced as generally thought (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998; Inagaki, 2007). A participatory communication approach is highly complementary to a human development approach, as it promotes horizontal and participatory models of development rather than vertical, one-way, top down, or trickle down models, more suited to modernisation and growth theories of development (Servaes, 2008; Waisbord, 2001). Modernisation and diffusion models of development and of development communication are generally considered to be outdated (Servaes, 2008; Waisbord, 2001, 2008), and yet they still appear in practice (Inagaki, 2007). One of the UN Focal Points for the Resource Pack project said that 'academics are 10 years ahead of us – what they know; only about 10% of it is applied by us – we simply don't have the tools to *apply* it'. Balit suggests that while C4D practitioners have reached a common understanding on the *principles* governing their discipline, it is a 'soft and social science that has to do with listening, building trust and respecting local cultures – not easy concepts to understand for policy makers and program managers with a background in hard sciences' (Balit, 2010a: 5).

Balit (2010a) also suggests that there are power issues at stake and that enabling full and direct participation challenges entrenched power structures. Participation in development is considered by some as a false participation, a buzz word, rhetoric, incompatible with procedures and goals of aid organisations, a threat to those in positions of power (Bailur, 2007; Balit, 2010a; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 1998; Leal, 2007; McKee, 1992; White, 1996).

And yet, dialogue, debate, the two-way flows of information, and the co-creation of knowledge are regularly put forward as important pieces of the development jigsaw, and intrinsic to the idea of participatory development – as evidenced in the processes promoted for the development of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the World Bank's insistence that the strategic use of communication tools and concepts is essential to its success.[5] This acknowledges a move away – in rhetoric at least – from vertical models of communication for development to horizontal models; in other words, a shift from sending messages to providing an opportunity for people to engage in dialogue, share knowledge and ask questions, which, coincidentally, the 'new communications environment' is ideally able to facilitate (Deane, 2004).

At our consultation meetings in New York, there was felt to be a need to stress the following two particular aspects of C4D:

1. Participation in C4D refers to engagement with various stakeholders at all points of a development process. Indeed, C4D can be demonstrated to be a mechanism for achieving the levels of participation that development more broadly strives and often struggles to achieve (Tacchi, 2009)
2. Participatory approaches to development, to C4D, and to R, M&E inevitably brings up issues of power. It is important in C4D to recognise this, and to be alert to power dynamics. Successful C4D will always, to some extent, involve challenging power structures. This is because it depends on actively engaging a range of people, not only encouraging everyone to have an equal voice, but also encouraging active listening across difference (O'Donnell et al., 2009).

Defining C4D in the UN

Understanding of and support for C4D across UN agencies varies (see below discussion on institutionalisation). For one of our Focal Point respondents, C4D in her agency context 'is neither institutionalised, nor an accepted practice'. Rather a few people are interested in C4D in [X agency], and to her mind, 'some of it is just plain common sense. But it is not embedded in given programmes or resources in the same way as it is, for example, in [Y agency].' It is important to recognise that different UN agencies take different approaches to C4D, as one Focal Point explained, 'C4D should not have one specific approach in the UN – otherwise agencies would be obstacles to each other… in each case the approach will relate to their particular mandate, and each has their own mandate'. Servaes (2007) also questions the objective of a common UN approach on C4D, in part because of their different mandates.

In preparation for the 11th Round Table, Puddephatt et al. (2009) described C4D under two headings: one-to-many, or diffusion communication; and, two-way, or participatory communication. They add

[5] http://go.worldbank.org/5MCV3J87S0. Unsurprisingly to C4D academics and practitioners, PRSPs have been criticised for reinforcing existing structures and politics of representation (see Gould, 2005).

that the former approach does not preclude, and is in fact often enriched, by the second approach. Servaes agrees that the various approaches used in UN agencies can be grouped into either diffusionist or participatory models of C4D, but that since the underlying theories and consequences are rarely considered, 'many approaches contain references to both diffusionist and participatory perspectives in obvious contradictory and illogical ways', which has been described as 'participatory diffusion or semantic confusion' (Servaes, 2007: 489). Waisbord (2001) examines cases where these two approaches are brought together, and while not wanting to pass judgment, he acknowledges that 'The fundamental issue continues to be that definitions of the problem are different, and expectedly, theories, strategies and techniques still offer essentially opposite analyses and recommendations' (Waisbord, 2001: 28).

This approach to C4D was also considered problematic by some of the Expert Panel for the Resource Pack project, since it draws together two essentially contradictory approaches, which presents an overly cautious statement about C4D, and results in inappropriate compromises. The UN resolution 51/172 (1997) gives a clear but broad ranging definition, which includes support for two-way communication systems that enable dialogue, 'allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development'. There is concern that decision makers within the UN fail to understand this aspect of C4D. At the same time, a UN respondent was keen to point out that while it is 'good to give parameters to decide what C4D means across the UN', it is very important that no single definition dominates.

While the 10th Round Table set out to develop a common approach to C4D across the UN (UNESCO, 2007), the emphasis for the 11th Round Table was on the need to institutionalise C4D, to ensure that decision makers understand the importance of communication for development and give it due attention. Participants at the 11th Round Table agreed to work together to produce a document that would describe the diverse approaches to C4D across UN organisations (UNDP, 2009b). *Communication for Development: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the United Nations* (McCall et al., 2010), sets out to explain and explore the main approaches in play across the agencies. It recognises that there is a significant crossover.

The four main 'strands' are described as follows:

- Behaviour Change Communication (BCC)
- Communication for Social Change (CFSC)
- Communication for advocacy
- Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment.

BCC is described as envisioning social and individual change, having evolved from information, education and communication (IEC) programmes, to incorporate greater dialogue and ownership. It is particularly relevant to health-related programmes (see http://www.globalhealthcommunication.org/strategies).

CFSC promotes dialogue through participatory and empowering approaches. It stresses the role of people as change agents, and long-term social change (see Byrne et al., 2005; Figueroa et al., 2002).

Communication for advocacy aims to change governance, power relations, social relations, attitudes and institutions. Ongoing advocacy seeks to build enabling environments for positive change (see Morariu et al., 2009).

Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment is about capacity building for: 1. a free, independent and pluralistic media; 2. broad access to communication and media channels; 3. a non-discriminating regulatory environment; 4. accountability systems; and 5. freedom of expression and participation in decision making processes (see Media Matters, www.internews.fr/IMG/pdf/Mediamatters.pdf#page=96).

In our survey with UN respondents the most common C4D approach taken by their agencies is Communication for Policy Advocacy (75%), followed by BCC (62.5%). Other approaches were: CFSC, Social Mobilisation and Media Advocacy and Mobilisation. Of the agencies represented, UNICEF and the World Bank appear to take the broadest range of C4D approaches. In terms of what C4D means, respondents gave a wide range of definitions and meanings of what C4D meant in their own work. The main themes were that C4D is a process that involves participation, community engagement, dialogue, access to knowledge and information, building capacities, and some form of advocacy. It seeks or promotes human rights and change, including behaviour or social change, and involves using communication to achieve development goals.

Survey responses from the Expert Panel were somewhat different, with the most common C4D approach taken by the UN agencies and other organisations that respondents work with being CFSC (84.6%), followed by BCC (61.5%), then Communication for Policy Advocacy (46.2%). Other approaches taken are Social Mobilisation and Media Advocacy and Mobilisation. As with the UN respondents, a wide range of definitions and meanings of what C4D meant were given. The main themes were that C4D involved the use of communication to advance development, it was a process that involves the use of a range of communication tools and methods, dialogue, debate and participation, and sharing ideas, knowledge and skills; it seeks or promotes change, including behaviour or social change, and is a planned, evidence-based process.

The agencies in which the UN Focal Points worked tended to take a more policy-oriented approach to C4D compared with the UN agencies and other organisations that the Expert Panel work with, which appear to make much more use of the more participatory and change-oriented CFSC approach. The responses highlight the range of terminology used, as well as the similarities in the underlying themes or meanings of C4D. Common themes were that C4D involved the use of communication to advance or achieve development; it is a process that involves dialogue, debate and participation, and access to knowledge and information, and seeks or promotes change, including behaviour or social change. However, some of the Expert Panel also commented that C4D involves the use of a range of communication tools and methods and is a planned, evidence-based process, while some UN respondents also noted that C4D involves promoting human rights and capacity building.

Institutionalisation

The 11th United Nations Inter-Agency Roundtable on Communication for Development had a dual and complementary focus – it set out both to explore ways to effectively institutionalise C4D within

the International Development Agenda (Feek & Morry, 2009) and to find ways to demonstrate impact and thereby strengthen C4D's institutional position (Puddephatt et al., 2009).

Feek and Morry conducted a survey and interviews in late 2008 and early 2009 as preparation for the 11th Round Table meeting, which set out to explore the level of 'UN agency understanding, acceptance, and implementation of C4D [or its equivalents] as a central, critical, and core element of their policy frameworks and programming strategies' (Feek & Morry, 2009: 4). Their findings are to some extent echoed in our survey and interviews conducted in mid to late 2010 in relation to the current situation of understanding and institutionalisation of C4D, although this was not the main focus of our survey and interview questions. The message from UN respondents that C4D is undervalued and not well understood in some of the UN agencies was very clear.

Feek and Morry's survey findings included:

- C4D lacks central status in policy, strategy and planning.
- There is a lack of demonstrated impact data.
- There is an inadequate number of skilled C4D staff.
- There is a need to learn across UN agencies, and support each other.
- There is a lack of dedicated funding.
- C4D is supported in some agencies and not in others, and varies across time.
- Corporate communications is prioritised over C4D.

In fact, Feek and Morry's survey from 2008/2009, and the survey that this literature review draws upon, reinforces surveys from 1994 (Fraser & Fjortoft for UNICEF and WHO), 2003 (Ramirez & Quarry for IDRC), and 2006 (Fraser & Restrepo for the World Bank) (cited in Balit, 2010a: 4). Each highlight the recurring problem of decision makers in development organisations not appreciating what C4D means, or its important role in development.

Communication and participation

Current thinking on C4D intrinsically links communication with participation. Both are simultaneously promoted within development agendas and agencies, at least at the rhetorical level, and at the same time, often misrepresented and misunderstood. For one of our Focal Point respondents, 'C4D is based on participatory approaches, it wouldn't be C4D without it, it would be public relations or some other form of communication'.

Communication is on the one hand considered to be marginalised in the development process, the fifth wheel on the cart (Balit, 2010a), not even allocated the importance of the spare tire on the development car (Gumucio Dagron, 2008). Balit (2010a) also notes that communication is absent from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On the other hand, there is recognition that communication needs to be harnessed to achieve the MDGs (UNESCO, 2007), and communication is heralded as a major pillar for development and change. The WCCD, held in Rome in October 2006, produced a set of recommendations to policy makers based on an understanding that communication is a 'major pillar' for development and social change, placing community participation and ownership on the part of the poor and excluded at the heart of communication for development. Among the 'strategic requirements' specified in the *Rome Consensus* are: access to communication tools so that people can communicate amongst themselves and with decision

makers; recognition of the need for different approaches depending on different cultures; and, support to those most affected by development issues to have a say. There is a stress on the need to build capacity for development communication at all levels, from community members to development specialists. It is not to be reduced to public relations or corporate communications, which would fail to appreciate that good communication implies a two-way relationship.

In practice, communication as understood by decision-makers, is often reduced to vertical information delivery, public relations, or dissemination, rather than used for meaningful participation (Balit, 2010a; Gumucio Dagron, 2006; Quarry, 2008). Indeed, a review of the literature commissioned by the World Bank demonstrated that while participatory approaches are 'officially sanctioned' by most of the major development organisations, the remnants of modernisation theory persist (Inagaki, 2007). While C4D, particularly the CFSC approach (see communicationforsocialchange.org; Gray-Felder & Deane, 1999), and participatory development more broadly places dialogue at the centre of development, meaning a participatory engaged relationship which involves valuing voice, recognition and respect, we are still fundamentally lacking an understanding of the information, communication and networking needs and aspirations of people who are marginalized or socially excluded. We need to more effectively listen across difference and inequality (O'Donnell et al., 2009: 423).

Yet the very institutions which excluded communities might usefully try to engage with through communication technologies and activities are often structurally unsuited for listening, and indeed development itself generally positions the poor and marginalised as listeners rather than speakers (receivers rather than senders of messages). The Listening Project, conducted within the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, have held 'listening conversations' with more than 4,500 people since 2005 in aid recipient societies across the globe. These people include ordinary people, community leaders, government officials, civil society and religious leaders, people from education, business, health and NGO sectors. They found that the aid agenda and its systems might be far more effective if 'listening' happened with people on the ground, building relationships at that level. They found that the 'systems of international assistance bias the ways that agencies and aid workers listen and do not listen, what they listen to, where and when they listen, and to whom they listen' (The Listening Project, 2009).

Progressive proponents of C4D consider it a fundamental principle that people on the ground need to be included in development processes at all stages. Communication, understood as a two-way relationship that not only acknowledges the right for people to be heard, but includes prioritising effective listening, and recognising and respecting alternative forms of knowledge, is needed to achieve this (Balit, 2010a; Gumucio Dagron, 2008; Quarry & Ramirez, 2009; Servaes, 2008; Tacchi, forthcoming). Giving people a voice on the kind of scale the World Bank undertook through their consultations with the poor project (more often referred to as Voices of the Poor – see http://go.worldbank.org/H1N8746X10 and Narayan et al., 2000a; Narayan et al., 2000b; Narayan & Petesch, 2002) can be considered a part of such a process – hearing the voices of 60,000 poor people across the world as a consultation exercise on what constitutes poverty has helped us modify our ideas about poverty and development. But in terms of developing effective development programmes and implementation, ongoing participation, dialogue and ownership of the development process and goals is required. Indeed, the voices of the poor project highlights the high importance that people living in poverty place on having a voice, a say in decisions that affect them

(Narayan, 2000a); clearly indicating that 'communication is key and central' to development (Balit, 2010a: 2).

The horizontal and dialogic components in content flows, the essential components of 'communication' (Gumucio Dagron, 2008), are often reduced, in development, to information delivery, or to allowing people to speak but not entirely engaging with them and including them in the processes of development. The participatory approaches that allow dialogue and engagement are often considered costly, to take a lot of time, and difficult to accommodate in well defined development project plans and logframes (Balit, 2010a). Such development planning approaches are considered by some to be an example of the stifling of participation, as they 'reinforce relationships of power and control... [embodying] a linear logic associated with things rather than people' (Chambers & Pettit, 2004: 145), they often do not give space for styles of communication and working that are more appropriate than Western styles, in non-Western contexts (Marsden, 2004). And yet, C4D proponents insist that 'without peoples' participation, no project can be successful and last long enough to support social change' (Gumucio Dagron, 2008: 70), participation and ownership are crucial for sustainability (Quarry & Ramirez, 2009), and, therefore,

> long-term perspectives for participatory communication are not as costly as the failure of expensive projects due to lack of the involvement and ownership on the part of the communities concerned (Balit, 2010a: 7).

C4D and research, monitoring and evaluation

Demonstrating the impact of C4D through research, monitoring and evaluation is a crucial part of moving C4D up the development agenda and achieving the kind of institutionalisation that is desired. One of the recommendations of the *Rome Consensus*, is that C4D programmes 'should be required to identify and include appropriate monitoring and evaluation indicators and methodologies throughout the process' (WCCD, 2003: 3). However, as we discuss further in Section 5, demonstrating the impact of C4D is often much more complex and difficult than for other development initiatives. Another issue identified by many of our UN respondents is that M&E approaches that are suitable for C4D require different skills and frameworks to mainstream and accepted UN evaluation expertise. This is emphasised in the comments of one of the UN Focal Points, who described,

> *A fault line in the UN whereby M&E specialists don't understand the M&E needs of C4D, so we have to get external specialists in. These 'funky' participatory M&E consultants demonstrate impact in interesting ways, but the UN M&E specialists don't recognise their work, findings or approach. We're therefore not able to make this approach more central across the UN.*

It is important, therefore, to demonstrate the rigour of participatory approaches, and to be able to quantify results, using a mixed methods approach to R, M&E. The area where there is most cross-over between the two M&E approaches (mainstream and participatory) is in the area of changing social norms, and this is where this respondent sees the most productive conversations taking place, 'for example, in maternal health, there is recognition that targets won't be met unless we can help to change social norms, and that is where we can get the C4D approach, and participatory M&E approaches on the agenda, because they are otherwise unable to achieve this'. Another UN

respondent echoed the concern that in order to undertake M&E for their C4D work they would need to contract in external evaluators, since they do not have the skills and expertise for participatory style M&E internally, and this is the kind of M&E that she felt was appropriate.

Another respondent stressed the need to locate C4D R, M&E into the results-based management approach (UNDP, 2009c) which is the basis for UN programme planning. C4D can become a broad, supporting strategy with its own outcomes. Currently the way C4D interventions are planned are scattered, and there is a lack of organised knowledge about tools and approaches. Planning is an important part of the process, and all parts of the process need to be monitored and evaluated. Other respondents felt the emphasis in terms of improving capacity to conduct M&E for C4D needs to focus on the methods and tools, and less on planning aspects. However, many respondents agreed on the particular need to demonstrate validity of both C4D itself, and the M&E approaches that are associated with it.

From the survey with the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel, a set of common challenges were identified, such as problems with evaluation design, knowledge of suitable methodology and methods, lack of budget and expertise to undertake M&E of C4D, and unrealistic demands, targets and time frames. The Expert Panel also commented on problems with demonstrating impact, dominant assumptions, 'biases' and a lack of openness of funders and commissioners regarding valid methodologies and methods, lack of planning and foresight, and lack of awareness and knowledge of impact assessment and 'the practical application of different methodologies'.

Both groups suggested more capacity building in R, M&E and the need for advocacy with senior staff and donors about the importance of C4D and appropriate R, M&E.

The Expert Panel also suggested the need for:

- Greater focus on innovative, 'non-dominant' approaches and experimentation.
- More attention to understanding 'the fundamentals of evaluation' and provide 'practical guidance' and simpler information on evaluation.
- Provide sufficient budgets and time for projects.

We discuss these issues in more depth in the remainder of this report.

Conclusion

C4D is widely understood today as a field of knowledge and of practice that uses communication and media in participatory processes of social change. The underlying theories of development communication have changed quite significantly over time. While participatory communication can nowadays be considered a dominant paradigm, older modernisation paradigms have not been completely displaced. Over time, the idea that communication is about meanings and about processes, rather than about the transmission of messages, has concretised.

A participatory communication approach promotes horizontal and participatory models of development rather than vertical, one-way, top down, or trickle down models. While C4D practitioners have reached a common understanding on the *principles* governing their discipline, it is sometimes challenging for policy makers and programme managers schooled in the hard sciences to

understand. Many C4D approaches confuse, or use both vertical and horizontal models, in contradictory ways.

Participation, in C4D, refers to engagement with various stakeholders at all points of a development process, and can be demonstrated to be a mechanism for achieving the levels of participation that development more broadly strives and often struggles to achieve. It inevitably brings up issues of power. It is important in C4D to recognise this, and to be alert to power dynamics. Successful C4D will always, to some extent, involve challenging power structures.

Understanding of and support for C4D across UN agencies varies, with the four main strands understood as:

- Behaviour Change Communication
- Communication for Social Change
- Communication for advocacy
- Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment.

C4D is undervalued and not well understood in some UN agencies. It lacks status in policy and strategy. There is a lack of impact data. There is a persistent problem of decision makers in development organisations not appreciating what C4D means, or its important role in development. Demonstrating the impact of C4D through research, monitoring and evaluation is a crucial part of moving C4D up the development agenda and achieving the kind of institutionalisation that is desired.

4. New thinking and trends in R, M&E and impact assessment

Summary of key findings

- A holistic perspective based on systems and complexity thinking and participatory R, M&E is increasingly seen as important to address complex social problems. Complexity thinking can help us to look at things differently and better understand how and why social change happens.
- Participatory M&E approaches are very appropriate and effective for C4D and have numerous benefits over the long-term. However, there is a lack of investment in these approaches.
- A mixed methods approach to R, M&E can shed light on different issues and can increase the strength and rigour of evaluation and impact assessment findings.
- Research and evaluation needs to consider the gender and power relations inherent in social interactions and organisations, along with local social norms, in order to make interventions more successful and sustainable.
- Evaluation is increasingly seen as an ongoing learning process and an important means of strengthening capacity and improving organisational performance. This requires the development of learning organisations.
- When these alternative approaches to evaluation are used, there is a shift from measuring and proving impacts, towards better understanding and improving programmes.

Introduction

As this report clearly shows, a top-down donor driven approach to R, M&E tends to ignore many significant contextual issues and outcomes through the use of dominant, mainly quantitative-based, evaluation methodologies. This often results in a warped or incomplete picture of the outcomes of C4D interventions. We therefore need to use more appropriate and effective alternative methods for researching and evaluating C4D, based on new thinking in this area.

At a recent meeting which discussed new methods for evaluating social change communication, participants reaffirmed the need to 'focus on approaches and methods that will complement (rather than replace) those that dominate at present, while keeping "bigger picture" issues to the fore and avoiding becoming bogged down in stereotypes and narrower methods-oriented debates of limited value'. They agreed that, to be constructive, 'we have to stay focused on the bigger picture and larger issues, which inform choice of method and approach' (Byrne, 2009b: 6). Similarly, Inagaki (2007: 45) suggests that 'development communication research needs to address the gaps among different methodological paradigms in order to advance more holistic understanding of communication processes in international development settings'. He goes on to argue that: 'The existing division between methodological paradigms must be replaced by constructive dialogues between different approaches so that the empirical evidence generated in the scholarship will achieve greater legitimacy and substance' (Inagaki, 2007: 46). However, concerns have been raised about fundamental incompatibilities between two distinctive trends in M&E: results-based management which is focussed on evaluation for accountability and a flexible approach based on understanding the cultural context of interventions and the differing values and perceptions of local stakeholders, based on evaluation for learning (Cracknell, 2000; Earle, 2002).

This highlights the need to give more consideration to the 'bigger picture' issues in evaluation and new thinking and trends in this field that are likely to be of great benefit to strengthening and improving C4D and the evaluation of C4D. In her overview of new thinking about how the evaluation of social change communication processes can be strengthened, Byrne (2009a: 2) comments:

> Considering gaps and biases in dominant practice has highlighted the value of systemic thinking, complexity thinking (including complex adaptive systems); associated methodologies, such as large-system action research; and more participatory approaches, among others.

Some of these new trends and ways of thinking about research and evaluation and their value for the assessment of C4D programmes will now be considered.

A holistic, systems approach

A holistic perspective based on systems thinking and participatory approaches to R, M&E is increasingly seen as important to address complex social problems (Burns, 2007; Byrne, 2009a and 2009b; Hearn et al., 2009). This type of approach is becoming more widely adopted in the fields of planning and community development as a strategy to facilitate sustainable community and economic development (Hearn et al, 2009: 34) and has significant implications for the evaluation of C4D. Several of these implications have been identified by Byrne (2009a and 2009b) and are discussed below.

Burns (2007: 1) argues that 'a holistic approach to intervention is crucial because complex issues cannot be adequately comprehended in isolation from the wider system of which they are part'. However, he believes that it is not enough to see things holistically, 'effective whole system change has to be underpinned by processes of in-depth inquiry, multi-stakeholder analysis, experimental action and experiential learning, enacted across a wide terrain'. He makes a compelling case for the use of systemic action research to generate action that supports whole system change.

Systemic thinking means '"taking into account the whole", and seeks meaning in the complex patterning of interrelationships between people and groups of people'. This 'highlights dynamics that are not always visible through the scrutiny of individual interactions' (Burns, 2007: 21). Burns sees this as crucial because 'outcomes (positive or negative) will often have more to do with the interrelationships between interacting interventions than the effect of any individual action. Action rarely impacts in a linear way' (Burns, 2007: 21). Byrne (2009a: 2) argues that 'staying focused on the whole draws attention to the deeper, underlying dynamics of social change'.

In contrast to linear, reductionist approaches to policy making and policy implementation which try to isolate variables, a systemic perspective 'tries to understand the relationships between the different elements' and what happens when they combine (Burns, 2007: 29). Hearn et al. (2009: 36) point out that one of the implications of adopting a holistic view 'is a recognition that any explanation of a phenomenon will not be able to point to single causes and effects'.

Examples of this new way of thinking cited by Hearn et al. (2009: 34) are the 'whole systems' approaches to involving the community in sustainable planning and development advocated by Oleari (2000), the 'sustainable livelihood' approach to rural development in South Asia outlined by Rajbhandari (2006) and Rice and Foote's systems approach to communication campaigns for improving health conditions of young children in developing countries (Rice & Foote, 2001).

Complexity thinking

The complexity of human systems is a key concept in new approaches to research and evaluation of development programmes. Lacayo (2006: 23) points out that:

> Contrary to the cause-effect Newtonian paradigm, complexity provides us with the opportunity to look at problems with multiple perspectives, studying the micro and macro issues, and understanding how they are interdependent. So, instead of describing how systems *should* behave, complexity science focuses the analysis on the interdependencies and interrelationships among its elements to describe how systems *actually* behave.

Byrne (2008: 9) suggests that complexity thinking is very significant in the social change communication context since 'it highlights the links between context-specific social processes, standards, norms and values and, therefore, the danger of assuming replicability or scale-up'.

Puntos de Encuentro is a valuable case study of the potential and strengths of adopting a systems and complexity perspective. This initiative is a multi-media social change and feminist movement and organisation in Nicaragua which was 'founded (unconsciously) on principles of complexity' (Byrne, 2009b: 7). In her case study of Puntos, Lacayo (2006: 45) describes the difficulties that emerged in undertaking the impact assessment of the project, based on both donor requirements and their complexity science approach. She highlights the need for 'a supportive social, political, and economic environment ... An environment that encourages alternative thinking, construction of complexity-based indicators, and evaluation methodologies that can test new theoretical propositions that explain rather than justify, understand rather than measure social change processes'. She goes on to highlight the benefits of complexity science for innovative C4D programmes such as Puntos that seek social change:

> [It] can open our mind, and help us to look for different ways to do things; to ask different questions; to get different answers; to try different strategies; and to better understand what does work and what doesn't in each context, but most important, how and why social change happens (Lacayo, 2006: 48).

Rogers (2009: 25) refers to a three-part typology - simple, complicated or complex – that has been found useful in planning and analysing evaluations and is beginning to be drawn upon in the evaluation of development programmes. Lacayo explains that in this typology

> 'Complex' refers to appropriately dynamic and emergent aspects of interventions, which are adaptive and responsive to emerging needs and opportunities. Simple aspects of interventions can be tightly specified and are standardized - for example, a specific product, technique or process. Complicated aspects of interventions have multiple components, are

> part of a larger multi-component intervention, or work differently as part of a larger causal package, for example in particular implementation environments, for particular types of participants, or in conjunction with another intervention. These different aspects of interventions have significant implications for how interventions operate, how we can understand them, and how we can use this understanding.

The use of this typology in an impact evaluation requires considering the multiple paths to achieving impacts and the role of the intervention in achieving the impacts, in relation to the context - i.e. whether the context was favourable or otherwise (Rogers, 2009).

Two Expert Panel members for the Resource Pack project emphasised the value of complexity thinking for the evaluation of C4D projects. One pointed out that this is a 'crucial difference between the thinking behind logical framework analysis and the thinking behind Outcome Mapping'.[6] Echoing arguments made by Burns (2007), he also commented that 'it doesn't make sense to talk about "best" practices, unless you are talking about very simple contexts. C4D interventions are decidedly not "simple"'.

Byrne (2008: 11) points out significant implications of the key features of complex adaptive systems (CAS) for evaluation. She cites Eoyang and Berkas (1998) who state that:

> These principles, consistent with CAS behaviour, shift the focus, tools and techniques of evaluation from the structures, low-dimension, predictable patterns of much of traditional research to more organic and flexible strategies. They also provide more structure and pre-designed rationality than many of the individualistic and constructivist methods of qualitative evaluation. By including a wide range of approaches, CAS methods of evaluation integrate the best of many disciplines and methods that were previously irreconcilable.

A further implication is that the evaluation of programmes 'must match the dynamics of the system to which it is applied' (Eoyang & Berkas, 1998, cited in Byrne, 2008: 10). The complexity, diversity and unpredictability of C4D processes and initiatives also has serious implications for the concept of 'one Theory of Change' for these initiatives, as Byrne (2009b: 6-7) suggests.

Participatory approaches

Participatory forms of R, M&E have been used in the development context for many decades and are widely acknowledged as effective and appropriate in C4D programmes (Balit, 2010b; Byrne, 2009a, 2009b; Hearn et al, 2009; Lennie et al, 2009; Parks et al., 2005; Puddephatt et al., 2009). Indeed, both the UN Focal Points and the Expert Panel we surveyed considered participatory approaches to M&E 'very important' for C4D, with 90% of the UN Focal Points and 79% of the Expert Panel making this assessment. One of the Expert Panel commented:

> *I think there is currently a groundswell of interest in alternatives to mainstream approaches ... They offer numerous strengths and help to complement and balance some of the weaknesses of dominant, more traditional approaches to evaluation, in C4D as elsewhere.*

[6] We discuss these approaches further in Section 7 of this report.

Chambers (2009a: 4) argues that 'we are living in a time of explosive innovation with participatory methodologies, including for monitoring and evaluation'. He points out that 'much of the ... creativity and innovation with participatory methodologies has come and is coming from the South, from Asia, from Latin America, and, notably, from Africa'. The ubiquity and mainstreaming of participatory methods is noted by Leeuw and Vaessen (2009: 31) who suggest that 'Nowadays, participatory methods have become mainstream tools in development in almost every area of policy intervention'.

Puddephatt et al. (2009: 10) highlight the importance of using participatory approaches to M&E of C4D programmes. They comment that the tendency of commonly used approaches to evaluation to focus on quantitative data and statistics 'often fails to provide the depth necessary for understanding more complex C4D initiatives and does not always allow for other unexpected outcomes'. They recommend that 'in the context of promoting dialogue and building capacity towards community empowerment and ownership, C4D initiatives should always aim to include a level of participatory analysis (Puddephatt et al., 2009: 10)

A further rationale for using participatory approaches to evaluation is provided by Byrne (2009a: 3), who suggests that 'contexts of multiple actors and multiple, diverse perspectives and types of knowledge call for participatory approaches'. In a similar vein, Chambers (2009a: 4) explains that 'participatory approaches and methods fit in a paradigm that is pluralist, evolutionary and iterative'. At a recent international conference[7] on impact evaluation for development effectiveness, Chambers (2009b) argued that participatory methods open up more possibilities for impact assessment, in terms of creativity and improvisation; they resonate with complexity science and can express local diversity. He also suggested that participatory methods open us up to learning and being in touch with the community in ways that other methods don't allow. A key theme at this conference was that the development discourse recognises that many partners, drawn from different sectors, contribute to the development of people and communities. Given this increasingly broad range of stakeholders, beneficiaries, and multiple-goals, greater consideration must be given to ways of including their voices in evaluations (Lennie, 2009a). Valuing diversity and difference and taking an inclusive approach to research and evaluation can also enable a more adequate understanding of problems and issues and can provide new insights and understanding of other perspectives (Morgan and Ramirez, 1984, cited in Hearn et al., 2009: 212).

Williams and Iman (2007) highlight the characteristics of complexity theory and systems thinking that have fundamental similarities to participatory monitoring and evaluation. These include:

1. A shift in focus to interrelationships and processes rather than snapshots, which seriously challenges dominant linear explanations of systemic phenomena.
2. An understanding of development as complex, emergent and transformative.
3. A shift to the bigger picture and interconnections, with much focus on boundaries and the values they reflect (cited in Byrne, 2008: 9).

[7] This major conference was entitled: *Perspectives of Impact Evaluation: Approaches to Assessing Development Effectiveness*. It was conducted in Cairo, Egypt from 29 March – 2 April 2009.

The numerous benefits of participatory R, M&E approaches and methodologies that have been identified include:

- Flexibility of the process and responsiveness to changes in the research and organisational contexts.
- Can increase utilisation of evaluation results and recommendations.
- Seen as a way to ensure the quality of an evaluation.
- Can facilitate better decision making, programme improvement and sustainability.
- Provide an effective way of strengthening stakeholder and staff capacities in M&E.
- Can foster a sense of ownership of the evaluation process and the initiative being evaluated.
- Can generate mutual trust and understanding between participants and development of a shared vision and shared understanding of programme objectives.
- Can create more equal partnerships between participants, and through the use of democratic and inclusive processes, can produce various forms of empowerment. (Diaz-Puente et al, 2008; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Forss et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2009; Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Lennie, 2005; Mayoux & Chambers, 2005; Papineau & Kiely, 1996; Parks et al., 2005).

However, from positivist perspectives, questions are still raised about the rigour and validity of these approaches (Chambers, 2008; Parks et al., 2005). Participatory research is essentially a challenge to positivist research paradigms since it is built upon the ideas of democratic practice and transformative relationships (Hall, 1993). Analysis of the online surveys we conducted for the Resource Pack project identified as key challenges the lack of openness of funders and commissioners 'about what constitute appropriate, "rigorous" and "valid" methodologies and methods' and a lack of understanding or appreciation of the newer, more participatory approaches to R, M&E, based on complexity theory and whole systems approaches.

While participatory approaches to M&E are particularly well-suited to C4D programmes, they may appear to cost more than non-participatory approaches and the political will to invest in this is often weak or absent (Parks et al., 2005: 13). There are also issues with the dominance of quantitative approaches and the entrenched use of tools such as the logframe, which are seen by some as incompatible with alternative, participatory approaches to evaluation (Earle, 2002). Therefore, we would suggest that there is a need to take a long-term view of the R., M&E process and the benefits of adopting a participatory, mixed methods approach.

Mixed methods approach to R, M&E

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17) suggest that a mixed methods approach to research is the 'third wave' or 'third research movement', which 'moves past the paradigm wars by offering a logical and practical alternative'. They define mixed methods research as 'the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17). Key features of mixed methods research which they identify include:

- uses the pragmatic method and system of philosophy

- uses induction, deduction, and abduction (uncovering and relying on the best of a set of explanations for understanding results)
- it is an expansive and creative form of research
- it is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, and suggests an eclectic approach to method selection and thinking about and conducting research
- the research question is most fundamental – research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 17-18).

Arguments for the use of multiple methods and triangulation have been put forward for quite some time, 'from convergent/discriminant matrix and unobtrusive research methods to triangulation' (Hearn et al, 2009: 39). Triangulation is the process of combining multiple methods and perspectives with various types of data sources in order to cross-check the results of R, M&E. It can also mean using several different researchers or evaluators (Patton, 2002). Bamberger et al. (2006: 27) suggest that triangulation offers the following advantages:

1. Increases the validity of conclusions by providing two or more independent estimates of key indicators.
2. Permits the researcher/evaluator to draw on the widest possible range of research and evaluation methods and tools.
3. Permits a deeper and richer analysis and interpretation of the programme's results and its context, lending greater rigor to the research process.

Bamberger et al. (2010) make a compelling case for using mixed methods in the monitoring and evaluation of international development programmes. In their critique of quantitatively oriented development economists and researchers, Bamberger et al. (2010: 2) point out that:

> By restricting themselves to the econometric analysis of survey data, development economists are boxed into a Cartesian trap: the questions they ask are constrained by the limitations inherent in the process by which quantitative data from closed-ended questions in surveys are collected (Rao & Woolcock, 2003). As such, they are limited in their ability to ask important questions about the social, cultural and political context within which development problems are embedded ... A related criticism ... is that many kinds of econometric analysis fail to examine what actually happens during the process of project implementation ... and consequently are unable to determine the extent to which failure to achieve intended impacts is due to "design failure" or to "implementation failure". In other words, their research questions are being shaped by their data instead of their data by the questions. A strong case can be made that such questions require a more eclectic approach to data, one that mixes participation, observation, the analysis of text-based information ... free-ranging open-ended interviews with key informants and focus groups, and other such types of information that can be loosely called "qualitative data".

While Bamberger et al. (2010) are referring to the international development context in general, their arguments can equally be applied to the limitations that result from a heavy reliance on quantitative survey data in the evaluation of many C4D programmes. Balit (2010b: 1) points out that quantitative approaches predominate in evaluating C4D programmes 'since decision makers in development institutions are usually hard scientists and demand evidence of results and cost

effectiveness based on numbers and statistics'. Findings from our survey showed that quantitative survey-based methodologies were one of the most frequently used methodologies in the evaluation of C4D programmes within the agencies of our UN respondents. Eighty percent of UN respondents indicated that quantitative survey-based methodologies were 'often' used by their agency, along with various qualitative, participatory and mixed methods approaches.

Bamberger et al. highlight a number of challenges that face evaluators who want to use a mixed methods approach in international development projects:

> A first challenge is the fact that mixed methods have been the evaluation design of choice for many development agencies for many years. However, many of these evaluations used somewhat ad hoc approaches and most do not apply the kinds of methodological and conceptual rigor that is required by academic journals such as the Journal of Mixed Method Research. So the mixed method approach is not new per se, but the professional, financial and other resources have usually not been available to increase methodological rigor (Bamberger et al., 2010: 23)

A pragmatic, mixed methods approach to social research and evaluation often results in superior research compared with mono-method research (Bamberger et al., 2010; Greene, 2002; Greene & Caracelli, 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A key theme at a recent international conference on impact evaluation for development effectiveness was the need to use flexible, multi-disciplinary frameworks and methods that enable people to learn from each other, along with a culturally appropriate, mixed methods approach (Lennie, 2009a). In their book *Action Research and New Media*, Hearn et al. (2009: 40) point out that a key feature of the action research approach is its methodological pluralism. However, they explain that:

> What brings different approaches together in a meaningful way is the guidance offered by the principles we have outlined here in formulating the inquiry and the design process. In particular, the guiding underlying principle is that action research is always cyclical, with all action able to be evaluated. That is, action research learns from itself.

It is increasingly acknowledged that, among many benefits, an appropriate combination of complementary methods will shed light on different issues and increase the strength and rigour of evaluation and impact assessment findings (Bamberger et al., 2010; Byrne, 2009a; Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Lennie, 2006; Puddephatt et al., 2009; White, 2009). Byrne (2009a: 3) calls for approaches to the evaluation of social change communication programmes that adopt an 'ethos of complementarities and triangulation', recognising that different approaches are suitable for different issues'. Puddephatt et al. (2009; 12) highlight the value of using a mixed methods approach in the evaluation of C4D programmes:

> Where more traditional, quantitative evaluation techniques fail to appreciate the increasingly complex nature of many development initiatives, [participatory] methods focus on innovative ways to assess less tangible outcomes alongside the principal objective and often use more qualitative analyses. There is some difference of opinion as to the value of quantitative against qualitative data, but increasingly there are calls for an appropriate combination of both. In terms of statistical evidence and securing funding from donors there is still a preference for "hard" data produced from standard, quantitative evaluation

techniques. As with the approaches to C4D themselves, these modes of M&E should not be seen as mutually exclusive, nor as rigidly defined in every case, rather as a complementary set of methods that can be adapted and when used in the right combination can provide a suitable strategy for pragmatic evaluation and clear reporting.

A good example of the need to use a mixed methods approach was identified in a review of published studies of C4D impacts which found that 'the evaluations using quantitative methods and those investigating vertical communication strategies did not, or failed to, capture project failures caused by power inequality' (Inagaki, 2007: 45). We outline a range of other benefits of adopting a mixed methods approach in Section 7 of this report. In evaluating C4D, we need to keep in mind that different C4D approaches and interventions will have different R, M&E requirements.

Focus on power relations, gender and social norms

Many contemporary and participatory approaches to R, M&E openly acknowledge and take into account the gender and power relations that are an inherent part of social interactions and organisations, as well as the political nature of research and evaluation practices (Burns, 2007; Gosling & Edwards, 2003; Hearn et al, 2009; Lennie, 2005, 2009b; Martin, 1996; Mertens & Chilisa, 2009; Tacchi et al., 2010). Burns (2007: 39) makes the important point that 'change emerges from the spaces in between, in the interrelationships and in the discussion, and it is mediated by complex power relations'. In a recent international workshop on mixed methods and social transformation, Mertens and Chilisa (2009) argued that we need to recognise power differentials between those involved in evaluations and to ask 'Whose version of reality is being privileged?' They suggested that using mixed methods allows dialogue to begin the research process. This would include asking question such as: Who do I need to involve?, How do I involve them? Whose values do I represent? These issues clearly have significant implications for the way in which R, M&E of C4D is conducted and the extent to which the processes used are inclusive and empowering or otherwise.

One of the implications of this approach is that, rather than take an idealistic view that assumes that all participants in a participatory M&E project are the same and equal, it is more useful to openly acknowledge the differences between those involved, particularly those related to gender, power and knowledge (Hearn et al., 2009: 37). Lennie (2005: 410) found that a participatory evaluation capacity building project she evaluated had a number of unintended and disempowering impacts due to 'inequalities in power and knowledge, the different values and agendas of the participants and researchers, the pre-existing relationships and networks within the communities, and other complex issues'. In addition, a review of published studies on the impact of C4D initiatives found that 'the issue of power is a common cause of unsuccessful outcomes in these interventions; power imbalances in political, economic, occupational and gender domains created blockages to communication across social boundaries' (Inagaki, 2007: 40).

Gosling and Edwards (2003: 33) point out that 'the full participation of women is a fundamental principle for any development programme. However, this principle is often difficult to put into practice because of inequalities between genders in many cultures and societies'. Clearly, the monitoring and evaluation of C4D and other development programmes requires a high level of awareness of gender issues, given that the improvement of women's status 'is essential if we are to move the world towards a better life for all individuals' (Mongella, 1995: 121). Indeed, successive UN

conferences have 'repeatedly articulated the pivotal role and needs of women' (Mongella, 1995: 121) and many of the MDGs are aimed at improving the wellbeing and opportunities of women and girls. However, Cornwall (2000: 1) argues for the need to rethink the concept of 'gender' and more directly address 'the issues of power and powerlessness that lie at the heart of both Gender and Development (GAD) and participatory development'.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power has underpinned a considerable amount of contemporary systems thinking (Burns, 2007: 36) and has been drawn on by many social science and feminist researchers (Lennie, 2009b). This approach sees power as 'constantly in motion, multi-directional and systemic in patterning' (Burns, 2007: 36). From this perspective, power is something that exists in action, in a network of interconnected relations. It is enacted in everyday social practices, rather than wielded by powerful groups such as corporations or large institutions. Foucault's work shows 'how objects of knowledge are not natural, but are ordered or constructed by discourses which determine what is "seeable and sayable"' (Jennings & Graham, 1996: 171). This power-knowledge nexus highlights the power relations that are enacted in all interactions, whether those involved have an emancipatory intent or otherwise (Lennie, 2009b). In this framework, power is intimately connected to knowledge, including the technical knowledge of specialists and the tacit knowledge of community members or workers (Hearn et al., 2009).

In this conceptualisation, power is seen as embodied in social hegemonies that constitute social norms – 'the attitudes and behaviours that people regard as normal for their peer group' (Burns, 2007: 35). Burns (2007: 36) highlights the urgent need to 'radically refocus attention on the importance of local social norms', and suggests that if interventions do not attend to local social norms, 'many policy initiatives will fail to win community support, rendering them unsustainable'. This has major implications for C4D programmes that aim to change harmful social and cultural practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation and prevent the spread of significant health problems such as HIV/AIDS. Burns (2007: 38-39) suggests that while top-down interventions focussed on public health issues have had very mixed results, 'systemic action research offers the opportunity to develop bottom up interventions in relation to local social norms'.

Development of learning cultures

In the current era of rapid change, evaluation is increasingly seen as an ongoing learning process and an important means of strengthening capacity and improving organisational performance (Morariu et al., 2009; Horton et al., 2003: 7). This is due to the need for people and organisations to engage in ongoing learning and to adapt to changing conditions. It is now recognised that the process of participating in an evaluation can often result in positive changes to an organisation, including to its capacity, processes and culture (Diaz-Puente et al., 2008; Horton et al., 2003; Patton, 1998).

A 'pedagogical' approach to evaluation entails a teaching and learning process, one that is 'more about learning than judging; more about participants becoming critically aware of their own positions on issues and developing an understanding and appreciation of new and different perspectives. … This learning process is made possible by dialogues of several kinds' (Schwandt, 2001, in Byrne, 2008: 14-15).

Souter (2008: 181) suggests that impact assessment, 'above all ... requires an honest and self-critical approach and a learning culture with good and trusting relations between partners'. Likewise, Gosling and Edwards (2003: 20) suggest that one ingredient for a successful evaluation with a specific implementing partner is that 'both the implementer and funder are 'learning organisations'. However, Cracknell (2000) and Earle (2002) have identified basic incompatibilities between the aims of accountability and lesson learning from evaluation. In addition, the development of a learning culture requires the active support, leadership and involvement of senior management within organisations, an openness to critical reflection and learning from the things that did not work, then putting these learnings into practice (Forss et al, 2006; Taut, 2007). However, moving to this kind of learning culture in the current context of results-based management is seen by some as problematic (Chambers & Petit, 2004; Earle, 2002).

A shift from 'proving' to 'improving'

Sankar and Williams (2007: 1) make the important point that the increasing emphasis on 'proving' the impact of programmes

> can undermine and sometimes even distract from program delivery efforts, where a focus on 'improving' could be more meaningful. It is not easy to design evaluations that both 'prove' and 'improve'. Also can an overemphasis on impact limit options for innovation and gradual achievement of sustainable results?

When the evaluation of development initiatives is underpinned by a holistic perspective based on meaningful participation, critical reflection and learning, there is a shift away from '*measuring* and "*proving"*, towards *understanding* and *improving',* as Byrne (2008: 9) points out. In this context, *progress towards long-term social change* and *the contribution being made* is increasingly considered a more realistic measure of effectiveness (Byrne, 2008: 9). This shift from proving to improving is exemplified by the emergence of relatively new planning and M&E methodologies such as Outcome Mapping, which focuses on constant improvement, understanding and the creation of knowledge, rather than on proving, reporting and taking credit for results (Earl et al., 2001).

Similarly, Mayoux and Chambers (2005: 273) explain that the new impact assessment agenda of pro-poor development has moved from a focus on 'proving impact' to 'improving practice'. This means that 'simple "rigorous" measurement of before and after situations for random samples with control groups is now rarely sufficient. It requires producing more credible practical recommendations and thinking about how they can be implemented, that is, the policy and practical impact of impact assessment itself'. This implies

> new questions to include the priorities of very poor people, looking in detail at differences between the experience of specific groups of poor people and crucially going from questions about what is happening to whom, to questions of causality and attribution and the implications for future change. Moreover the new agenda requires not only new questions, but new processes and methods because poor people themselves are now central actors at all stages of the assessment process (p.274).

Mayoux and Chambers, (2005: 292) outline the key principles of the new paradigm of impact assessment:

- Prioritises the voices, views and interests of poor women and men, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.
- Involves these people throughout the process of impact assessment from indicators, to representation in sampling to analysis and recommendations.
- Ensures that the vulnerability of those most vulnerable is not increased.
- Increases the skills, knowledge and networks of poor people and communities as part of the assessment process.

These principles and others were drawn on to identify principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D which were set out in Section 2 of this report.

Conclusion

There is a need to consider bigger picture issues and new thinking and trends in R, M&E and impact assessment that can strengthen and improve both C4D initiatives and the evaluation of C4D. A holistic perspective based on complexity and systems thinking and participatory approaches to R, M&E was seen as important to address the type of complex social problems that C4D aims to address. This is crucial because these issues cannot be understood in isolation from the wider context and system of which they are part. Complexity thinking is very significant for C4D since it highlights the links between context-specific social processes, norms and values and can help us look at things differently and better understand how and why social change happens.

Participatory approaches to R, M&E have been shown, over many decades, to be very appropriate and effective for C4D. However, the political will to invest in these approaches is often weak or absent, since they tend to be perceived as too time consuming and costly. A long-term perspective is required in relation to the use of participatory methodologies, given their numerous benefits, including flexibility of the process, increased ownership of the evaluation, better utilisation of evaluation results and recommendations, and strengthened evaluation capacities.

A pragmatic, mixed methods approach to research and evaluation was argued to often result in superior research. An appropriate combination of complementary methods can shed light on different issues and increase the strength and rigour of evaluation and impact assessment findings. However, research and evaluation needs to consider the gender and power relations that are inherent in all social interactions and organisations and to attend to local social norms in order to make interventions more successful and sustainable.

Evaluation is increasingly seen as an ongoing learning process and an important means of strengthening capacity and improving organisational performance. Successful evaluation is associated with the development of learning organisations. This requires the active support and leadership of senior management, and an organisational culture that is open to critical reflection and learning from things that did not work, and then puts these learnings into practice.

When these alternative approaches to evaluation are used, there is a shift away from measuring and proving impacts, towards better understanding and improving programmes. This new approach

requires impact assessment to include the development of practical recommendations and effective ways of implementing them, taking the views, needs and interests of community members, especially the poor and vulnerable, into account.

5. Challenges, issues and strategies

Summary of key findings

- The many wider contextual, structural and communication-related challenges, issues and barriers related to C4D and R, M&E of C4D require more consideration.
- There are also significant country level and institutional challenges, including lack of coordination between head office and field staff, and confusion about the meaning of C4D.
- The assumptions, attitudes and policies of funders and management can result in lack of appreciation, funding and support for C4D and innovative evaluation practices, and problems with effectively applying participatory processes.
- Numerous challenges were identified in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D, including lack of time, funding and resources, low levels of capacity, weak planning and design, and the dominance of quantitative methodologies. Similar challenges were identified in assessing the impacts of C4D. Other challenges for impact assessment included demonstrating and attributing impacts, unrealistic demands, targets and time frames, poor baseline data, and facilitating stakeholder participation in all stages of the evaluation.
- Strategies to overcome these challenges included: advocacy with UN and other organisations and donors, identifying creative and innovative R, M&E approaches and examples, providing sufficient budgets and time, long-term capacity development and institutionalisation, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and encouraging open sharing of all findings.

Introduction

In this section we outline some of the many complex challenges and issues surrounding the evaluation of C4D and suggest some strategies that aim to overcome these challenges and issues.[8] As well as reviewing relevant literature, we have extensively drawn on our consultations and findings from a survey of UN Focal Points and Expert Panel members who collaborated in this project.

Wider contextual and structural challenges and issues

Many complex social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and technological factors and barriers (including issues related to gender inequality and power relations) affect the sustainability and success of C4D and other development programmes and the evaluation of these programmes. Balit (2010a: 6) points out that both development and communication are basically political and this is why 'political will to put into practice on the part of governments and local authorities is often lacking. After all, enabling poor communities to participate directly challenges existing power structures'.

Byrne (2009a: 5) argues that 'impacts of the wider environment in which any evaluation takes place need to be better appreciated'. Similarly, Inagaki (2007: 44) emphasises the need for 'academic research in development communication ... to engage more fully with larger structural issues that

[8] Our consultations indicated that the challenges set out in this section are not just C4D related, they are across the board and also apply to areas such as early childhood development.

may not be adequately addressed in project evaluations conducted as part of individual assistance projects'. He notes the existence of 'a peculiar disjuncture between empirical research and critical theoretical discourses, at least among the empirical studies published in the mainstream development studies journals' and comments that

> Such a disjuncture may put the legitimacy of the scholarship into question. If reduced to purely instrumental research interests, academic research will lose its authenticity as a voice questioning fundamental development problems such as racism, structural poverty, political economy of malnutrition and diseases, commercial exploitation of indigenous and natural resources, and international conflicts (Inagaki, 2007: 44).

Another factor is that many C4D and Information and Communications for Development (ICD) initiatives are implemented in an information and communication context which is changing very rapidly. Souter (2008: 179) states that

> by the time that a (say) three-year initiative has been completed, the technology originally used has become obsolete, or at least would no longer be the most appropriate for deployment ... At the same time, changes in the availability and use of ICTs within target communities are most likely to suggest a very different approach to facilitating access and use than occurred at project initiation.

Various issues related to access to communication and information technologies clearly affect the outcomes of C4D programmes and their evaluation, especially if methods are used that employ ICTs such as online surveys or multimedia.

In addition, in many developing countries there are specific problems associated with geographic, communication and cultural barriers and local political issues that can significantly affect communication among stakeholders and evaluators and travel to research sites, making field research and data collection more time consuming and difficult. For example, Lennie et al. (2009) have described major communication and travel problems that arose in the four year *Assessing Communication for Social Change* project in Nepal that involved developing a participatory impact assessment methodology for C4D programmes. These problems were due to the wide cultural and linguistic diversity in the country, internet access being fairly limited outside the Kathmandu Valley, and the country's high mountain terrain and poor roads. In addition, ongoing political instability and discontent in the country frequently involved strikes that included disruptions to the transport network. These communication and travel problems greatly affected field research work and capacity development activities conducted as part of the project, which involved a network of community researchers and M&E staff in Equal Access Nepal, a development communication NGO.

Country and institutional level challenges

In a recent paper, Balit outlines a number of significant obstacles that affect the development and implementation of the UN's recently developed C4D advocacy strategy, including its M&E and capacity development strategies. She points out that the concept of C4D is a social process based on dialogue, it is a 'soft and social science that has to do with listening, building trust and respecting local cultures - not easy concepts to understand for policy makers and programme managers with a

background in hard sciences' (Balit, 2010a: 4). As we noted in Section 4, this means that quantitative approaches predominate. However, the problem is that 'counting and hard data cannot truly capture the complexity of social change processes over longer periods of time' (Balit, 2010b: 2). Our consultations found that there is an emphasis in some UN agencies on the use of quantitative approaches which are unlikely to provide the most meaningful and useful data on C4D impacts. One of the Expert Panel also noted that:

> *A key issue underlying the challenges and difficulties is that the M&E of C4D (like much other development) is typically approached in a vertical, non-integrated manner, rather than being an integral part of programmes. An add on, for "M&E experts". This reinforces the tendency towards top-down, "expert driven" approaches and actively works against participatory approaches (skills for which the former do not typically have).*

A further obstacle identified by Balit is that many C4D units are still located in corporate communication and external relations departments. While some policy makers understand the advantage of using C4D 'they tend to be interested only in producing messages to disseminate information and tell people what to do, rather than listening and giving people a voice'. Balit suggests that 'eliminating the confusion between communication for development, publicity and corporate communication is essential for the correct understanding of the discipline' (Balit, 2010a: 5).

Balit also points out that

> Countries that foster dialogue, debate and inclusion while encouraging free and open media are more likely to engage in participatory communication practices than more centrally controlled countries and authoritarian governments. The whole notion of good governance, transparency and accountability is political and depends on the willingness of those in power to share knowledge and information with citizens and civil society (Balit, 2010a: 6).

Again, this has significant implications for the effective use of participatory evaluation methods that are more congruent with the underlying ethos of C4D.

Many organisational challenges also affect the sustainability and effectiveness of R, M&E of C4D. One of the challenges in planning and conducting R, M&E of C4D programmes identified by an Expert Panel member was 'The lack of co-ordination between central HQ policy staff who want evaluations and field staff for whom evaluation is an irritation'. Puddephatt et al. (2009) also highlight the need for greater coordination of C4D programmes and continual strengthening of country capacity. Our consultations emphasised the need for a long-term, sustained focus on capacity development in R, M&E for staff at all levels. However, our consultations also suggested that without the understanding, funding, support and commitment of senior UN managers and donors, improvements to capacity and moves towards greater use of more innovative and participatory approaches and methods are likely to be less successful.

Attitudes and policies of funders and management

As we have already noted, a key challenge identified in our online survey was that senior managers and funders were seen as lacking an appreciation of the value and importance of C4D and R, M&E and often did not support more innovative or participatory approaches. One Expert Panel respondent listed the following as a key challenge in planning and conducting R, M&E of C4D programmes:

> *The assumptions and biases of funders/those commissioning research and evaluation, combined with a lack of openness to less mainstream, more innovative, less prescriptive and predictable approaches. Both conceptually and in terms of resourcing these processes, an unquestioning "more of the same" is all too commonplace, regardless of the suitability and fit with the aims of and values underlying the particular programme involved.*

As we highlight below, such assumptions and attitudes appear to be reflected in the lack of adequate funding and resources provided for R, M&E of C4D. Byrne (2008: 4) highlights difficulties with funding innovative evaluation practice in the C4D area and the frustrations of many at the field level with having to fit their achievements into externally imposed 'SMART' objectives and indicator tables like logframes. Guijt (2007) suggests that 'In practical terms, donors need to rethink the principles on which they base their models of evaluation and learning' (cited by Byrne, 2008: 6). Balit also points to the problem of applying participatory processes within the rigid timeframes of logframes and results-based management: 'Participatory processes will upset the well defined plan. Donors want quick results. Thus it is easier to implement an information campaign than develop a long-term communication process with the local people' (Balit, 2010a: 7).

Souter (2008: 181) argues that impact assessment of ICD programmes requires 'sustained commitment on the part of implementing agencies, from project design through to project completion *and beyond*'. He suggests that donors also need to understand and be willing to recognise 'that unexpected and even negative impacts need to be identified and understood; and that impact assessment is not about validation of past decisions but about the improvement of those that will be made in future' (Souter, 2008: 181). One of the challenges identified by Puddephatt et al. (2009) was the tendency for R,M&E studies to be published that report on successful initiatives rather than those which have been less successful but could provide valuable learnings, and a lack of reporting on the long-term effects of communication programmes.

Challenges in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D

Our online survey identified a wide range of challenges in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D programmes, some of which have already been identified in this literature review.[9] Five

[9] The survey for UN Focal Points asked respondents to name, in order of importance, with the most important first, up to four challenges that they face in conceptualising, outsourcing and managing R, M&E in their C4D programmes. A similar question was asked in the survey for Expert Panel members about challenges that they face in planning and conducting R, M&E of C4D programmes.

of the UN Focal Points and 12 of the Expert Panel listed challenges in these areas.[10] Results from these survey responses are summarised below.

Lack of sufficient funding and resources for R, M&E: Four UN respondents listed as either their second or third most important challenge 'low priority of funding for R, M&E', 'appropriate funding', 'inadequate resources for M&E' or 'lack of resources, which could be addressed partially by applying a "percentage" system to all programme sectors'. Ten Expert Panel respondents listed lack of funding or resources for various aspects of R, M&E as a challenge. One respondent nominated 'Insufficient time and budget for research, monitoring and evaluation' as their most important challenge, six listed this as their second most important challenge, three said it was their third most important challenge, while one listed it as their fourth most important challenge. Comments on this from the Expert Panel included:

> *Resources needed for research, if available (which they are usually not) would be disproportionate to the scale of the project/programme.*
>
> *Under resourcing the effort, expecting impact results from what is really just "a drop in the ocean" case study.*
>
> *The second most important challenge is to convince the contractor that it also takes money to do it well. A fixed percentage of budgets should be allocated to research, monitoring and evaluation from the design phase, instead of adding the activity at the end and looking for funding when the project or programme funds are already exhausted.*

This issue appears to be related to the lack of appreciation and understanding of the value and importance of C4D and R, M&E. Another factor is that participatory approaches to R, M&E can take more time and resources to do well compared with other approaches. Leeuw and Vaessen (2009: 32) comment that 'in general, the higher degree of participation, the more costly and difficult it is to set up the impact evaluation'. However, if issues of capacity development, local ownership and sustainability could be costed or factored in, participatory approaches would be seen to offer value for money as well as having other strengths.

Low capacity, skills or awareness: All of the UN Focal Points who responded to this question listed challenges related to low levels of capacity, understanding or awareness or 'limitation of staff's skills'. They were listed as either the first or second most important challenge in conceptualising, outsourcing and managing R, M&E of C4D programmes. Two respondents also listed lack of 'availability of skilled resource persons' within their agency while another listed as her second most important challenge: 'Uneven understanding of behaviour and social change'. Two respondents to the Expert Panel survey listed weak expertise or capacity as their second most important challenge while another listed 'Few skilled practitioners in many countries to conduct R,M&E' as their third most important challenge. Comments on this were:

> *Weak or non-existent expertise of personnel within the national agency(ies) with whom the UN agency is working.*

[10] Twelve of the Expert Panel respondents named one challenge, 11 named two challenges, nine named three challenges, and seven named four challenges.

Weak capacity for research and evaluation, especially at organisational levels, and inadequate resources to strengthen capacity at all levels, over a realistic timeframe.

Problems with objectives, indicators, lack of baseline data and results expected: Six Expert Panel respondents listed problems in these areas while one of the UN Focal Points named 'Weak design of indicators, baseline information, and conceptual approach to assessing impact at start of implementation' as their second top challenge. The top challenges for two Expert Panel respondents were: 'Lack of clarity about objectives for the commissioned research, monitoring and evaluation', and the 'diffuse, long-term and hard-to-measure results expected from our projects and programmes'. The second most important challenge of another respondent was: 'Indicators for some aspects of C4D programming are not well defined or understood', while another listed as their fourth most important challenge indicators being 'too difficult for field or local staff to apply'. A further challenge is that a 'culture of measurable indicators and baseline information is not widespread in the C4D NGO sector' and that 'baseline data are lacking and often C4D components are not programmed explicitly which limit their evaluability'.

Lack of importance of R, M&E: Two of the Expert Panel respondents named a lack of appreciation of the value and importance of R, M&E as the most important challenge. Comments on this were:

Convincing decision-makers and project managers that R, M&E of C4D is important.

Low level of realisation among partners of importance and value of RME for C4D.

In addition, one of the UN Focal Points listed the following as their fourth most important challenge:

Lack of interest among programme staff, governments, other stakeholders in activities and use of evaluation results.

Insufficient time: A related issue was a lack of appreciation of the time required for effective R, M&E and pressure to 'prove' results within a certain timeframe. One UN respondent listed her most important challenge as 'Finding the time to design evaluations for diverse programmes, where each requires specialised analysis' , while another's third most important challenge was: 'Time constraints vis-à-vis project duration'. In addition, an Expert Panel respondent commented: 'The most important challenge is convincing the contractor that research, monitoring and evaluation are processes that take time, and they are not just quick mechanical operations'. For two other respondents, lack of time to 'get good baseline data' and to 'ensure effective follow-up, over time, to help ensure that capacity is developed in sustainable ways at individual, institutional and collective levels' was their fourth most important challenge. Another commented that 'M&E is very time- and resource-intensive, for everyone involved'.

Poor planning or lack of long-term planning: this is related to weak expertise or capacity in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D programmes, and low levels of understanding and awareness of effective planning of R, M&E. Three Expert Panel respondents listed problems with planning as a challenge. One nominated 'planning' as the top challenge since 'C4D is often an organic process that follows opportunities which means the evaluation needs to flexible

enough to move with a program as it develops without missing opportunities for baselines'. Yet this is not how evaluations are typically approached or designed. Others nominated 'Lack of long-term planning' and 'Poor C4D planning with unclear results' as their second or fourth most important challenge.

Lack of understanding of C4D: Two Expert Panel respondents listed this as their most important challenge. One said there was a 'Poor understanding of C4D concepts, its role and adequate use in programmes', while the other thought there was a 'Lack of understanding of C4D by agencies commissioning research, monitoring and evaluation'.

Attitudes to methods and problems with the evaluation process: One UN respondent listed as her top challenge: 'Emphasis in the organisation on quantitative methodologies and methods'. In addition, three Expert Panel respondents identified various problems and issues related to evaluation methodologies, methods and processes. Challenges listed included:

> *To convince the contractor that quantitative methodologies will not provide the necessary information on how peoples' lives changed. Only qualitative methodologies which allow people to participate and speak can provide quality information about social change.*
>
> *The apparent obsession with methods and tools, to the neglect of deeper, fundamental questions like: Who is the evaluation for? What is it for? Who are the intended users of the evaluation? What are the intended uses? How will the process itself empower those involved and strengthen wider communication for development processes?*
>
> *Too much jargon and mystification of the process, lack of simplicity and lack of clarity about what is being evaluated.*

Other challenges in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D programmes identified in the surveys included:

- Poor documentation of C4D impact through R, M&E in reports, case studies.
- Lack of institutional or corporate guidance.
- Appropriate follow-up and accountability.
- Insufficient support for communication offices.
- Mostly HQs based and donor driven.
- Permanent rotation of personnel.

Challenges in assessing the impacts of C4D

Cracknell (2000: 237) points out that 'despite the obvious need for them, impact studies are still not all that common. This is because they absorb a lot of resources, take time to implement, and need to be conducted in full cooperation with the beneficiary country where the project is located'. While the number of impact evaluations in the development sector has increased since then, our literature review indicates that there is a lack of published reports on high quality impact assessments of C4D. A major study by Inagaki (2007: 43) found that 'the volume of empirical research on the impact of communication for development is not as large as one might expect' while Balit (2010a: 1)

comments that 'only a limited number of [C4D] interventions have been adequately monitored and evaluated'.

Some of the difficulties in demonstrating the impacts of C4D programmes were aptly summarised by an Expert Panel respondent:

> *Impact is a holy grail, it requires considerable funding and effort to gain credible results because communication impact is challenging. It is not counting latrines that have been built, it is about assessing changes in how people think and respond to issues and contexts and this can be impacted by many variables.*

The challenge of attribution

As we have already indicated, there are many problems and issues with demonstrating and attributing impacts of C4D programmes compared with other development initiatives where it can be easier to isolate individual changes in the environment. Souter (2008: 175) suggests that 'an open-minded approach [is needed] to analysis and interpretation of findings, particularly to issues of attribution, aimed at learning from experience'. Balit (2010b: 1) notes that 'cause and communication effect are difficult to measure, and one of the most serious obstacles to evaluating communication activities'. While some outcomes such as 'empowerment' and 'dialogue' can be difficult to define and measure, Balit (2010b:1) suggests that ' in some cases it may be possible to measure changes in knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and access and use of services'.

Four Expert Panel respondents listed various challenges associated with demonstrating the impact of C4D programmes, attribution or assessment of impact not being 'provided for'. One commented: 'The impact of improving media is a widely-held assumption but very hard to demonstrate'. Another respondent listed 'difficulty of attributing impact in a complex world' as his third most important challenge. A further comment on this issue was:

> *Much of our work is to do with improving processes (eg quality of relationship between journalists and CSOs). Impact of this is likely to be improvement in other processes (eg quality of journalists' research).*

Souter (2008: 162) explains that the challenge of attribution

> stems from the complexity of causality ... In practice, change may well result from a number of factors, either contributing independently or acting upon one another. Different factors in causality maybe more or less important at different times during the project cycle.

This problem is difficult because of the politics of aid which means that implementing agencies are 'often tempted to claim credit for impacts because that is what those they are accountable to want to hear' (Souter, 2008: 162). This issue is emphasised in the study by Inagaki (2007) which found that the majority of evaluations of C4D programmes that they reviewed reported positive impacts. However, as we have noted, it is often more important to understand negative and unexpected impacts and what has not been achieved as this contributes to learning and improvement. Such knowledge also allows 'practitioners and researchers to empirically identify sources of failure' and

can 'feed back into more effective planning and implementation of projects in the future' (Inagaki, 2007: 39). Leeuw and Vaessen (2009: 32) also point out that

> Within the light of the attribution issue, stakeholder perspectives can help improve an evaluator's understanding of the complex reality surrounding causal relationships among interventions and outcomes and impacts. In addition, insight into the multiple and (potentially) contrasting assumptions about causal relationships between an intervention and processes of change can help enrich an evaluator's perspective on the attribution issue.

Parks et al. (2005: 20) suggest that 'the initial CFSC evaluation challenge is to determine how best to measure short-term increases in communication capacity, and in turn, how to attribute this increasing capacity to broad, longer-term social change and more narrowly defined improvements in HIV/AIDS prevention and care'.

Time constraints, unreasonable demands and the 'longitudinal' problem

Souter (2008: 164) argues that, in relation to the 'longitudinal' problem, 'In many ways this is the most difficult of all challenges for impact assessment'. Social change impacts often take a long time to occur. However, our consultations identified that there are often unrealistic demands, targets and time frames for the impact assessment process and donors often want to see results in an unreasonably short time frame.

Time constraints were listed by two UN respondents as either their first or second most important challenge in assessing C4D impacts, while another listed 'Donors wanting to see results in an unreasonably short time frame' as her third most important challenge. In addition, two Expert Panel respondents listed unrealistic demands or targets as their third most important challenge. One commented: 'If donors demand "results", it is hard to link improvements in public knowledge and discourse with actual changes on the ground' while the other challenge was 'Imprecise results and unrealistic targets and dubious indicators (data can't be collected) planned at the beginning'.

Three Expert Panel respondents also mentioned issues with unrealistic time frames. One commented on:

> *Inadequate time and resources to do justice to effort expended, to achievements and to learning potential and interest. This typically accounts for limited follow-up opportunities, including those for collective critical reflection and learning, which should lie at the heart of evaluation processes.*

A related challenge is that 'urgency to implement displaces good M&E'.

Souter (2008: 164) makes the important point that 'if an intervention leads to "lasting and sustainable change", the majority of that change must still lie in the future when project managers are closing the accounts and writing up their notes'. However, impact assessment is usually undertaken immediately after the end of project implementation. Balit (2010b:1) points out that 'donors want visible results within a relatively short timeframe (3 to 5 years) of programmes, while communication processes take much longer to achieve. Inagaki (2007: 41) found that only four of

the 37 published studies on the impact of C4D programmes 'offered any type of insights into the long-term impacts of communication interventions, and even among these studies impacts going beyond the immediate timeframe of the project are discussed through anecdotal accounts rather than systematic analyses'. One of the factors identified by Inagaki (2007: 41) was that

> Most of the project implementation schedules are too short if one tries to gauge long-term impacts during or within the timeframe of the projects. The average length of the projects evaluated in the reviewed studies is two years, and the active project period in a little over half of these projects had lapsed in one year or less.

Parks et al. (2005) suggest that assessment of the impact of CFSC programmes should look at short-term, intermediary and long-term impact. While Skuse (2006: 25) suggests that understanding the behavioural impact of radio programmes is 'notoriously difficult and can only occur over the long-term', he argues that 'there is scope to set interim behaviour change indicators within ICD programmes that can and should be evaluated'. Souter (2008: 164) suggests that the best way of assessing "lasting and sustainable change" is to use longitudinal studies 'undertaken some time (six months, two years, five years) after project closure'. However, he notes that the reluctance of donors to fund such studies is a particular problem in areas like ICD 'where there is no strongly established evidence base of past experience on which to build' (Souter, 2008: 164).

Inadequate funding and resources

A key challenge identified by our online surveys was inadequate funding and resources, including time to undertake impact assessment of C4D programmes. Four UN respondents listed as either their second or third most important challenge: 'low priority of funding for R, M&E', 'appropriate funding', 'inadequate resources for M&E' or 'lack of resources, which could be addressed partially by applying a "percentage" system to all programme sectors'. Lack of budget was also the top challenge for three Expert Panel respondents and the second top for another.

In ICD contexts, Skuse (2006: 25) points out that 'formal impact evaluation places significant transaction costs on ICD practitioners, especially at the community level where financial and technical resources are few'. However, he suggests that 'the challenge for donors is to make evaluation neither complex nor costly, and support the development of easy to use tools that will allow broadcasters to quickly and easily assess the impact of their outputs' (Skuse, 2006: 26).

The challenge of context and participation

As we have previously suggested, a bottom-up approach, which implies a holistic, participatory approach to impact assessment, highlights the importance of taking the social, economic, cultural and political context of C4D programmes and their evaluation into account. Parks et al. (2005) suggest that the results of CFSC programmes must go beyond individual behaviour and consider social norms, current policies, culture and the general development context (Parks et al., 2005: 4).

The participation of project users at all stages of the cycle is increasingly considered crucial to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment of development

interventions (Gosling & Edwards, 2003; Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Puddephatt et al., 2009; Souter, 2008). Gosling and Edwards (2003: 126) argue that 'it is important that impact assessment is embedded in all stages of the programme spiral'. However, there is a need to strengthen an understanding of the context of C4D projects 'including the relationship between the intervention under consideration and other interventions undertaken by themselves or other development actors' (Souter, 2008: 175). As Puddephatt et al. (2009: 13) highlight, it is important that C4D specialists (and other stakeholders)

> be involved at every stage of the development process, from the conception through to the evaluation of an initiative in order to integrate fully the communication process into the development framework. It is essential to take positive steps in this direction in order to both demonstrate the value communication can add to development systems on a global scale and to embed its principles within the UN operating framework.

Likewise, Cracknell (2000: 340) suggests that 'the key issue is to ensure full participation of all the stakeholders right from the start of the project's life ... unless the primary stakeholders are fully involved, progress could be slow and success problematic'.

Other key challenges and issues

Other key challenges and issues in assessing the impacts of C4D programmes identified in our online survey and in the literature review include:

Lack of planning and foresight: Two Expert Panel respondents listed the following issues related to lack of planning and foresight as their second most important challenge:

> *Evaluation is not really conceptualized at the beginning of programmes.*
>
> *It is not foreseen that beneficiaries participate in planning and implementing research, M&E.*

The complexity of social change: Since social change is a complex, uncertain, unpredictable and long-term process, change often needs to be assessed against a moving baseline and is rarely continuous. Understanding change requires 'an in-depth understanding of both context and the baseline against which change is being measured' (Souter, 2008: 161). We discuss this issues further in Section 7.

The challenge of the baseline: Gosling and Edwards state that baseline studies are quite rare and where they have been carried out 'they have often looked at factors which seemed important initially but have become less relevant as the programme has developed' (Gosling & Edwards, 2003: 140). This highlights the need for the relevance of baseline data to be periodically reviewed. Souter (2008: 162) points out that 'without some sort of baseline it is not really possible to assess impact at all'. While baseline data can be recovered retrospectively, 'these are poor substitutes for genuine baseline data acquired at the proper time'. However, as our consultations suggest, baseline data is often quite poor or absent in C4D projects. Indeed, only 40% of the UN experts surveyed as part of the project conducted evaluation via 'baseline, formative and summative studies'.

Issues with the indicator setting process and the selection of appropriate indicators have been identified by Souter (2008) and Parks et al. (2005) as some of the fundamental methodological challenges associated with the measurement of ICD and CFSC. Parks et al. (2005: 17) argue that selecting indicators is one of the most difficult steps in setting up a PM&E approach as it 'highlights, more than any other, the different information needs and expectations that the different stakeholders have of the monitoring work'. Challenges identified by Parks et al. (2005: 20-21) include: What is the optimum methodology for developing CFSC indicators? Who sets the criteria for indicator development? Who is involved and who decided what type of information will be collected and how it will be used?

A lack of a good quality evidence base for impacts of ICD and C4D programmes makes it more difficult to decide what outcomes might be expected and what indicators may be useful to enable assessment of unexpected outcomes (Souter, 2008: 178). A particular challenge is to 'distinguish between indicators which are primarily technological and those which are primarily concerned with attitudes and behaviour' (Souter, 2008: 178). Parks et al. (2005) suggest that as well as 'what indicators' we need to ask 'who should develop and use these indicators?'. However, this is often overlooked. Mayoux and Chambers (2005: 278) also raise concerns that SMART indicators may 'completely miss the most significant questions for respondents'. A key concern with indicators is that they are typically imposed from above. However, there are examples which demonstrate the benefits of actively involving local people in the development of indicators (Fontalvo-Herazo et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2006). We discuss indicators of C4D impacts further in Section 8 of this report.

The challenge of aggregation and scaling up: Souter (2008: 162) points out that 'In practice ... it may not be individual interventions at all to which change should be attributed, but the cumulation of a group of interventions which interact with one another, so that their collective impact is more substantial than the sum of their impact as individual interventions. He suggests that it may sometimes be easier 'to establish the aggregate impact of changes in the information and communication technology (ICT) environment than the impact of specific components in that aggregate change' (Souter, 2008: 178). This attribution challenge is notable in the C4D field, where the impact of a communication initiative cannot be considered in isolation from wider contextual factors that will inevitably have an impact. A related problem identified by Parks et al. (2005: 20) is: how best can micro-level data for participatory M&E be generalised and used to inform national and macro-level strategies and policies? In response to this issue, Lennie et al. (2008) have suggested that national initiatives must adapt the CFSC approach to extrapolate findings to the broader context and that this could be done through community-based research in representative case study sites.

The challenge of disaggregation: to be effective, impact evaluations need to disaggregate data by gender or other categories such as different levels of income, education, age, ethnicity or caste. However, as Souter (2008: 163) points out, it is often difficult for interventions to reach the most marginalised groups such as the very poor so 'particular attention therefore also needs to be given to identifying the experiences of the most marginalised. The capacity to monitor, evaluate and assess impact with this level of disaggregation needs to be built into project design from the start, including baseline data'. This emphasises the need for effective planning of impact assessments and the establishment of good quality systems for the collection, organisation and analysis of useful monitoring and evaluation data from the very beginning of programmes.

The need to focus on both primary audiences and wider communities: C4D interventions do not only impact target audiences – their impact can also be on other communities and social groups, either directly or indirectly. So impact assessment needs to also consider how the intervention affects the lives of wider communities and groups (Souter, 2008: 163). Also, it is sometimes difficult to specify a primary audience when mediums such as radio and television are used to influence social change.

The challenge of the unexpected: Byrne (2009a: 3) suggests that a key concept in new thinking about how C4D programmes are evaluated is to 'seek the unexpected, which can emerge to be the most significant'. Likewise, Souter (2008: 164) points out that all development interventions have unexpected outcomes, because

> it is never possible to predict everything that is likely to happen in the future ... They may be positive or negative, in terms of project objectives or the overall development needs of target communities ... Unexpected outcomes may turn out to be more significant than anticipated outcomes ... Impact assessment needs to pick them up, to be honest about them, and to learn from the experience how to capitalise on the opportunities of the positive and avoid the problems of the negative.

The challenge of capturing diverse perceptions: The importance of using multiple methods and ensuring the inclusion of a range of stakeholders in an impact assessment is highlighted by Souter who points out that since different stakeholders are likely to have different perceptions of impact 'it is important for impact assessment to capture the diversity of experience and perceptions around an intervention' (Souter, 2008: 164). Byrne suggests that 'contexts of multiple actors and multiple, diverse perspectives and types of knowledge call for participatory approaches'. However, she notes that the participation of diverse stakeholders 'involves diverse and at times contradictory perspectives' (Byrne, 2009a: 3).

Need for stronger capacity and skills: There is a lack of awareness and knowledge of impact assessment and 'the practical application of different methodologies'; a lack of expertise, ongoing learning, guidance and examples. Key challenges identified by Parks et al. (2005: 20) are: How to add or integrate PM&E 'into conventional M&E systems already challenged by data quality and resource constraints'. What type of capacity building in PM&E is needed, for whom, and at what level? How will PM&E capacity be maintained? Balit (2010b: 5) comments on the need for in-service training of C4D staff to develop new skills, including skills in 'participatory situation analysis, qualitative research methods, group facilitation, group dynamics and conflict resolution'. Mayoux and Chambers (2005: 282) also note the need for high level skills in 'facilitating the participatory process in a balanced, equitable and ethical manner'. Well facilitated participatory research also enables 'a more systematic discussion of priorities and trade-offs, cross-checking with many individuals, rather than imposing external interpretation' (p.282). We discuss evaluation capacity development in more detail in Section 6.

Other challenges to effective impact assessment identified in our consultations include:

- Problems with the evaluation design or methods used.

- Issues with poorly defined outcomes and the challenges of ensuring rigour, whatever methods are used.
- A preference for qualitative or quantitative methods.
- Overcoming assumptions about and the dominance of 'quantitative evaluation' approaches.
- The challenge of estimating the cost and impact of what did *not* happen. As Balit notes, there is a need to highlight 'the immense cost of not investing in communication' (Balit, 2010b: 7).

There are also problems with poor documentation of C4D impact through R, M&E in reports and case studies and capacity to effectively disseminate impact assessment findings to various stakeholders needs to be strengthened (Souter, 2008).

The outcomes of our literature review and consultations clearly demonstrate that there are many significant challenges, issues and barriers that affect the planning and implementation of evaluation and impact assessment of C4D. This research suggests that a more flexible, realistic and sustainable approach is required in relation to the timeframe, resources and approaches used in the evaluation of C4D, and in strengthening evaluation capacity at all levels. The following section outlines some strategies that could help to address these complex challenges and issues.

Overcoming the challenges

Members of the Expert Panel and the UN Focal Points identified a number of strategies that could be used to overcome some of the challenges outlined above. Similar strategies were also identified in previous background papers for the 11th UN Round Table on C4D.

Advocacy with organisations, donors and others

Both the Expert Panel and the UN Focal Points suggested undertaking advocacy with UN and other organisations and donors to highlight the importance of C4D and R, M&E and develop a greater appreciation of C4D's contribution to achieving strategic results. Balit (2010b: 5) argues that 'what is really missing are high level communication planners and managers: the kind of professional who can advocate for the discipline with senior decision makers'. In terms of the best advocacy strategy, Balit (2010b: 6) suggests that as well as using a mix of approaches such as case studies and a position paper or booklet, a multi-media approach should be used since 'seeing is believing, and decision makers do not have much time to read'.

A further advocacy strategy, suggested at the New York consultation meetings, was to establish links with high profile thinkers, academics, think tanks and high profile 'bloggers'. It was felt that links could also be made with aid critics who want development assistance to be more accountable, since there could be a philosophical overlap between these critics and C4D as a participatory method of achieving development (see New York consultation meeting report, Pamer at al., 2011: 9).

Identify creative and innovative approaches and examples

Other survey respondents suggested a greater focus on innovative, 'non-dominant' approaches and experimentation. Byrne (2009a: 5) suggests that we urgently need 'more honest and reflective stories of innovation in practice, in social change, communication for social change and their

evaluation, from across the world and across the development sector. The Nicaraguan initiative Puntos de Encuentro, which was outlined in Section 4, is a good case study of innovation in this field. Likewise, Balit (2010b: 6) suggests that 'creative and innovative examples from the past 50 years [can be selected] to illustrate what works best and show results'. It is also important to include examples of projects that have failed due to lack of a C4D element.

Digital story telling through participatory content creation has been found to be a powerful way for development programme participants to tell their stories in their own voices and to facilitate the process of social change (Hearn et al., 2009; Watkins & Tacchi, 2008) and is likely to be another effective means of advocating to donors and senior management.

Provide sufficient funding and time

The above gaps highlight another key issue raised by nearly all of those we consulted - that is the need for donors and programme implementers to provide sufficient budgets and time for R, M&E of C4D projects, including for longitudinal studies of impact. Balit (2010b: 10) highlights the importance of advocating with donors 'to foresee sufficient time and resources for research and monitoring and evaluation efforts, especially when dealing with participatory approaches for social change'.

Another advocacy strategy suggested at the New York consultation meetings was to produce short information sheets on C4D activities, with RM&E evidence, and to promote these activities as worthwhile investments. Analysis of cost effectiveness would reveal the benefits of incorporating C4D versus not incorporating it. Such evidence can help to convince UN Country Representatives and Deputy Representatives to set aside fixed percentages of programme budgets for C4D and for R, M&E (see report of New York consultation meeting, Pamer et al., 2011: 9).

Long-term capacity development

Our consultations and literature review emphasise the need for long-term capacity development in R, M&E for UN staff and their partners at all levels of organisations, particularly at the country level. We have suggested that this process should particularly focus on staff involved in planning, designing and implementing R, M&E, and their government and NGO partners. As we noted in the previous section, participatory approaches to M&E are particularly good at strengthening capacities in this area (Parks et al., 2005; Lennie et al., 2010). This is discussed further in Section 6.

Some respondents also suggested that more attention should be given to understanding 'the fundamentals of evaluation', providing 'practical guidance' and simpler information on evaluation, and stakeholder engagement in interpretation. At the consultation meetings in New York, the following suggestions were also made in relation to capacity development:

Institutionalisation of capacity development of C4D R, M&E:

As a first step:

- Examine the different cultures of R, M&E across agencies.
- Systematise R, M&E practices across agencies.

- Develop materials explaining what developing capacity for C4D and R, M&E can do for a particular programme or agency. The materials should focus on demystifying C4D and providing basic skills to staff. Existing resources for developing capacity for M&E outside of C4D such as the World Bank resource on system diagnosis and building effective M&E systems and UNICEF publications on country-led M&E systems and real world evaluation should be resourced (see Bamberger et al., 2006; MacKay, 2007; Segone, 2009).

Capacity development in C4D and R, M&E of C4D

- To strengthen understanding of C4D in some agencies, future cooperation should focus on general C4D capacity development with specifics on capacity development in R, M&E to come later.
- To increase understanding about C4D, UN agency leaders at the decision making level should receive concise information on what it is and why they should invest in its use.
- Practitioners require information explaining the background of and justification for C4D that reiterates the difference between C4D and corporate communications and public relations.
- Materials for practitioners also should include simple answers to their most common questions and provide capacity development resources with methods and 'how to's.'
- C4D R, M&E should also be included in broader R, M&E work at the country level to help build capacity.
- Create a mechanism for practitioners to ask an expert, for example through establishing an online community of practice. This was seen as a key to capacity strengthening (Pamer et al., 2011: 10-11).

Collaborative research

A further strategy identified by Sam Bickel, Officer in-Charge of UNICEF's Evaluation Office, in his official closing remarks to the New York consultation meetings was to undertake collaborative research on pilot programmes, since he considered that joint evaluations are of higher quality than those conducted by UNICEF (or other UN agencies) alone. Such collaboration was also seen as creating an opportunity to exchange ideas on programming and M&E (see Pamer et al., 2011: 15).

Addressing the challenges at different programme stages

Other ways of addressing the challenges listed above at various stages in the programme cycle, which have been suggested by Souter (2008) and others are outlined below.

Design stage

Souter (2008: 179) suggests using the following strategies at the design stage:

- Conducting an information and communications audit (assessment of the communications environment) at the project design stage.

- Giving attention to stakeholder mapping of initiatives to gain input throughout the monitoring period. This should 'significantly help to ensure full stakeholder engagement in the final impact assessment process'.
- Establishing indicators and baselines and disaggregation of data between different social groups with particular attention on very poor or marginalised groups.

Participants in the New York consultations thought that Ethnographic Action Research (EAR) was an important approach to needs assessment that fits well with formative research and the systems approach advocated in this report. We describe EAR in Section 7 of this report. Parks et al. (2005) also suggest that combinations of locally-generated measurements and PM&E processes with externally derived indicators and M&E approaches are at times the most appropriate way of monitoring and evaluating CFSC initiatives.

Implementation stage

Souter (2008: 179) advises using the following strategies at the implementation stage:

- Conducting 'continuous monitoring of the communications environment affecting an intervention in order to adjust implementation to changing needs'.
- Adopt a rolling baseline where necessary, i.e. adjusting the baseline 'at various time points within the implementation phase in order to recognise the scale of changes which have occurred in the communications environment'

Analysis and interpretation

In terms of analysis and interpretation of data, Souter (2008: 180) suggests the following strategies:

- Taking care to 'distinguish between technological and behavioural change ... To accommodate the long-term nature of impact, it may be necessary to use attitudinal indicators as proxies for subsequent behavioural change (although this technique requires caution)'.
- Drawing on the evidence of project participants and other stakeholders, since this 'will be crucial to understanding what is going on ... it may be particularly important to understanding impacts on the very poor and most marginalised'.
- Drawing on 'expertise and experience in comparable interventions ... provided ... that [they] have been assessed with sufficient rigour'.
- Undertaking 'additional longitudinal studies or tracker studies ... the quality of insight which they can contribute to understanding ... has very high potential value'.

As we discuss further in Section 7, Outcome Mapping and the Most Significant Change technique are particularly useful methodologies for engaging stakeholders in this phase.

Use of meta-evaluation

During our consultations in New York, meta-evaluation was seen by one UN participant as a very powerful way of identifying and framing issues that emerge from the evaluation of development

programmes. It can also be an important means of improving evaluations and increasing the utilisation of evaluation results. The concept of meta-evaluation is used in different ways by evaluators, researchers and policy makers. While it is seen by some as an aggregation of evaluation findings across a number of studies, others, such as Patton (1997), see it as a process of evaluating evaluation studies based on the profession's standards and principles – this can be seen as an approach to quality control for a single evaluation study (Uusikyla & Virtanen, 2000: 51).

Uusikyla & Virtanen argue that meta-evaluation should also be concerned with the utilisation of evaluation results. They suggest that 'the continuous and reflexive interpretation of evaluation findings is the only way to enhance organisational learning and thus increase the utilisation of evaluation results' (Uusikyla & Virtanen, 2000: 52).

An ongoing meta-evaluation of the AC4SC project was found to have many benefits, particularly:

- increased evaluation skills, knowledge and capacity, including improved critical reflection and review skills;
- development of new knowledge and learnings, including about the complex organisational, social and cultural context of the project and the effects of such contextual factors on the outcomes of the project;
- forming effective collaborative relationships with participants in the project;
- development of an impact assessment methodology, and M&E systems that are likely to be practical and sustainable and more useful than if we had not undertaken our meta-evaluation of the project (Lennie et al., 2010: 7).

Open sharing of all findings

Souter (2008: 181) also suggests that there is a need for

> Stronger collaboration between donors and implementing agencies to share impact assessment findings – positive and negative, intended and unexpected – in a more open-minded fashion. Donors and implementing agencies might also do more to share experience of impact assessment methodologies.

Similarly, one of the Expert Panel respondents noted the need for 'openness to admitting and learning from weaknesses and "failures"' She suggested that

> *What these highlight is the importance of* ***transparency*** and ***integrity/honesty*** *throughout research and evaluation processes. The critical point is not to deny or seek to hide weaknesses but, rather, to learn from them and for those involved to document how they are attempting to do this.*

We discuss the importance of developing open and effective communication and feedback systems and processes in order to share M&E findings and enhance the success of participatory M&E in C4D organisations in Section 6.

Conclusion

Many complex contextual, institutional and methodological factors and barriers affect the sustainability and success of C4D and its evaluation that need to be better understood and appreciated. Specific problems associated with geographic, communication and cultural barriers and local political issues can significantly affect the outcomes of R, M&E of C4D in certain developing countries. In addition, greater awareness is needed of the many country level and institutional challenges, including the predominance of quantitative approaches, lack of coordination between head office and field staff involved in evaluations, and confusion between C4D, publicity and corporate communication. Our research suggests that the assumptions, attitudes and policies of funders and management can result in a lack of appreciation, funding and support for C4D and innovative evaluation practices, problems with effectively applying participatory processes, and lack of learning from evaluations.

We identified a wide range of challenges in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D, including lack of time, funding and resources, low levels of evaluation capacity, weak planning and design of R, M&E, and the dominance of quantitative methodologies. Similar challenges were identified in assessing the impacts of C4D. Additional challenges and issues for impact assessment included: demonstrating and attributing impacts, problems with indicator development, donors setting unrealistic demands, targets and time frames, facilitating stakeholder participation in all stages of the evaluation cycle, poor baseline data, and the need to seek unexpected and negative outcomes, as well as expected and positive outcomes.

A range of strategies to overcome these challenges were identified. They included:

- Advocacy with UN and other organisations and donors to highlight the importance of C4D and R, M&E and to develop a greater appreciation of C4D's contribution to results.
- Identifying creative and innovative R, M&E approaches and examples to illustrate what works best and to demonstrate the results of C4D.
- Providing sufficient budgets and time, including for longitudinal studies.
- Long-term capacity development for staff at all levels and institutionalisation of capacity development.
- Using various strategies to enhance stakeholder engagement.
- Undertaking meta-evaluations to identify and frame issues, improve the quality of evaluations and ECD, and increase the utilisation of evaluation results.
- Open sharing of positive and negative, intended and unexpected findings.

A more flexible, realistic and sustainable approach is clearly required in relation to the timeframe, resources and methodologies used in the evaluation of C4D, and in strengthening evaluation capacity to enable more effective evaluation and impact assessment of C4D.

6. Evaluation capacity development in C4D

Summary of key findings

- There is a significant need to strengthen capacity in C4D and R, M&E at all levels and to take a long-term approach to evaluation capacity development (ECD).
- Institutionalising evaluation and developing an evaluation culture in organisations is expected to generate more high quality M&E of C4D and to improve C4D design and outcomes.
- Professional evaluation associations and networks, universities and research institutions can play important roles in ECD.
- Developing, implementing and sustaining ECD can present challenges and issues for time, skill and resource-poor organisations in developing countries.
- Adopting a holistic, participatory, learning-oriented approach to managing, implementing and improving ECD can be very effective. Developing good working relationships between those involved is crucial for success.
- Particular challenges and issues that can affect the effectiveness and sustainability of ECD in the C4D and development context include: the complexity of assessing the impact of C4D, the diversity of C4D approaches (which affects ECD needs), the need for practical, flexible and sustainable C4D impact assessment frameworks, and the range of skills required.
- Other ECD challenges and issues include: the need for a readiness for organisational learning, power and conflict issues, language, literacy and cultural issues, and developing effective data collection and management and communication and feedback systems.
- Learnings about increasing the effectiveness of ECD in the C4D context include: designing ECD that is flexible and open to change, actively demonstrating the value of M&E to programme staff, and keeping evaluation methodologies practical and simple.

Introduction

A key theme in this report is that developing and strengthening evaluation capacity is an important priority in the C4D area. Strengthening capacity in both C4D and M&E were identified as key needs in our consultations, in the background paper by Puddephatt et al. (2009), and in the report of the 11th UN Round Table on C4D by UNDP (2009b). One of the key challenges identified by participants in the 11th Round Table was 'the lack of awareness, understanding and capacity of M&E in C4D' (UNDP, 2009b: 23). Participants put forward various strategies to strengthen M&E capacity. One of the recommendations made by Byrne (2008) in her paper on evaluating communication for social change is the need to redress imbalances at all levels by providing adequate resources and support in order to strengthen evaluation capacity.

Developing evaluation capacity can be seen as part of the process of institutionalising evaluation and creating an evaluation culture within UN agencies and their government and NGO implementing partners who are involved in C4D activities. This process is anticipated to generate more high quality M&E and impact assessments of C4D and to improve C4D initiatives and development initiatives that include C4D elements. These processes are vital components of the strategy to widen appreciation of the value and significance of C4D in reaching development goals.

Overview of evaluation capacity development

'Evaluation capacity development' (ECD) and 'evaluation capacity building' (ECB) [11] have been conceptualised in various ways. In their paper on supporting partner country ownership and capacity in development evaluation, Lundgren and Kennedy (2009: 81) define ECD as 'the process of unleashing, strengthening and maintaining evaluation capacity'. They see evaluation capacity as 'the ability of people and organisations to define and achieve their evaluation objectives' and explain that capacity involves three interdependent levels: 'individual, organisational and the enabling environment'. ECD is seen as 'a long-term process, targeted in the context of strengthening capacity in related systems of management, accountability and learning' (Lundgren & Kennedy, 2009: 81).

Preskill and Boyle provide a very detailed definition of evaluation capacity building which reflects various concepts in their comprehensive multidisciplinary model of ECB:

> ECB involves the design and implementation of teaching and learning strategies to help individuals, groups, and organisations, learn about what constitutes effective, useful, and professional evaluation practice. The ultimate goal of ECB is sustainable evaluation practice - where members continuously ask questions that matter, collect, analyse, and interpret data, and use evaluation findings for decision-making and action. For evaluation practice to be sustained, participants must be provided with leadership support, incentives, resources, and opportunities to transfer their learning about evaluation to their everyday work. Sustainable evaluation practice also requires the development of systems, processes, policies, and plans that help embed evaluation work into the way the organisation accomplishes its mission and strategic goals (Preskill & Boyle, 2008: 444).

This definition highlights the need for capacity building to lead to sustainable evaluation practices within organisations and the importance of taking a learning-oriented approach, gaining support from management, the provision of adequate resources, and the development of strong systems and processes for M&E within organisations. As we noted earlier in this report, there is an increasing trend towards seeing evaluation as an ongoing learning process and as a means of strengthening capacity and improving organisational performance (Horton et al., 2003). Patton (in Horton et al., 2003: viii) argues that aiming for multiple levels and kinds of impacts from evaluation is crucial when resources are scarce, such as in the developing world.

Ba Tall (2009: 123) notes that capacity 'includes different realities from individual to institutional level' and is usually defined as 'the power of something to perform or to produce'. Like Lundgren and Kennedy (2009) and Preskill and Boyle (2008), she suggests that it is 'a continuing process of learning and change management' (Ba Tall, 2009: 123) and that, like development, it is not a short-term process. Ba Tall sees evaluation guidelines, principles and ethical codes of conduct, which evaluation associations are deeply engaged in developing, as a key tool for developing capacity. Her paper highlights the effectiveness of evaluation associations and networks in building capacity in various developing countries and beyond. However, to be effective, they 'must play this role of organising the national dialogue amongst all development stakeholders in the country, and make the

[11] In this section we have referred to 'evaluation capacity development' since this is seen as the most appropriate term. However, we also refer to 'evaluation capacity building' since this term is commonly used in the literature on this topic.

bridge to the international community of evaluation' (Ba Tall, 2009: 133). Likewise, Boyle suggests that professional associations for evaluators can play a role as facilitator of a network of evaluation practitioners and users, in the promotion of good practice standards and ethical guidelines, in raising awareness of 'methodological and skills developments and innovations', in the provision of education and training, and in offering 'useful support for developing the evaluation resource' (Boyle, 1999: 141-142).

In addition, Bamberger (2009) argues that the active involvement of leading national universities and research institutions is critical for ECD in the development context. Similarly, Balit (2010b: 5) comments on the role of universities in increasing the number of qualified C4D professionals in development institutions and the need for the development of human resources at all levels – 'from field workers up to communication planners and managers'. Bamberger (2009) advises that an ECD strategy for impact evaluation (IE) must target at least five main stakeholder groups: 'agencies that commission, fund, and disseminate IEs; evaluation practitioners who design, implement, and analyse IEs; evaluation users; groups affected by the programmes being evaluated; and public opinion'. He explains that users include 'government ministries and agencies that use evaluation results to help formulate policies, allocate resources, and design and implement programmes and projects' (Bamberger, 2009: 30).

This brief review of the literature highlights the need to consider the following elements of ECD in the C4D area:

- The enabling context of ECD activities and the readiness within organisations for change towards an evaluation culture that is focussed on learning, improvement and accountability.
- The diverse organisational levels and stakeholders groups that need to actively participate in and take ownership of the process, in order to be most effective.
- The range of capacities and skills that need to be developed.
- The need to embed evaluation into all aspects of C4D activities in organisations and initiatives to increase the sustainability of ECD and evaluation practices.
- The role of professional evaluation networks and universities in the ECD process.

As Schiavo-Campo (2005: 2-3) suggests, 'capacity-building in general and M&E in particular is far more than just training'. He advises against an over-reliance on one-off M&E workshops since 'sustained capacity-building efforts are required to improve the performance of the public sector on a lasting basis' (Schiavo-Campo, 2005: 8).

Schiavo-Campo (2005: 13) notes that a key lesson from the ECD experience is that 'building an effective capacity for monitoring and evaluation is neither quick nor easy' and emphasises the need for 'steady and sustained support by international donors'. The UN and Expert Panel members we consulted also emphasised the importance of a long-term, sustained focus on capacity development in R, M&E for staff at all levels. They indicated that this process needs to include UN staff who are conceptualising, planning and managing R, M&E of C4D programmes and staff and stakeholders of NGOs and government partners which UN agencies are working with to implement and evaluate C4D activities.

Some issues in ECD within developing countries

Naccarella et al. (2007: 231) state that: 'internationally, evaluation capacity-building activities have mushroomed as demands have increased for government-funded programmes to demonstrate that they are effective and efficient'. As we have noted in this report, similar demands are behind the increasing focus on more effectively evaluating the impacts of C4D programmes. Various strategies are now being implemented in many developing countries to help stakeholders and staff at different organisational levels (including those involved in C4D) to learn about evaluation and to regularly engage in effective evaluation practices. A key aim of these strategies is to promote the adoption of an evaluation culture within organisations, a process known as 'the institutionalisation of evaluation' (Khadar, 2003: 93). Bamberger advises that institutionalisation of impact evaluation (IE) at the sector or national level occurs under the following conditions:

- It is country-led and managed by a central government or a major sectoral agency.
- There is strong "buy-in" from key stakeholders.
- There are well-defined procedures and methodologies.
- IE is integrated into sectoral and national M&E systems that generate much of the data used in the IE studies.
- IE is integrated into national budget formulation and development planning.
- There is a focus on evaluation capacity development (Bamberger, 2009: 14).

Bamberger notes that impact evaluation 'can only be successfully institutionalised as part of a well-functioning M&E system' and that the way in which impact evaluation is institutionalised will vary, depending on 'different political and administrative systems and traditions and historical factors' (Bamberger, 2009: 14). This indicates the need to develop more effective systems for the evaluation of C4D initiatives as part of the process of developing a stronger evaluation culture within organisations involved in implementing C4D.

However, developing, implementing and sustaining ECD can present particularly difficult challenges and issues in resource and capacity poor developing countries such as Afghanistan and Nepal with high levels of poverty, ill health, illiteracy, gender discrimination, and ongoing political instability or violence. This suggests that the success of ECB is highly context dependent (Valery & Shakir, 2005). Valery and Shakir (2005: 80) point out that while donors and NGOs have been supporting evaluation capacity building activities for at least three decades, most of these activities 'occur in developing countries and not in conflict or post-conflict settings' such as Afghanistan.

Among the numerous contextual factors that affected access to and extension of health services and capacity building in Afghanistan, Valery and Shakir (2005) note the erosion of human capacity, the lack of personnel with managerial and technical skills throughout the country, cultural constraints that limit access to health care for rural women, high illiteracy levels, the absence of telecommunications in rural areas, harassment of the international community, violence and political instability. Some similar contextual challenges were identified in the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* project that involved strengthening the evaluation capacity and M&E systems in a development communication NGO in Nepal. This process included using a range of participatory research tools and methods to engage listeners of the 'Chatting with my best friend' (SSMK) and 'New Nepal' radio programmes and other community members in M&E and impact

assessment processes. This process is being facilitated by M&E staff and a network of community researchers in various rural and regional areas in Nepal (Lennie et al., 2009, 2010; Tacchi et al., 2010). However, a number of challenges and issues arose which affected the success of the capacity development process, including the regular turnover of M&E managers, loss of key leaders, champions and change agents, language and communication problems, travel restrictions related to political instability, the hierarchical culture that affected the use of participatory action research, and various other factors related to the complexity of the cultural context (Lennie et al., 2009, 2010; Tacchi et al., 2010).

The value of taking a participatory, holistic approach to ECD

The increased attention to ECD in recent times can be attributed, in part, to the growing interest in the use of participatory and collaborative forms of evaluation (Preskill & Boyle, 2008), and to increased awareness of the benefits of incorporating evaluation into programmes to facilitate better decision making and ongoing organisational and programme improvement (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Horton et al., 2003; Preskill & Boyle, 2008; Lennie et al., 2010). Cracknell (2000: 354) highlights the need to strengthen evaluation capacities in developing countries 'as part of the trend towards more participation', while Khan (1998: 312-313) notes that some donors favour the use of participatory evaluation as the basis for all future ECB work.

A key benefit of participatory approaches to research and evaluation is that they can demystify these processes and make them more accessible to a wider range of participants, including community members. Indeed, one of the Expert Panel respondents thought that qualitative and participatory methodologies held 'far greater potential in terms of strengthening the research, evaluation and development-capacity of individuals, organisations and communities themselves, in lasting and empowering ways', compared with quantitative and survey-based methodologies and methods.

As well as the many benefits of participatory R, M&E methodologies that were listed in Section 4, such as the flexibility of the process and the potential to foster greater levels of staff and stakeholder ownership and empowerment, other benefits and strengths of participatory and action research methodologies for ECB include:

- Adopts a 'learning by doing' approach which is recommended in particular for adult learners.
- Can provide rapid feedback about the success or failure of an ECB intervention.
- Can be a cost-effective method of ECB (Forss et al., 2006; Taut, 2007; Valery & Shakir, 2005)

Horton et al. (2003: 46-48) highlight the value of adopting participatory, learning-oriented self assessment processes for managing and improving organisational capacity development. Based on their learnings from a major international project on the evaluation of capacity development in research and development organisations, Horton et al. (2003) advocate taking a holistic approach to organisational capacity development. Its principles include:

- Take ownership of your organisation's capacity development initiative.
- Focus on the needs and priorities of the organisation as a whole.
- Management of capacity development processes is crucial for success.

- Prepare for monitoring and evaluation at the outset of a capacity development initiative.
- Capacity development is more than a one-off event.
- Engage stakeholders in the capacity development process.
- Establish an environment conducive to learning and change (Horton et al., 2003: 55).

Horton et al. (2003: 56) explain that organisational capacity building is a process that 'evolves over a number of years ... the development and maintenance of good working relationships between the various parties involved in a capacity development effort is crucial to its overall success'. This approach is highly congruent with the participatory, holistic, learning-based approach to the M&E of C4D that we have consistently advocated throughout this report.

However, as research by Lennie (2005), Lennie et al. (2009), Forss et al. (2006), Tacchi et al. (2010) and Taut (2007) has shown, the use of participatory evaluation methods for ECD raises various challenges, issues and contradictions that should be taken into account. Those identified by Tacchi et al. (2010: 1) include: 'the power relations between donors, outside evaluation and development specialists and internal M&E staff'; cultural factors that can lead to dependency on research and evaluation specialists, and 'the time required to build relationships and effective communication and engage stakeholders'. Other challenges and issues are outlined in the next section.

Particular ECD challenges and issues in the C4D context

Our research has suggested a number of challenges and issues that have a particular impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of evaluation capacity development in the C4D context, including:

- The diversity of C4D approaches
- The complexity of assessing the impact of C4D
- The need for practical and sustainable impact assessment frameworks for C4D
- Attitudes to M&E among donors, C4D organisations and NGOs
- Maintaining and sustaining evaluation capacity
- Facilitating wide participation in M&E for C4D
- Coordinating M&E with C4D programme content and improvement needs
- The wide range of skills required in M&E for C4D.

Our literature search indicates that there are few published papers about evaluation capacity development in the C4D area. However, in this section we have drawn on key issues raised in this literature review and in our consultations, as well as work on the AC4SC project, that has identified a number of challenges and issues and valuable learnings about ECD in the C4D field.

Diversity of C4D approaches

As we noted in Section 3, there is a wide range of C4D approaches, with the four main 'strands' across the UN described as:

- Behaviour Change Communication
- Communication for Social Change
- Communication for advocacy

- Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment.

While they have a number of similar aims, these approaches draw on different underlying theories and concepts. This suggests that somewhat different M&E approaches and methodologies and different types of indicators may be needed, depending on the C4D approach taken. This would affect the capacity development and training needs of UN agencies and their partners which employ these different C4D approaches. For example, programmes that adopt a CFSC approach are more likely to be interested in building capacities in bottom-up participatory forms of R, M&E compared with programmes that adopt a BCC approach, which have tended to use KAPB surveys and more top-down M&E methods. In addition, the strengthening of an enabling media and communication environment strand would have quite specific capacity building needs related to researching and monitoring issues such as communication and media access and participation, compared with other approaches that are more focussed on social and behaviour change.

Complexity of assessing the impact of C4D

As we have noted, assessing the impact of C4D raises many methodological challenges and complexities that are less evident in other development areas. Issues here include the need for a better understanding of the communication context (which is often complex and rapidly changing) and the challenges involved in 'proving' impacts to donors and the attribution of impacts to specific C4D elements of larger development programmes.

Given the difficulty of predicting C4D outcomes and impacts, the use of baseline measures and the development of SMART indicators can be quite problematic. For example, M&E staff involved in the AC4SC project found it difficult to develop some indicators since the objectives of their radio programmes were constantly changing, based on funding for new radio programme topics that was regularly received from donors. This means that mainstream planning tools such as the logframe are often more difficult to apply to the evaluation of C4D programmes. ECD programmes also need to be based on a good understanding of the particular challenges and issues in the C4D context. Many C4D programmes at the country and NGO level are not well equipped to deal with these challenges and complexities, given other constraints and difficult contextual challenges that they face. As a paper on the AC4SC project by Lennie et al. (2009: 8) points out:

> The complexity of the CFSC model, with its focus on media interventions stirring dialogue and creating the impetus and self-efficacy for social change implies a research focus on aspirations of social change, what is said about constraints to social change and shifts in public opinions, social organisation and patterns of inclusion. Observing and tracking social change demands a deeply qualitative and participatory approach, yet the ability of organisations such as EAN [Equal Access Nepal] to roll out the complex participatory M&E systems that the CFSC approach demands is fraught with constraints such as lack of and turnover of M&E human resource, irregular supply of electricity, frequent strikes that hamper travel, as well as natural disasters that impede travel and the regular flow of data from community researchers.

Need for practical and sustainable impact assessment frameworks for C4D

These issues emphasise the need for ECD in the C4D area to be based on more flexible, realistic, practical and sustainable M&E frameworks and approaches. However, the challenge is to develop M&E systems and capacities that all staff can understand and use, while, at the same time, taking the complexity of C4D and the impact assessment of C4D into account. Research by Lennie et al. (2009) and Tacchi el al. (2010) has highlighted a number of challenges raised by evaluation capacity development projects in developing countries (such as the AC4SC project) that have both academic and practical aims. Following feedback from the M&E staff at Equal Access Nepal about the complexity of the AC4SC methodology, the process was revised in an attempt to make it more streamlined and immediate in terms of outcomes. This included focussing the M&E work on the more general social change indicators that the CFSC model is associated with, such as increased dialogue and inclusion of excluded groups, better grounding the approach in the content and objectives of EAN's broader development programmes and more clearly linking the participatory research process to these particular areas of media output (Lennie et al., 2009: 6).

Attitudes to M&E

As this report has indicated, M&E of C4D is often donor driven and undertaken for upward accountability rather than for learning and improvement purposes. It is not always accorded a high level of importance by management and programme staff. Cracknell (2000: 55) points out that there is a fundamental tension and incompatibility between the two competing objectives of evaluation 'accountability on the one hand, and lesson learning on the other'. He notes that while governments and pressure groups favour accountability, which emphasises the degree of success or failure of a project, aid agencies and developing countries tend to favour lesson learning to improve future performance and to identify the reasons for success or failure. However, it is difficult to adequately satisfy both objectives. In addition, many developing countries complain that evaluation research is 'too costly and too time consuming to be of any use to management' (Khan, 1998: 324).

A small number of respondents in the study by Napp et al. (2002: 43) thought that the expectations of the funding agency was the main reason for undertaking the evaluation and most CBOs 'felt burdened by evaluation requirements'. Some saw it as a "necessary evil" to meet the requirements of their funding agency'. They also felt that funding agencies needed to understand the challenges inherent in evaluating HIV prevention programmes, and that without this understanding 'the evaluation expectations of funding agencies were likely to be unrealistic and more of a hindrance to than a facilitator of evaluation' (Napp et al., 2002: 45).

As we have previously indicated, donors and managers were also seen by some of the Expert Panel as not valuing 'alternative' M&E approaches that are likely to be more appropriate for C4D. This can affect the amount of time and the adequacy of resources provided for ECD and the effectiveness of strategies that aim to develop an evaluation culture within organisations that implement C4D initiatives.

Research shows that a lack of support for evaluation among programme staff and management is a key barrier to effective ECD and evaluation. In the study by Napp et al., respondents reported that time spent on evaluation was seen as compromising service quality and that staff 'resist evaluation because it encroaches on their opportunity to provide prevention services' (Napp et al., 2002: 44).

This suggests a need for specific funding to support evaluation efforts and for long-term funding for such prevention programmes (Napp et al., 2002: 46).

Cracknell (2000: 182) also points out that staff attitude to evaluation findings 'will differ according to their role in the organisation'. The AC4SC project found that M&E staff within Equal Access Nepal had a lower status within the organisation than programme production staff, some of whom were high profile presenters of the very popular SSMK radio programme which has a large following of young listeners around Nepal. Before the AC4SC project began, a few staff, including programme production staff, had received training in Ethnographic Action Research. However, there was no system in place to effectively analyse EAR data, provide feedback on it, and make effective use of it beyond the work of the individuals undertaking it. The programme production staff were therefore unable to utilise this data in reports to donors. While the research helped them to improve some aspects of their work, it did not help them to prove impact. Contrast this with the measurable feedback received through large numbers of listener letters and other feedback about the SSMK programme which indicated that the programme was highly successful, but did not directly help them to understand how or why. The letters were easy to quantify, and the SSMK team therefore felt 'why do we need to evaluate the impact of our work?' As a result, at the beginning of the AC4SC project, most staff thought that EAR was not used very well in their organisation and they had not been able to demonstrate its usefulness to stakeholders (Lennie et al., 2009: 4).

Lennie et al. (2009) found that one of the most important outcomes of interactive ECD workshops that the Australian research team conducted as part of the AC4SC project was improved 'team building', 'team spirit' and communication and appreciation of the need for a 'culture of sharing' among M&E and radio programme production staff. However, a critical review of M&E systems in June 2008 identified that

> While the Naya Nepal program team was cooperating well with the M&E team, the SSMK team was seen as 'resistant' to changing the way it does M&E since they thought their current system was working well. They had also been reluctant to provide content themes to the community researchers in case this affected the number of listeners. M&E staff thought that the SSMK team was very insulated and not open to others entering their group (Lennie et al., 2009: 6)

Again, this example highlights the importance of understanding the organisational dynamics and context and attitudes to M&E before ECD strategies and processes are developed and implemented. One of the Expert Panel recommended using a diagnostic tool developed by the World Bank (MacKay, 2007) which can help to build better M&E systems.

Maintaining and sustaining capacity

Maintaining and sustaining evaluation capacity is a key issue when there is high staff turnover in C4D organisations and key 'champions' leave organisations. Employee turnover is a persistent challenge in developing countries where there is often a shortage of people with good evaluation capacities. This can undermine ECB efforts due to problems with maintaining capacity and skills and varying levels of commitment to the ECD process from new staff (Atkinson et al., 2005; Napp et al., 2002). As we noted earlier, one of the key challenges which affected the success of the AC4SC project and the ECD process was the regular turnover of M&E coordinators, and loss of key leaders and change

agents within Equal Access Nepal. This created problems with continuity and time was needed to bring each new coordinator up to speed with all the facets of the project. Only the first M&E coordinator took part in the initial ECD workshops with staff which included developing initial theory of change matrices and practicing various participatory tools with community groups. This situation put pressure on remaining staff who then had less time to devote to the project (Lennie et al., 2009).

Horton et al. (2003) suggest that rather than focussing on building the capacities of individuals and parts of an organisation, it is more effective to focus on building the capacity of the organisation as a whole and to encourage the active participation of a broad range of staff and stakeholders in the process. This latter strategy can cushion the impact of staff turnover (Gibbs et al., 2009). The AC4SC project attempted to use this more holistic approach to ECD. As Tacchi et al. (2010) explain, this included adopting a partnership approach to capacity building by, for example, encouraging EAN staff to take some responsibility for facilitation of workshops and meetings, and organising meetings that engaged various stakeholders (including EAN's competitors) in the project. The research team also encouraged staff to see participatory evaluation as an ongoing action learning and programme improvement process that could facilitate the development of a learning organisation and research and evaluation culture within EAN.

Facilitating wide participation

As we have emphasised, effective M&E of C4D requires a high level of participation from a range of staff, participants and programme or outreach partners. They also need an adequate understanding of C4D and M&E concepts, a range of relevant methodologies and methods, and a willingness to devote time to the process of planning, designing and implementing M&E processes. Given other demands on their time and energy and other factors, achieving this level of participation and commitment to the process is not easy. Although there are many benefits to involving stakeholders in the evaluation process, Khan (1998: 324) points out that 'where beneficiaries are restricted by unequal power relationships, the ability of evaluators to reach a cross section of beneficiaries will continue to remain a problem'. As Souter (2008) points out, it is often difficult for development interventions to reach the most marginalised groups such as the very poor.

Participatory approaches to evaluation and ECD require greater planning and higher levels of participation and engagement than other approaches (Diaz-Puente et al., 2008). Time and resources are therefore needed for adequate planning, diagnosis of an organisation's strengths, weaknesses and capacity building needs, development of trust, and encouraging participation (Diaz-Puente et al, 2008; Horton et al., 2003). A study of self-evaluation capacity building in a large international development organisation identified a lack of management support 'through engaged participation' in the ECB workshops (Taut, 2007: 52). However, Forss et al. (2006) suggest a need to be realistic about the level of input and involvement in an evaluation that should be expected from senior managers. They also highlight the fact that for deeper learning in evaluation to have occurred they would have had to have 'spent considerable time with programme staff, and to ensure that the interaction between programme staff and the evaluation team made learning possible' (Forss et al, 2006: 138).

The complexity of assessing the impact of C4D programmes can be a barrier to the engagement and participation of a wide range of staff and stakeholders. In addition, there are often issues related to

ownership, power, control and participation. This is illustrated by the following account of a process that the authors engaged in with staff of Equal Access Nepal to develop theories of change (TOC) for two of the EAN radio programmes, which involved working with teams that included programme producers, management and M&E staff:

> Initially this worked extremely well, and staff from across the organisation invested time and energy. However, at some stage, this was followed by the realisation of the amount of time and work that would be required to complete the TOC with a range of stakeholders external to EAN. This was the thing that had most attracted us as academics to the approach, and ended up being the factor that made the M&E team the most uneasy about it, making it difficult to pursue. Already stretched in terms of the demands of the organisation on their time, the M&E team felt overwhelmed by the seemingly 'extra' work this task required, and were unable to weigh this positively against perceived benefits. While initially the TOC seemed to offer an ideal mechanism for joining up M&E work with agreed change objectives, it shifted to an additional task with ill-defined benefits. (Tacchi et al., 2010: 7-8).

Coordinating M&E with C4D programme content and improvement needs

A further issue is that the time required to plan, organise and conduct participatory M&E, analyse large volumes of qualitative data, and prepare reports on research and evaluation may not match well with the needs of C4D programme makers who want data available more quickly in order to inform programme content and make decisions about improvements to ongoing programmes. This was another issue raised in the AC4SC program, which found that the SSMK production team 'needed to obtain data immediately to inform their weekly letter review process' (Lennie et al., 2009: 6).

Range of skills required

As we have previously indicated, knowledge and understanding of a range of theories, frameworks, methodologies and methods is needed to undertake effective M&E and impact assessments of C4D initiatives. A number of papers highlight the wide range of skills required to undertake research and evaluations, particularly those using participatory methods (Boyle, 1999; Hearn et al, 2009; Napp et al., 2002; Taut, 2007). As well as technical skills, they include: 'strong skills in facilitation, as well as humility, respect for others and the ability to listen' (Narayan, 1993, cited in Boyle, 1999: 143). Other skills include: 'responsiveness to user needs ... acceptance of diverse views, [and the] ability to establish rapport and trust' (Green, 1988 cited in Taut, 2007: 49). High level conflict management and facilitation skills are also needed when stakeholders have contradictory perspectives about the initiative or there are unequal power relations between participants.

In addition, some popular methods such as Most Significant Change are not necessarily as simple to use as their handbooks indicate. The MSC guide describes the process as 'a simple means of making sense of a large amount of complex information' (Davies & Dart, 2005: 11) and recommend conveying the message that 'MSC is simple and straightforward to implement' (Davies & Dart, 2005: 15). However, research has shown that the full MSC technique can be quite complex to use effectively (Willetts & Crawford, 2007). We discuss the strengths and limitations of MSC in Section 7 of this report.

In order to effectively use a mixed methods approach to R, M&E, M&E staff require skills, knowledge and experience in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. However, as the AC4SC project found, the management, analysis and interpretation of large volumes of qualitative data can be particularly difficult for M&E staff in contexts such as Nepal who lack experience in this area and do not have access to the type of face to face training and local support that would more easily and rapidly enhance their capacities.

The AC4SC project also demonstrated that, as Jallov (2005) has shown, community members can be trained to collect useful qualitative data about the impacts of community radio programmes. However, as Lennie et al. (2009: 8) note:

> There is a need to ensure that community researchers are very clear about the context and focus of this research work. They also require continuous mentoring and support, and both formal and informal training to increase their capacities and the quality of the data they collect. Effective feedback systems are also needed to maintain motivation and to share learnings and examples of good quality data. This process can take over a year or more.

Other ECD challenges and issues

The next section provides an overview of some more general ECD issues that need to be considered, including issues related to the use of participatory evaluation and participatory approaches to ECD.

Taking the organisational culture, dynamics and context into account

As we have indicated, for ECD to be effective, an organisation needs to have a readiness for organisational learning from evaluation and the environment and culture needs to be conducive to success (Forss et al., 2006; Naccarella et al., 2007; Taut, 2007). Carlsson et al. (1994) in Cracknell (2000: 181) state that 'the way aid activities are being evaluated is primarily a function of organisational dynamics and not a technical/administrative matter'. They go on to argue that:

> effective feedback, and getting people to change their habitual way of doing things in response to evaluation findings, has to involve a thorough understanding of how organisations take decisions, how they set objectives; how they resolve internal conflicts; and how they learn. In other words, their thesis is that effective feedback is a function of organisational dynamics (Cracknell, 2000: 181).

Forss et al. (2006: 138) cite a UNESCO survey which indicates a number of organisational factors that can hinder learning from evaluation, including 'lack of transparent communication and decision-making, lack of managers as models of learning, lack of reward for innovation and learning from mistakes, and a largely missing collaborative culture'. They suggest that if such contextual prerequisites are not addressed, 'learning from evaluation will encounter too many obstacles to really take off'. Leadership is particularly important here. Several studies demonstrate the need for leaders to support ECB and evaluation, and to be seen as strong models for learning (Forss et al., 2006; Khadar, 2003; Taut, 2007; Valery & Shakir, 2005). This was also clearly demonstrated in the AC4SC project (Lennie et al., 2009).

Considering differences in power, knowledge and status

Organisations form networks of people with different agendas and interests and varying levels of power, status, authority, experience and expertise (Cracknell, 2000: 182). As we indicated earlier, the degree of conflict and cooperation among these groups has an impact on ECB and evaluation activities in the C4D area. The study by Taut (2007) highlights the political nature of evaluation and the need to take the organisational work environment and the potentially negative effects of the self-evaluation process into account.

Lennie (2005: 410) found that an Australian ECB project she evaluated (which aimed to build capacities in evaluating community-based ICT initiatives) had a number of unintended and disempowering impacts due to 'inequalities in power and knowledge, the different values and agendas of the participants and researchers, the pre-existing relationships and networks within the communities, and other complex issues'. These issues included 'a perceived lack of ownership and control of some project activities, and confusion and misunderstandings about the project and the LEARNERS process' (2005: 410). Lennie also suggested that gender and power issues need to be taken into account in such evaluations, 'particularly issues related to leadership, communication and control' (2005: 410). Similar issues were raised in the AC4SC project, as we have already indicated.

Language, literacy and cultural issues

Valery and Shakir (2005: 93) point out that evaluation capacity building is 'language-dependent'. This is particularly the case when not all of the participants in an ECD activity or an evaluation can speak the same language. The diversity of local languages and the literacy levels of community participants are key issues that can affect people's participation in certain M&E activities and was often raised in the AC4SC project. Client literacy and language was also frequently mentioned by respondents in the study by Napp et al. (2002) as something that hindered their data collection activities. Since client literacy was low, they reported problems identifying appropriate data collection tools. It was also difficult to find tools appropriate for those who do not speak English, and designing their own tools, or translating existing tools 'often required skills and resources beyond their means' (Napp et al., 2002: 42). However, many participatory research and evaluation tools have been specifically designed for groups with low levels of written literacy and have been shown to be very effective in engaging a wide range of community members in development projects, as Chambers (2008) and others have shown.

Various cultural issues can also affect the ECD process. For example, Lennie et al. (2009) and Tacchi et al. (2010) have identified factors related to the hierarchical culture in Nepal, and the complexity of the cultural context that affected the outcome of the AC4SC project. Tacchi et al. (2010) note that the relative informality of the Australian academic institutions within which the AC4SC research team worked contrasted greatly to the expectations of deference that characterise the relationships of Nepali students to their teachers. Another factor is the rigid pedagogical methods used in Nepal in which critical questioning or taking the type of critical approach used by evaluators is not encouraged (Lennie et al., 2009). This raises questions about the influence of cultural contexts on ECD because participant's expectations of their own and each others' roles clearly vary, depending on their previous experiences and backgrounds.

Taking communication and 'evaluation language' issues into account

Cracknell (2000: 186) comments that 'evaluation is all about communication', while Preskill and Boyle (2008: 455) suggest that an evaluation culture is reinforced 'through intense and sustained communication about evaluation'. Communication systems within organisations and the communication processes and language used in an ECB initiative are therefore key issues that need to be considered.

Critical by-products of participatory action research are 'methodological innovation favouring collaboration, and locally driven theories and models for change', and yet in practice this is 'fraught with challenges and contradictions' (Schensul et al., 2008: 102-103). For example, Tacchi et al. (2010) reported difficulties when the AC4SC project attempted to develop shared understandings of the theories of social change and the language of donor-influenced development evaluation. This indicates that there are severely limiting factors at play in the field of development where strong paradigms of participation exist in stark contrast to structures that tend to prioritise certain forms of knowledge (Cornwall, 2006; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

McKie emphasises the need to focus on the communicative and relational dimensions of participatory evaluations which can affect their outcomes in unintended ways and argues that 'Whether we like it or not evaluation has created a language and modus operandi that can be excluding' (McKie, 2003: 320). Lennie (2005: 410) suggests that including a diversity of community members in participatory evaluations forces us to pay attention to issues related to the appropriateness of language as well as the perceived value and relevance of participation and evaluation to various groups. In addition, Khadar (2003) and Khan (1998) highlight the confusion generated by the multiple definitions of key evaluation terms in the literature.

Developing open and effective feedback systems

Related to these communication issues is the need for open and effective communication and feedback systems and processes. Cracknell (2000: 196) notes that although feedback is vitally important, 'ironically this is the branch of evaluation which has so far received least attention'. He offers several possible reasons for this, including the different skills required, the amorphous nature of feedback, and way that it 'involves seeming to put oneself in a superior position to colleagues' (Cracknell, 2000: 195). However, Cracknell advises that it is now widely recognised that feedback must be planned for and organised 'with as much care and determination as was required for the evaluation itself' (2000: 196). Our own work in this area indicates that effective communication and feedback systems are essential to the success of participatory M&E in C4D organisations.

Addressing the need for good quality data and data management systems

Khan (1998: 313) states that in developing countries 'weak institutional and methodological capacities (staffing logistics, knowledge, skills etc.) affect the quality of evaluation findings and consequently, their credibility'. These are also issues for more developed countries. Boyle et al. (1999: 9) point to the need for 'good reliable data which can be trusted' to enable sound conclusions to be drawn from evaluations. They suggest that if such systems are not available initial efforts will need to be put into establishing and developing sound data. Preskill and Boyle (2008: 455-456)

emphasise that sustainable evaluation practice 'is in many ways dependent on the organisation's ability to create, capture, store and disseminate evaluation-related data and documents ... as well as processes, procedures, and lessons learned from evaluative efforts'. The AC4SC project used a range of strategies to improve the quality and depth of data gathered by community researchers, including developing a detailed community researcher manual, periodic intensive and refresher training, and regular follow up visits and mentoring.

Many respondents in the study by Napp et al. (2002: 43) expressed concern about 'the validity of evaluation measures and were less likely to support evaluation data when they lacked confidence in the accuracy of evaluation data'. They also questioned the truthfulness of the self-reported behaviour of clients in their HIV prevention programmes and 'their ability to use evaluation designs with sufficient scientific rigour to accurately measure programme outcomes'. The respondents were concerned that without such scientific rigour, the evaluation may produce spurious results that did not accurately reflect the program's worth. Similar issues about the reliability of some M&E data collected about C4D programmes and the need for 'independent' evaluations were raised in our consultations with the Expert Panel for this project. However, 'independent' was sometimes used to refer to evaluators who were not briefed and managed by donors, which was seen as leading to reports that tend to cater to shared expectations between consultant and donor, rather than useful and insightful engagements on the ground and meaningful results.

Some learnings about increasing the effectiveness of ECD in the C4D context

Both this literature review and the outcomes of the AC4SC project have provided a number of valuable learnings about ECD and creating an evaluation culture in development organisations, including those involved in C4D. They include learnings about the importance of leaders being committed to the process, and the need to create a learning organisation and a collaborative organisational culture, based on mutual trust and understanding. This requires a sustained effort over a number of years. Some of those involved in our consultations in New York also suggested that bringing evaluation and C4D professionals together in dialogue is a useful strategy. This strategy was found to be very effective in the AC4SC project. Other learnings reported by Lennie et al. (2009: 9) and Lennie et al. (2010) include:

All relevant staff need to be involved in ECD activities: Management, programme staff and M&E staff need to take an active part in ECB activities so that evaluation is not seen as solely the task of the M&E section. This can help to reduce the impact when key staff members leave the organisation.

ECD initiatives need to be flexible and open to change: The design of ECD initiatives must be flexible and open to change or revision, based on regular feedback from staff and stakeholders.

Ongoing meta-evaluation of ECB is valuable: Meta-evaluation of ECD can help to improve evaluation capacity within organisations. The outcomes of meta-evaluations can also be effectively used to enrich and enliven practical evaluation toolkits and to pass on the learnings to others. Ongoing meta-evaluation and critical reviews are also important to gradually increasing the quality and trustworthiness of R, M&E findings (Lennie, 2006; Lennie et al., 2010).

Good communication and feedback systems are important: The language and forms of communication used in ECD need to be appropriate and clear to all staff. Definitions of key concepts

need to be clarified and agreed to by all relevant staff as early as possible. Feedback systems need to be well thought out and timely so that they can be used to improve programmes and evaluation systems most effectively.

The value of evaluation needs to be actively demonstrated to programme and management staff: Programme and management staff may be reluctant to spend resources and time on evaluations due to pressure to develop or deliver programmes within a set timeframe and budget. They may also be reluctant to change M&E systems which they believe are working well. The best way to address these challenges is to actively demonstrate the benefits and value of undertaking ongoing evaluation to these staff members in such a way that it is integral to all their work, and not seen as an add-on.

Keep participatory evaluation methodologies simple and practical: In the initial phase of ECD initiatives that are trialling new participatory R, M&E methodologies and methods, it is important to keep evaluation methodologies and methods, and M&E systems, as simple and practical as possible. This should help to reduce confusion or lack of motivation and interest among staff and participants, and to increase their usefulness, effectiveness and sustainability. This may require spending more time in the initial planning phase on ensuring that the ECB objectives and process is clear to everyone and not too ambitious or unrealistic in its scope. The roles and responsibilities of everyone involved also need to be very clear.[12]

Conclusion

Our research has identified a significant need to strengthen capacity in C4D and R, M&E at all levels, from community and field levels to planning and management levels. We have also emphasised the importance of taking a long-term approach to evaluation capacity development. ECD was seen as part of the process of institutionalising evaluation and developing an evaluation culture within countries, organisations and initiatives that use C4D. This process is anticipated to generate more high quality M&E and impact assessments of C4D and to improve the design and outcomes of C4D initiatives. Professional evaluation associations and networks, universities and research institutions can play important roles in ECD in developing countries.

We also highlighted the value of adopting a holistic, participatory, learning-oriented approach to managing and improving capacity development. However, we acknowledged that using participatory evaluation methods for ECD raises various challenges and issues. Developing, implementing and sustaining ECD was seen as presenting particularly difficult challenges and issues for time, skill and resource-poor organisations in developing countries. Challenges and issues that have a particular impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of ECD in the C4D context include:

- The complexity inherent to assessing the impact of C4D.
- Attitudes to M&E among donors, C4D organisations and NGOs.
- Lack of practical and sustainable impact assessment frameworks for C4D.

[12] We would like to clarify that, as one of the Expert Panel pointed out, these learnings apply to all evaluation methodologies and ECD processes, whether participatory approaches are used or not.

- The diversity of C4D approaches, which affects ECD needs.
- Maintaining, supporting and sustaining evaluation capacity when there is high staff turnover and loss of change agents and champions.
- Coordinating M&E with C4D programme content and improvement processes.
- The wide range of skills required for effective R,M&E of C4D.

Other ECD challenges and issues that we identified included: the need for a readiness for organisational learning and an organisational culture that is conducive to success; power and conflict issues within organisations and ECD projects; language, literacy and cultural issues; and developing effective data collection and management and communication and feedback systems.

This literature review and our own research in this area have provided some valuable learnings about increasing the effectiveness of ECD in the C4D context. They included: involving all relevant staff in ECD activities, ensuring that ECD is flexible and open to change, actively demonstrating the value of M&E to programme and management staff, and keeping evaluation methodologies and M&E systems as practical and simple as possible.

7. Key approaches, methodologies and methods for research, monitoring and evaluation of C4D

Summary of key findings

- Four key themes and issues related to research, monitoring and evaluation frameworks have emerged from this research:
    1. The need for a more flexible approach in selecting and using R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods.
    2. The value and importance of a participatory approach.
    3. The benefits of a mixed methods approach.
    4. The importance of using approaches and methodologies that consider the wider context and structural issues.
- Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation is recommended as an effective way of engaging stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation, strengthening evaluation capacities, and increasing ownership of the process.
- Various participatory, qualitative or mixed method approaches and methodologies were considered effective for assessing the impacts of C4D, including case studies, Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal, Outcome Mapping, and contribution assessment. Quantitative survey-based methodologies and cost benefit analysis were also seen as effective.
- Causal analysis/problem analysis, the Theory of Change approach and the logical framework approach were considered effective for planning impact evaluations of C4D.
- Commonly used qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, and participatory tools such as community/village mapping, were seen as particularly effective in assessing the impacts of C4D.
- However, each of the approaches, methodologies and methods that were assessed as effective have strengths and limitations or constraints that need to be considered.
- Key factors in selecting the approach, methodologies and methods for R, M&E of C4D include: the extent to which they will provide the most useful and desired outcomes and are consistent with the particular C4D approach, and the resources and support available.

Introduction: Key themes and issues related to R, M&E frameworks and approaches

Four key themes and issues have emerged from this research:

1. The need for a more flexible approach in selecting and using R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods.
2. The value and importance of a participatory approach.
3. The benefits of a mixed methods approach.
4. The importance of using approaches and methodologies and that take the wider context and larger structural issues into account.

The need for a flexible approach

A key finding from our consultations was that more openness, freedom and flexibility is needed in the selection and use of various R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods to ensure that they are appropriate and fit the aims of the C4D programme. As one of the Expert Panel noted:

> *The research and evaluation methodologies and processes selected should fit with the underlying aims and values of the development initiative or programme involved. Often this is not the case and people are frustrated by attempts to fit "square pegs into round holes", without having the freedom, support and know-how to choose approaches and methods that best fit the particular context and the research or evaluation questions being considered.*

A wide diversity of C4D initiatives is implemented within the UN system and the approaches used to evaluate these different initiatives vary widely. In order to deal with the 'complexities and challenges of monitoring and evaluating C4D projects or project components' Puddephatt et al. (2009: 27) recommended adopting a 'tailored toolkit' approach to selecting methodologies and methods. They suggest that

> The type(s) of methodology selected will depend both on the type of project, but also the restraints of the evaluation in terms of time, resources and organisational challenges. For this reason, each methodological approach will vary. As such, suggesting best practice, in terms of selection of methodologies that can apply to all C4D evaluations, would be impossible as well as futile. Instead, the evaluator should decide at the outset of each evaluation what would be the appropriate set of methodologies and toolkits for the specific intervention.

Likewise, Parks et al. (2005: 22) argue that '…we should be wary of forcing Communication for Social Change initiatives into existing or pre-determined monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems. Frameworks are seen by Chapman and Wameyo (2001) as 'useful for giving an overview of areas to look at but should be seen as tools for facilitating creative thinking. The challenge is to remain open to unintended outcomes that fall outside the framework of assessment that may have been adopted' (cited in Parks et al., 2005: 22).

In addition, Souter (2008: 177) states that 'Continual rapid change adds considerably to the difficulty of project design for interventions that make use of ICTs because it makes many of the assumptions involved unstable'. He points out that the project cycle is often 3 to 5 years for many development interventions and that ICD interventions 'are therefore likely to need greater flexibility than is often found in other development initiatives' (Souter, 2008: 177).

The value and importance of participatory approaches

Throughout this report we have emphasised the value and importance of participatory approaches to R, M&E. They are widely acknowledged as highly effective and appropriate for C4D. One of the Expert Panel made the important point that

> *Ultimately, how "effective" a particular methodology or method is deemed to be, should depend on the degree of fit between the aims and values that underlie the particular*

initiative and those witnessed in the approach and process selected to research and evaluate such an initiative.

Highlighting the value of qualitative and participatory approaches to evaluation, another Expert Panel member commented that: 'they are not models, they are not toolkits or toolboxes … they are open approaches that can be adapted locally, that should be adapted locally'.

Participatory R, M&E frameworks and methodologies have a wide range of benefits that can greatly strengthen C4D programmes, and their outcomes, including the improvement of C4D programmes and policies, increased capacities in R, M&E, greater utilisation of findings and learnings, and the empowerment of participants. Other benefits of participatory methods, identified by Chambers (2009a: 4) are that:

> Well designed and facilitated, participatory methods are rigorous, and besides offering qualitative insights can count the uncountable, and generate statistics for relevant dimensions that would otherwise be overlooked or regarded as purely qualitative. They open studies to the voices of those most affected by a project in ways not possible using more conventional methods and can make the realities and experiences of poor people count more.

As discussed in Section 4, Chambers (2009a: 6) has highlighted the 'largely unrecognised ability' of participatory methods to generate numbers 'which can also be commensurable and treated like any other statistics'. He explains that:

> Through judgement, estimation, and expressing values, people quantify the qualitative. The potential of these methods is overdue for recognition. As always that there are ethical issues. Well facilitated, participatory methods can be win-win – empowering people as well as providing credible and reliable insights for policy-makers.

As we have noted, there are a number of challenges and issues associated with participatory methodologies that need to be taken into account. They include: the greater level of time, capacity development in necessary skills and resources, issues related to power inequities and inclusion and the potential for dependence on the facilitator/ evaluation consultant, and for conflicting agendas and perspectives of various stakeholder groups to hinder success (Gregory, 2000; Lennie, 2005; Hearn et al., 2009; McKie, 2003; Tacchi et al., 2010). Other challenges and limitations of participatory M&E methodologies are outlined in the section below on effective methodologies. However, as we have previously argued, in the long run participatory approaches can be less costly when their many benefits are factored into the costs involved. Puddephatt et al. (2009: 13) make the important point that 'stakeholder communication, involvement and ownership should not be limited to methodologies that are more participatory in nature: efforts should be made to build this element into any evaluation practice'.

The benefits of a mixed methods approach

As we have highlighted throughout this report, using a mixed methods approach to R, M&E provides much needed flexibility, sheds light on different issues, and increases the strength and rigour of

evaluation and impact assessment findings (Bamberger et al., 2010; Byrne, 2009a; Hearn et al., 2009; Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Puddephatt et al., 2009; White, 2009). A key finding from our surveys of the UN and Expert Panel groups was that 80% of the UN respondents and 79% of the Expert Panel assessed a mixed methods approach to R, M&E for C4D as 'very important' in their work. In comparison, quantitative approaches were considered 'very important' by 50% of the UN Focal Points and 39% of the Expert Panel and qualitative approaches were considered 'very important' by 80% of the UN Focal Points and nearly 85% of the Expert Panel.

Bamberger et al. (2010) make a compelling and comprehensive case for the use of mixed methods in the monitoring and evaluation of international development programmes. Many of their arguments also apply to the evaluation of C4D. The numerous benefits of a mixed methods approach that they identify include:

- Are more appropriate for 'more complex, multi-component programmes'.
- Can be more effective when impact assessments have to be done quickly, with a modest budget, and have other constraints. The approach can 'provide a number of rapid feedback techniques'.
- Can help to provide detailed analysis of local contexts.
- Enables information on sensitive topics such as domestic violence to be collected and helps to locate and include difficult to reach groups.
- Can enable more effective reconstruction of baseline data.
- Can 'provide the flexibility to integrate good monitoring practices within evaluation designs' and to make more creative use of administrative records and analysis of communication and information such as emails, newsletters and radio announcements.
- Can significantly strengthen the rigour and validity of quantitative approaches by triangulating various data sources and ensuring that survey respondents are interpreting questions in the same way.
- Qualitative information on the implementation process enables evaluations to assess whether certain outcomes are due to design or implementation failure.
- Can 'contribute a range of qualitative indicators as well as generating case studies and in-depth interviews to help understand the meaning of the statistical indicators'.
- Enables the specific information needs of different stakeholders to be met (Bamberger et al., 2010: 3- 16).

The importance of taking context into account

We have also consistently emphasised the importance of using R, M&E frameworks, approaches and methodologies that take into account the wider social, economic, political, cultural, communications and environmental context and larger structural issues that affect C4D initiatives and are of concern and interest to stakeholders. Souter (2008: 161) suggests that a 'greater depth of understanding of context is required for impact assessment than at other levels (e.g. evaluation)'. He argues that 'contextual factors are often highly important in determining whether particular results arise'. However, one of the principles of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E), which is highly recommended for measuring Communication for Social Change initiatives, is that 'the evaluation must be context-specific, rooted in the concerns, interests and problems of the program's end users (Parks et al., 2005: 12). This suggests that a good understanding of context is important for both evaluation and impact assessment. We describe PM&E in more detail in the next sub-section.

Gosling and Edwards (2003: 126-127) point out that non-linear models of change which show how the context of programme inputs and outputs affects the resulting changes is 'closer to the reality of development interventions ... According to this model, change is brought about by a combination of specific events, people and conditions present in a given situation, as well as by the project or programme undertaken'. As many others have noted, those who understand the local context best are the people living in the communities affected by the initiative.

The different context of C4D initiatives also affects the selection of particular R,M&E approaches methodologies and methods. Souter (2008: 174) argues that it 'is not possible to construct a single impact assessment model or framework for ICD projects ... because different methodologies are required for the very different contexts and types of objective involved'. Two particularly important differences in the ICD context that he identifies are:

1. The difference between technologies – 'Different approaches to impact assessment are likely to be required depending on which technologies are involved'.
2. The difference between interventions concerned with media or traditional C4D objectives and those concerned with the use of ICTs to deliver services to project users (Souter, 2008: 175).

Overview of the key R, M&E methodologies

We begin this section by presenting an overview of PM&E, which has been recognised as a key approach to the evaluation of development programmes and CFSC initiatives (Estrella, 2000; Parks et al., 2005; Vernooy et al., 2003). PM&E is an umbrella term for some of the more focused/specific methodologies that we subsequently outline, which are considered effective for R, M&E of C4D. These methodologies were identified in our literature review and survey results. Finally, we summarise a number of strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the key methodologies that were identified by our survey respondents as effective for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

PM&E has been recommended as an effective approach to actively engaging stakeholders in all stages of the monitoring and evaluation of CFSC and ICD initiatives and strengthening evaluation capacities and ownership of the process (Byrne et al., 2005; Myers, 2005; Parks et al., 2005). It emerged because of the limitations of conventional M&E, which is seen as mainly serving the needs and interests of project implementers and donors (Vernooy et al., 2003: 29). PM&E has been described as 'a set of principles and a process of engagement in the monitoring and evaluation endeavour. The process is at least as important as the recommendations and results contained in PM&E reports or feedback meetings' (Parks et al., 2005: 7). Another definition of PM&E is:

> any process that allows all stakeholders - particularly the target audience - to take part in the design of a project, its ongoing assessment and the response to findings. It gives stakeholders the chance to help define a programme's key messages, set success indicators, and provides them with tools to measure success (Myers, 2005: 19).

PM&E differs from traditional M&E by 'attempting to include all stakeholders in all aspects of the process' (Holte-McKenzie et al., 2006: 365). Another distinguishing feature of PM&E is its

fundamental values of '*trust, ownership and empowerment'* (Parks et al., 2005: 11). PM&E is seen as an integral component of a project that is 'closely woven into the whole project cycle ... It provides information that can be fed back into the project immediately to improve subsequent performance' (Vernooy et al., 2003: 29). The participatory tools and techniques of PM&E 'have evolved as useful tools for involving local people in developing strategies for learning about their communities and for planning and evaluation' (Parks et al., 2005: 11). However, there are many local forms of PM&E that go unrecognised.

The concept of PM&E is not new. It draws from over 30 years of participatory research traditions, including 'participatory action research (PAR), participatory learning and action (including participatory rural appraisal or PRA), and farming systems research (FSR) or farming participatory research (FPR)' (Estrella, 2000: 3). Parks et al. (2005) point out that PM&E entered the policy-making domain of large donor agencies and development organisations (including FAO, USAID and the World Bank) during the 1970s.

Two main streams of PM&E have been identified:

1. **Practical PM&E** which is focused on the pragmatic and with fostering evaluation use. This is seen as similar to Developmental Evaluation (which is described below) and 'stakeholder-based evaluation'.
2. **Transformative PM&E** which is based on emancipation and social justice activism and focuses on the empowerment of oppressed groups. This has similarities to transformative versions of Empowerment Evaluation (which is described below) and 'democratic evaluation' (Parks et al., 2005: 10-11).

In practice, there are overlaps between these two streams. Parks et al. (2005: 14) list six essential ingredients that are needed to make PM&E work:

1. Receptive context – PM&E works best when the organisational climate and political context is fairly open and democratic.
2. The evaluator's or evaluation team's commitment to participation and faith in the inherent capacity of people to contribute meaningfully to the PM&E process.
3. Recognition that PM&E takes time and resources; it cannot be rushed ...
4. People skills—particularly facilitation—are a key part of the participatory evaluator's toolkit. Willingness to share experiences, knowledge, insights, and perhaps most difficult, power.
5. Capacity building should be a PM&E objective. Capacity building is consistent with PM&E goals and principles. Capacity building enhances accountability and supports sustainability through community and leadership development, creating a core of participants who are committed to the program/initiative and knowledgeable about it.
6. The process should be structured in such a way that ensures participation of the different interest groups but must be easy to facilitate because local facilitators may be themselves inexperienced in participatory techniques.

Useful participatory, qualitative and mixed methods approaches and methodologies

While assessments between the UN and Expert Panel members we surveyed varied,[13] the following participatory, qualitative or mixed methods approaches and methodologies[14] were generally considered to be the most effective for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes:

- Case studies
- Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA)
- Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)
- Outcome Mapping
- Most Significant Change (MSC) technique
- Ethnographic Action Research (EAR)

Each of these methodologies, other than case studies, was outlined in the background paper by Puddephatt et al. (2009). That paper highlighted MSC and Outcome Mapping as two of the methodologies which they thought represented 'state of the art techniques that practitioners should consider adding to their existing toolbox of evaluation approaches' (Puddephatt et al., 2009: 27). MSC was also included as a key methodology for use in a PM&E framework in Parks et al. (2005) and has become widely used and known in the development field. Empowerment Evaluation was also considered quite effective, especially by some of the UN respondents, and has been successfully used in a variety of programmes around the world (Fetterman, 2010, 2001; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005). Other participatory, qualitative or mixed methods methodologies that were nominated by respondents as effective were:

- Developmental Evaluation
- Rights-based approach methodologies
- Contribution assessment
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Usability studies for online platforms

When used appropriately, PRCA, EAR, the MSC technique, Outcome Mapping, Empowerment Evaluation, Developmental Evaluation, and Appreciative Inquiry are all highly participatory methodologies. Several of these methodologies are becoming more widely used or recommended for R, M&E purposes in different development contexts and programmes. As we discuss below, most of these methodologies include the use of a variety of methods and tools that can provide different forms of qualitative and quantitative data, therefore enabling a mixed methods approach to M&E to be taken. The following provides an overview of these methodologies and the UN Focal Points and

[13] A comparison between the findings from the surveys found that the UN Focal Points rated most of the methodologies and methods as more effective than the Expert Panel, sometimes to quite a large extent. This could indicate that the Focal Points tended to take a less critical perspective or that they had less on the ground or in-depth knowledge of the actual use of some of these methodologies and methods. This needs to be taken into account when considering the assessments provided below of various methodologies and methods.

[14] These were included in a list of methodologies that survey respondents were asked to assess.

Expert Panel member's assessments of these methodologies for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes.

Case studies

Case studies were assessed as 'very effective' by 80% of the UN Focal Points and 85% of the Expert Panel, making it the methodology that was considered the most highly effective of all those listed in our surveys for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes. It is also the methodology that was most often used by both groups (80% of the UN respondents and 85% of the Expert Panel 'often' used case studies in their C4D work).

Case studies frequently involve the use of participatory, qualitative and quantitative methods. Lacayo (2006: 11) points out that 'several scholars argue that the case study approach is appropriate for exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory purposes'. Lacayo (2006: 11) also states that complexity theorists 'favour the choice of a case study approach as it enables the researcher to study a phenomenon as an integrated whole'.

At a recent international conference on impact evaluation for development effectiveness, Khagram suggested that case studies were the best method, empirically, for looking at causal pathways about the effects of an intervention. However, he noted that they are often poorly done. Khagram argued that case studies provide the ability to focus on context, multiple outcomes from the same initiative, and unintended causes. He argued that the comparative case study approach provides a rigorous method that enables learning and knowledge development from impact evaluations (Khagram, 2009).

Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal

PRCA was assessed as 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 75% of the UN Focal Points and 73% of the Expert Panel. This methodology was adapted from Rapid Rural Appraisal. PRCA is described as 'a quick, multidisciplinary and participatory way to conduct communication research. It actively involves the people concerned in the research process to ensure that Communication for Development programmes are effective and relevant to them' (Anyaegbunam et al., 2004: 1). PRCA is 'a methodology that combines participatory approaches with communication methods aimed at investigating issues, especially in rural settings, while building the capacities of the individuals involved in the process' (Mefalopulos, 2005: 249). This process 'allows stakeholders to play an active role in defining their realities and priorities' (Mefalopulos, 2005: 250).

As well as using a range of participatory and qualitative tools and methods, PRCA includes quantitative KABP baseline surveys for Situation and Communication Analyses. One Expert Panel member thought that this made it 'a very powerful and comprehensive approach, especially for BCC [Behaviour Change Communication] benchmarking'.

Rapid Rural Appraisal

RRA was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 75% of the UN Focal Points and 58% of the Expert Panel (however, 50% of the Expert Panel assessed RRA as 'fairly effective'). RRA is an

approach to rural development research that uses multiple methods to enable outsiders to learn about and understand rural conditions and rural poverty in a timely and cost-effective way (Chambers, 2008).

Chambers (2008: 74-78) outlines ten disparate RRA methods which include: using existing information, key indicators, local researchers, direct observation, key informants and group interviews. One Expert Panel respondent considered that RRA was 'a good qualitative methodology accepted also by policy makers' which is 'quite well known and practiced in many countries'. Chambers (1992: 7) explains that RRA emerged in the late 1970s due to dissatisfaction with the 'biases ... of rural development tourism ... disillusionment with the normal processes of questionnaire surveys and their results ... [and] ... the growing recognition that rural people were themselves knowledgeable on many subjects which touched their lives'. It was also found that 'except when rushed and unself-critical, RRA came out better by criteria of cost-effectiveness, validity and reliability when it was compared to more conventional methods' (Chambers, 1992: 8).

Outcome Mapping

Outcome Mapping was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 63% of the UN Focal Points and 67% of the Expert Panel. It is an integrated approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation that 'provides a programme with a continuous system for thinking holistically and strategically about how it intends to achieve results' (Earl et al., 2001: Chapter 1: 4) Drawing on complexity thinking, it recognises that multiple, non-linear events lead to change.

The originality of this approach is seen as its 'shift away from assessing the development impact of a program (defined as changes in state — for example, policy relevance, poverty alleviation, or reduced conflict) and toward changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of the people, groups, and organisations with whom a development programme works directly' (Earl et al., 2001: Chapter 1: 1). Earl et al. (2001) detail the 12 steps involved in using this methodology. Rather than focussing on the impacts of a programme, Outcome Mapping focuses on the often subtle changes that are clearly within a programme's sphere of influence, 'without which the large-scale, more prominent achievements in human well-being cannot be attained or sustained' (Earl et al., 2001: Chapter 1: 7).

This approach is based on the concept of ongoing learning, 'consciousness-raising, consensus-building, and empowerment ... for those working directly in the development program' (Earl et al., 2001: Chapter 1: 3). Its focus is on constant improvement, understanding and creating knowledge rather than on proving, reporting and taking credit for results.

Most Significant Change technique

MSC was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 75% of the UN Focal Points and 58% of the Expert Panel. MSC is a highly participatory approach to M&E that is becoming very widely used or recommended in development contexts (see for example Bhattacharya, 2007; Jallov, 2007a, 2007b; Leeuw & Vaessen, 2009; Parks et al., 2005; Willetts & Crawford, 2007; Wrigley, 2006). One of the Expert Panel listed a number of important strengths of MSC:

> *People love telling and hearing stories, if the environment is safe and trust and rapport well established. Caters to the unexpected and unpredictable. Enables people to tell their own*

stories, in their own words, and to have these listened to by an interested outsider, in a safe environment. The process can be empowering both for the interviewer and the interviewee. When the MSC technique is followed through, there is great group learning potential - both from the stories themselves as well as from their active participation in the process. E.g. having to prioritise and select particular stories, and justify the rationale in each case, fuels important discussion, debate and learning. It can be a very satisfying process for all involved. MSC can really capture the rich detail of changes in the lives of people, communities and organisations involved.

MSC should be used in combination with other methodologies and M&E methods. It involves assessing the changes and impacts that have happened as a result of a programme from the perspective of participants. Programme participants and stakeholders are involved in deciding what sort of change should be recorded, and in analysing the stories that are collected. The MSC process happens throughout the programme cycle and provides monitoring information that can help staff to improve a program. It also contributes to evaluation by providing information about the impacts and outcomes of a programme that can be used to assess how well the programme as a whole is working (Davies & Dart, 2005). A key aim is to encourage continuous dialogue up and down the various levels of an organisation, from field level to senior staff and back again. When this process works well, it can be a powerful tool for ongoing evaluation and learning (Davies & Dart, 2005; Willetts & Crawford, 2007). Although MSC emphasises qualitative monitoring and reporting of change, it can also enable some quantification of changes.

While the MSC technique has proven popular and effective, and has an 'apparent simplicity', there are a number of deeper complexities and challenges in using the full MSC approach in development contexts that must be considered, as Willetts and Crawford (2007) demonstrate. They include: the need for rigorous planning of each stage in the M&E cycle and to ensure adequate representation of 'data sources', the need for higher-order skills than many conventional M&E methods, problems with conveying the concept of 'most significant change' to villagers, issues with power imbalances and the translation of stories, and the extensive time required for story selection. They also identify a number of 'broad enabling contextual factors' that are important to the successful implementation of this technique, including support from senior management and 'an organisational culture that prioritises learning and reflection' (Willetts & Crawford, 2007: 377). An additional issue is that the structure of MSC 'does not focus on, or answer questions about, overall project impact' (Willetts & Crawford, 2007: 378). Some of these challenges and issues in using MSC were also identified in the AC4SC project.

Ethnographic Action Research

EAR was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 38% of the UN Focal Points and 64% of the Expert Panel, who tended to make more use of EAR. This methodology was mainly designed for use in community-based ICT or media projects and has been applied in a number of major development projects conducted in South and South East Asia and elsewhere (Hearn et al., 2009; Tacchi et al., 2003; Tacchi & Kiran, 2008).

EAR is similar to participatory action research, with three key distinctions, as Hearn et al. (2009: 87) explain:

> First, the *ethnographic* refers not only to the key methods that are used [which are mostly qualitative and participatory] ... but also to the *ethnographic approach* that is a fundamental plank of EAR and the way it is both integrated into the development of media initiatives and is ongoing. EAR is designed to build the capacity of media initiatives to monitor and evaluate, and ... to alter practices as part of their ongoing development ... Second, EAR works with the conceptual framework of the communicative ecology. This involves paying keen attention to the wider context of information and communication flows and channels – formal and informal, technical and social – and monitoring opportunities for both intervention and the changes that result. Finally, the media itself are used as tools for action research, for exploring issues in a community as well as archiving, managing and collecting data and facilitating online networks of EAR researchers.

A key aim of EAR is to develop a research culture through which knowledge and reflection become integral to an initiative's ongoing development (Tacchi et al., 2003; Tacchi et al., 2007). While EAR is mainly focussed on the collection of qualitative data, several participatory EAR tools enable the production of charts, maps and diagrams which can provide valuable quantitative information (see EAR training handbook at http://ear.findingavoice.org/). Short questionnaire surveys can also be used to collect some statistical data from larger numbers of people that can be triangulated with various qualitative data to add rigour to M&E findings.

The four-year AC4SC project further developed the EAR methodology for assessing the social change impacts of community radio programmes in Nepal. While the project was successful in building an evaluation culture and strengthening M&E systems and capacities within Equal Access Nepal, a number of significant challenges and issues arose that affected project outcomes and impacts (Lennie et al., 2009 and 2010; Tacchi et al., 2010). They included issues related to the hierarchical culture in Nepal, regular staff turnover and loss of change agents, communication barriers, power–knowledge relations, and the time and resources required for project activities. However, an ongoing mixed methods meta-evaluation of the project was considered effective in increasing evaluation skills, knowledge and capacities, forming effective collaborative relationships with participants, and developing a practical impact assessment methodology and M&E systems that are likely to be sustainable (Lennie et al., 2010). A toolkit on the AC4SC methodology and methods, which includes numerous examples contributed by M&E staff of EAN, is currently being completed.

Empowerment Evaluation

Empowerment Evaluation was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 36% of the Expert Panel group and 57% of the UN Focal Points who were able to make an assessment.[15] This methodology aims to increase programme success by '(1) providing program stakeholders with tools for assessing the planning, implementation, and self-evaluation of their program, and (2) mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/organisation' (Wandersman et al., 2005: 28). Community-based projects and organisations in many countries have successfully used this methodology to improve programmes and interventions in a wide range of fields (Andrews, 1996; Fetterman, 2010, 2001; Fetterman & Wandersman, 2005; Miller & Lennie,

[15] It should be noted that 62% of the UN Focal Points had a low to moderate knowledge of this methodology while it was unknown to 36% of the Expert Panel.

2005). This methodology is distinguished by its clearly articulated principles: (1) improvement, (2) community ownership, (3) inclusion, (4) democratic participation, (5) social justice, (6) community knowledge, (7) evidence-based strategies, (8) capacity building, (9) organisational learning, and (10) accountability (Wandersman et al., 2005). The steps of Empowerment Evaluation are:1) taking stock or determining where the programme stands, including strengths and weaknesses; 2) focusing on establishing goals ... with an explicit emphasis on programme improvement; 3) developing strategies and helping participants determine their own strategies to accomplish programme goals and objectives; and 4) helping programme participants determine the type of evidence required to document progress credibly toward their goals (Fetterman, 2010: 8). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected as part of an Empowerment Evaluation.

Miller and Lennie (2005: 24) suggest that Empowerment Evaluation has several strengths that make it 'a practical and valuable methodology for improving and assessing the impacts of community based programmes ... and increasing their long-term sustainability and success'. However, they advise considering a number of limitations and issues before deciding to implement this methodology. Common to all participatory approaches, these include the funding, time and resources required to 'build evaluation capacities and include a diversity of programme staff and community members in designing and conducting the evaluation'. Also, to be effective, 'a strong commitment is required to the principles of Empowerment Evaluation by senior management, staff and community participants and adequate resources are required' (Miller & Lennie, 2005: 24 – 26).

Developmental Evaluation

Developmental Evaluation was suggested as a useful methodology by two of the Expert Panel. One of them explained that he uses this methodology 'to gather data (situation analysis) and inform critical/creative thinking during an ongoing process of 'developing' a model or project (for example, if there is a big change in context and you have to adapt) - or when one has to respond and adjust in complex environments, for example'. He further explained that

> *this type of evaluation respects and incorporates complexity thinking and provides new ways to think about lines of accountability. This type of thinking poses important questions and challenges to results-based management.*

Developmental Evaluation was designed for use by initiatives with 'multiple stakeholders, high levels of innovation, fast paced decision-making, and areas of uncertainty [that] require more flexible approaches (Dozois et al., 2010: 14). This methodology refers to

> Long-term, partnering relationships between evaluators and those engaged in innovative initiatives and development. [Its] processes include asking evaluative questions and gathering information to provide feedback and support developmental decision-making and course corrections along the emergent path. The evaluator is part of a team whose members collaborate to conceptualise, design and test new approaches in a long-term, on-going process of continuous improvement, adaptation, and intentional change. The evaluator's primary function in the team is to elucidate team discussions with evaluative questions, data and logic, and to facilitate data-based assessments and decision-making in

> the unfolding and developmental processes of innovation (Patton, 2008 cited in Dozois et al., 2010: 15).

As with other forms of participatory evaluation, some specialised skills are needed to effectively undertake Developmental Evaluation. As well as skills such as communication, facilitation, active listening, and flexibility, Dozois et al. (2010: 22) suggest that 'at a *minimum*, a DE needs to have some facility with strategic thinking, pattern recognition, relationship building, and leadership'.

Rights-based approach methodologies

One of the UN respondents nominated 'Rights-based approach methodologies' as an additional methodology that is effective for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes. She commented that 'this is loosely understood and operationally ends up applying already known methods. However, it deserves to be treated as a "methodology"'.

A number of evaluation frameworks that incorporate a human rights approach have been identified and analysed by Porter (2009) who notes that 'Being specialised means that in many instances human rights is new to evaluators, while evaluation is new for human rights practitioners. Curiously a middle ground has been found in development practice, where the interplay between the two is especially important' (Porter, 2009: 1). One of the frameworks reviewed by Porter is the United Nations Evaluation Group – Draft Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in Evaluations in the UN System. As we noted earlier in the Principles section, participatory approaches can be linked to human rights such as the right to be heard and to be empowered, based on various UN conventions.

Like most genuinely participatory approaches, the transformative mixed methods framework associated with Donna Mertens is rooted in human rights and social justice. It places priority on partnership-based indigenous-rooted approaches and uses methodologies that are culturally appropriate and employ mixed methods (Mertens & Chilisa, 2009). The Save the Children toolkit by Gosling and Edwards (2003: 7-8) explains how a rights-based approach to development affects planning, M&E and impact assessment:

> Attention shifts from the needs of people to the duties and responsibilities of those around them to respect, protect and fulfil their rights. Responsibility for this is distributed between family, community, civil society organisations, national and local government institutions, business and the media. All those with responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights are defined as duty-bearers.

The implications of this approach to child rights programming, for example, include:

- ***Broader analysis***: A broader situation analysis is required, focussing on people's rights and responsibilities.
- ***Broader impact***: Programmes should have an impact on the root causes of rights violations, as well as immediate problems.
- ***Participation***: People [including children] have a right to participate in decisions that affect them.

- ***Non-discrimination and equality***: All people have rights and this emphasises the importance of non-discrimination and equality.
- The ***best interests of children*** should come first (Gosling & Edwards, 2003: 9).

Contribution assessment

Another UN respondent nominated 'contribution assessment' as another useful impact assessment methodology. He described this as 'an analysis of the contribution of a C4D intervention to an overall development outcome, as opposed to a cause-effect relationship ... [It] shows how C4D contributes to an outcome without being directly responsible for it'. Our literature review has highlighted some of the benefits of this approach.

Contribution analysis is a performance measurement approach that was developed by Mayne (1999). Rather than attempting to definitively link a program's contribution to desired results, contribution analysis seeks to provide plausible evidence that can reduce uncertainty regarding the 'difference' a program is making to observed outcomes (Mayne 2001, cited in Kotvojs & Shrimpton, 2007: 27). In addition, contribution analysis recognises that it takes time for results to occur, and 'so does not attempt to prove an impact before impacts can realistically be achieved (Kotvojs & Shrimpton, 2007: 28).

An assessment of the use of contribution analysis in the Fiji Education Sector Program (funded by AusAID) found that its most notable benefits were 'improvements to the existing FESP program logic, monitoring against performance indicators that better demonstrate progress towards outcomes, donor harmonisation and increased support for monitoring and evaluation activities' (Kotvojs & Shrimpton, 2007: 34).

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry was suggested by another UN respondent who thought the strengths of this approach were that it 'facilitates dialogue and participation'. This process was developed by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) and Cooperrider et al. (2003). It was 'designed to create democratically based, visionary change' in organisations (Gergen, 2003: 53). It is based on an understanding of organisations as living human systems that are socially constructed, and is seen as useful in formulating positive futures-oriented plans in action research projects (Hearn et al., 2009). In this approach, problem identifiers and bringers are valued as they tell us that things could be better. Organisations are seen as being made up of many voices, all of which have valid perspectives (Hearn et al., 2009).

Useful quantitative methodologies

Quantitative survey-based methodologies and cost benefit analysis were also seen as effective for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes by several of the UN and Expert Panel members we surveyed. Puddephatt et al. (2009) describe a number of 'diffusion-based' quantitative methodologies that are often associated with top-down approaches to C4D and M&E. However, as Leeuw and Vaessen (2009: 32) suggest, 'many methods not commonly associated with stakeholder participation ... can also be used in more or less participatory ways'.

Quantitative survey-based methodologies

Quantitative survey-based methodologies were assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 69% of the Expert Panel and 90% of the UN respondents, who made much more use of these methodologies in developing and evaluating their agency's C4D programmes. Puddephatt et al. (2009) outline the strengths and weaknesses of a number of quantitative and survey-based techniques that are commonly used in the M&E of development programmes, and have an application to C4D programmes. They include: behaviour change comparison surveys, behavioural surveillance surveys and Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviours and Practices surveys. The strengths and weaknesses of KABP surveys are discussed in the methods section below. As we have consistently emphasised in this report, quantitative methodologies should be used in combination with qualitative methodologies to produce more useful and rigorous M&E findings.

Cost benefit analysis

Cost benefit analysis was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 54% of the Expert Panel and 67% of the UN Focal Points, who made much more use of this methodology in their agency's C4D work. Puddephatt et al. (2009: 8) suggest that cost benefit or cost effectiveness analysis can be a useful tool in demonstrating success 'in a results-based environment where competition for funds is tight and donors want to see the most efficient use of their resources'. However, one of the Expert Panel argued that in 'complex C4D environments cost benefit analysis is too reductionist to tell us very much unless it is complemented with in-depth qualitative research'.

Important note about the tables in this section

The views expressed in the tables in the following section reflect the diverse perspectives of the UN C4D Focal Points and Expert Panel members we consulted. Their responses indicated that these perspectives ranged from tending to favour dominant M&E approaches and methodologies to strongly advocating for the use of alternative participatory or qualitative approaches. This should be taken into account when reading these tables. However, as one of the respondents noted: 'the common criticism of participatory evaluation being subjective/less objective can be applied to almost any methodology or method'. It should also be noted that the same respondents who described strengths of various methodologies, approaches and methods also outlined their limitations or weaknesses. Their responses indicate that even those who favoured particular methodologies and approaches generally took a critical approach that openly acknowledged their weaknesses as well as their strengths. We think this is an important point, and that it is advisable to always take a critical approach and consider the weaknesses along with the strengths of the approaches, methodologies or methods chosen.

It was beyond the scope of this literature review to review all of the literature on the strengths and limitations of each of the approaches, methodologies and methods discussed in this section. However, such information can be found in various evaluation and impact assessment guides, toolkits and compendiums such as Clark and Sartorius (2004), Gosling and Edwards (2003), Heeks and Molla (2009) and Westat (2002).

summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Strengths and limitations of key M&E methodologies

Methodology	Strengths	Limitations or weaknesses
Case studies	Provide an in-depth review, understanding or analysis of an issue or complex situation and detailed information over space and time about the complexities of the research context and change in the community, including unexpected change. This allows a holistic description of the process and outcomes, key issues and trends, and the ability to compare various scenarios to find out "why". Case studies are concrete and provide real life information for replication and an understanding of the type of dynamics required to achieve results.	They are limited in terms of their representation, and their inability to generalise to a larger population and prove large-scale results. They are viewed by some as anecdotal and not sufficiently 'scientific' and it may be difficult to extrapolate learning. Case studies can be designed for or against a single principle and need continuous careful attention. Preparing case studies requires certain expertise, time, support and financial resources. Their quality depends on the qualities of the documenter and sources of information - whether from direct or indirect means.
Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)	These methodologies provide a quick means of taking stock of needs, preferences, perceptions, views and opinions of various target groups. They allow participants to define results and measure change and they stimulate and encourage participation and discussion with stakeholders at all levels.	Results cannot be generalised and they are difficult to use for large-scale results; requires particular skills and resources.
Rapid Rural Appraisal	Quite well known and practiced in many countries: more local staff are beginning to be trained in these techniques. A good qualitative methodology that is also accepted by policy makers.	Seen as not systematic, and not measured rigorously enough to provide credible baseline reference.
Outcome Mapping	Useful for planning and evaluation. This methodology puts people, relationships and behaviours at the heart of the process and differentiates levels of change. It checks assumptions behind expected results, and focuses on results that are directly related with a particular programme or project. OM does this by measuring how people's lives have changed and the sense of ownership they acquired over the programme or project.	Outcome Mapping is seen as overly detailed, with a terminology that can be exclusive and a process that can be long. It does not focus on impacts and was seen as not very suitable for projects aimed at changing processes (e.g. news-making) and much more diffuse results.
Most Significant Change	Evaluates from the participants' point of view and gathers various viewpoints among stakeholders to appreciate their perceptions and priorities. MSC can capture the rich detail of changes in the lives of people, communities and organisations, including the unexpected and unpredictable. This technique enables people who are usually voiceless to tell often complex	MSC was seen as having similar problems to Outcome Mapping - the full process is time consuming, demands sustained support and commitment and can be complex and difficult to implement and use. Like case studies, it may not provide robust evidence and be credible to certain stakeholders. In addition, MSC does not enable an understanding of the magnitude of phenomena, less

	stories about how their individual lives have been affected. MSC can also catalyse participatory reflection, and fuel important discussion, debate and learning. The process can be empowering for those involved.	prominent factors and effects are not captured, and it is difficult to quantify.
Ethnographic Action Research	EAR captures relevant data through the active involvement of researchers with different participant groups to document their context and realities. It delves into underlying problems and looks closely at the whole process, from the planning stage, and is responsive to programmatic changes. EAR facilitates timely feedback and significant, ongoing learning, and allows immediate participatory engagement with people in search for a common solution. This process can be enriching and can catalyse new ideas and behaviours.	EAR was seen as resource intensive, time consuming, and requires necessary expertise. It also captures depth and nuances of context, over time, which is hard or impossible to do at scale, and may be merely descriptive without attempts to measure. The longitudinal nature of an EAR study was seen as unsuited to the UN's short-term allocation of funds for research. This approach requires long-term planning with defined and agreed benchmarks, the nature of which may shift and change over time, sometimes necessitating constant monitoring and adjustment.
Empowerment Evaluation	Is people-focussed and allows for longer term sustainability.	Can be difficult to judge in the short-term.
Participatory Evaluation	Key actors and stakeholders have a major say, their voices, perspectives and experiences are elevated. PE can be a significant learning experience, fostering constructive and critical reflection and learning among and between all involved. It can be a richly rewarding experience, as those involved see and feel the benefits of their own active participation. PE fosters commitment to and use of evaluation findings, as those involved have a greater degree of ownership of the process and findings, both of which therefore mean more to them.	Requires time, sustained support and resources. The common criticism of PE being subjective or less objective can be applied to almost any methodology or method.
Quantitative survey-based methodologies	They enable a wide coverage, and provides a considerable amount of data. With the right sampling, allows for broad generalisations of findings to larger populations. Survey data gives a reality basis from which to plan. They are seen as crucial for gaining a basic understanding about certain problems, and can effectively test assumptions about qualitative and observed behaviour, and gauge levels of public participation, and monitor usage of tools etc. These methodologies can provide more exact or solid evidence or markers, particularly of short-term progress	They can be costly, time consuming and labour intensive. Their use requires expertise in application and the participation of a team of people, hence significant and careful pre and post planning and scheduling, some financial investment and strong leadership are necessary. They do not capture context-specific realities and the level of detail required to understand the nuances of impact (including perceptions, opinions and experience). In addition, they do not allow for qualitative analysis and change over time in a given context;

	towards change and can be less costly and resource intensive than other methodologies. They are also good for policy makers.	and are best suited for short-term activities. There may also be problems with conducting appropriate baseline surveys; they may be unsuitable for all situations; they are often less engaging for participants.
Cost benefit analysis	Along with KABP effects, this is seen by one of the Expert Panel as the most important method for bottom-line decision making about the worth of C4D. The method can be instrumental in deciding whether or not to support large-scale C4D initiatives. Another Expert Panel respondent considered this a 'good method' for policy makers and donors.	This methodology usually requires an economist to establish credibility and appropriate data gathering and analysis, in short, time and effort to produce results. Also, it does not always provide an analysis of qualitative aspects.

Overview of key impact evaluation approaches and methods

In this section we outline the key approaches, methods and tools identified in our survey results and in the literature which were considered effective for planning and implementing impact assessments of C4D programmes. We then outline a number of strengths and weaknesses of the key approaches and methods which need to be taken into account.

Approaches for planning impact evaluations

The following approaches and tools were generally considered by the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel to be the most effective for planning impact evaluations of C4D programmes:

- Causal analysis/problem analysis
- Theory of Change approach
- Logical framework (logframe) approach

The following provides a brief overview of these approaches and tools and their assessment by the UN Focal Point and Expert Panel respondents:

Causal analysis/problem analysis

Causal analysis/problem analysis was assessed as 'very effective' by 56% of the UN Focal Points and 46% of the Expert Panel. A causal analysis framework aims to identify the following:

1. The major problem and condition(s) that the project seeks to change.
2. The factors that cause the condition(s).
3. The ways to influence the causal factors, based on hypotheses of the relationships between the causes and likely solutions.
4. The interventions to influence the causal factors.
5. The expected changes or desired outcomes (Chaplowe, 2008: 2)

Chaplowe (2008: 3) advises that causal analysis should be based on

> a careful study of local conditions and available data as well as consultation with potential beneficiaries, program implementers, other stakeholders, and technical experts. Such information may be available in needs assessments, feasibility studies, participatory rapid appraisals, community mapping, and other forms of analysis.

Other forms of problem analysis, such as problem trees can be useful for 'isolating conditions and consequences' that help to identify project objectives and strategies (Chaplowe, 2008: 3). One of the Expert Panel members found that the most effective tool in Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal is the use of Problem Tree Analysis for setting the focus of quantitative baseline surveys.

Theory of Change approach

The Theory of Change approach was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 33% of the UN Focal Points and 82% of the Expert Panel.[16] 'Theories of change' is 'one manifestation of the theory-driven approach used to evaluate complex public policy interventions' (Sullivan et al., 2002: 206). This is due to its apparent capacity to accommodate multi-sector activity (diversity), its concern with the relationship between process and outcomes (dynamics) and its emphasis on wholesale change at individual, organisational and system levels (complexity) (Sullivan et al., 2002: 206). This approach also makes explicit the values that underpin the perspectives of more and less powerful stakeholders (Sullivan et al., 2002) and is highly compatible with participatory M&E methods. A structured Theory of Change tool has been developed by Keystone Accountability. Using this tool, the process of developing a theory of change is seen as 'an exciting and often liberating process of interaction and discovery that helps organisations see beyond their familiar frames and habits … understand the full complexity of the change they wish to see, and imagine new solutions in dialogue with others' (Keystone Accountability, 2009: 4).

The strengths of the theory of change approach include that it adds value to process-outcomes evaluations by 'requiring the link between process and outcomes to be articulated at the beginning of the process', its capacity to link the 'participation of all relevant stakeholders with a maximisation of learning', and its emphasis on 'the dynamic nature of context' in the evaluation (Sullivan et al., 2002: 208). However, Sullivan et al. (2002) also identify a number of practical, political, theoretical and systemic limitations to applying theories of change in practice. They include: the problem of including 'dissenting voices' in the process, its lack of reference to how power differentials may need to be addressed, and the potential that a bottom up approach to theory could limit other explanations from broader theoretical perspectives (Sullivan et al., 2002: 209-210).

Logical framework approach

The logical framework approach or 'logframe' was assessed as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' by 58% of the Expert Panel and 80% of the UN Focal Points, which made much more use of this approach. Along with MSC and Outcome Mapping, Puddephatt et al. (2009) nominated the logframe as one of the M&E methodologies that they thought represented 'state of the art techniques that practitioners should consider adding to their existing toolbox of evaluation approaches' They argue that 'a logical model of change should drive any M&E system' and that the logframe 'could be one

[16] It should be noted that 44% of the UN respondents did not know this approach but 89% of them had a very high or high level of interest in learning more about it.

way to progress impact assessment of C4D initiatives as an interim measure and lay the groundwork for more nuanced evaluation over time (Puddephatt et al., 2009: 28)'.

The logframe has been described as 'the single most widely used device for presenting a summary description of what aid programmes are trying to achieve' (Gasper, 1997, cited in Davies, 2004: 103) and is one of a larger class of tools known as programme logic models, which are frequently used by organisations and evaluators. Over the past 20 years the logframe has come to play a dominant and central role in the planning, design, implementation, evaluation and management of development projects (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005; Dearden, 2001) and its use is now stronger than ever.

Proponents of the logframe claim that it provides a 'structured, logical approach to setting priorities and determining the intended results and activities of a project', and the basis for 'evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of a project' (Dearden, 2001: 3) Logframes have also been praised for 'the way in which they can encourage strategic thinking at different "levels" of a project' (Earle, 2002: 2) and for 'encouraging clear thinking' (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005: 12). A major strength of this approach, identified through research with international development NGOs, is that 'it forces development actors to think through the relationship between where they want to go (the impact) and what they are going to do (the inputs and activities) and the intermediate steps on the way' (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005: 18).

However, the logframe has also been widely criticised as inflexible, reductionist and unable to capture unexpected outcomes or changes. It represents the simplification of complex social processes and avoids the importance of process (Earle, 2002). In addition, there is a growing awareness that 'the logframe and similar tools squeeze out data related to local culture and context, and thus do not provide a space for an analysis of informal interactions and external influences that can be the lifeblood of a successful development intervention' (Earle, 2002: 5). It is also seen as grounded in a 'worldview largely associated with Western positivist thinking, and alien to the rest of the world' (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005: 12-13). Even when a participatory approach to logframe development is used, this can prove problematic due to it being difficult to change after stakeholders have gone through a very thorough planning process (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005), and the way in which it can foster 'an extractive approach to participation' (Earle, 2002: 4). While adaptations of the logframe have been developed, and some have called for more participatory use of the logframe, Earle has questioned whether 'the problems of language, Western concepts of linearity and its fundamentally hierarchical nature [can] ever be reconciled with goals of empowerment and giving voice to the most marginalised'(Earle, 2002: 14).

A number of other strengths and weaknesses (or limitations and constraints) of these three approaches and tools, described by respondents to our surveys, are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Strengths and limitations of key impact evaluation planning approaches

Approach	Strengths	Limitations or weaknesses
Causal analysis	Can provide solid insights into key issues requiring attention. It is seen as a reliable way to describe determinants of and barriers to behaviour and social change at	The quality of information depends on the reliability of sources (this was seen as a challenge, not a weakness). It can dilute the overall objective, and when the intervention is too concrete and the

	different levels of the problem tree, particularly from analysis of intermediate and root causes/determinants of behaviour and social norms. It allows problem identification to lead the way and helps people to see the logic of an intervention. It can also determine the nature of a problem, and provide an understanding of ways to address it that resonate with local communication practices and interests.	outcome is too broad, it is not easy to show the logic of an intervention. It can also be difficult to show the causal links between the project, program, regional and global levels of results. It requires good skills and extensive data and does not always assist (and can even diminish) communication design if it is done poorly.
Theory of change	Seen as enabling more detailed analysis of different stakeholders, communication flows and processes. It enables targeted project design and M&E. It is also good for expressing assumptions of causal changes and for deeper analysis of what is working or not, for whom etc.	It is often designed to fit the scope and resources of the project (by small NGOs) rather than taking in all the external context and has the same problems as logframe in that when the context changes the theory has to adjust. However, it is intended to be adjusted over time.
Logframe	Enables more effective planning and monitoring by helping people to clearly see the linkages of interventions, and to think things through from the beginning in an easy to follow systematic, step-by-step method. This process helps to identify the sequence from activities to outcomes and objectives. Logframe is useful for setting performance objectives and judging whether they have been achieved. This tool can give clarity and simplicity to what can be an overly complex design, and is seen as essential for identifying what will be tracked, and what baseline data is needed.	The process is generally not participatory, has low-levels of flexibility, can be time consuming, does not express underlying causal theory and is not impact focused. It also requires good databases for setting achievable performance targets. It cannot always account for the numerous factors that contribute to social change and does not show the level of commitment and contributions from stakeholders to the attainment of results. It is very difficult to use the full logframe for complex programmes and projects due to the large number of indicators required and the difficulty of formulating SMART indicators. The logframe can become a box ticking exercise that is not properly utilised once completed, and can reduce communication creativity.

Effective methods for assessing impacts of C4D

Table 9 below sets out the methods listed in our survey that were generally considered by the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel respondents to be the most effective for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes. It shows the percentage of respondents who assessed these methods as either 'very' or 'fairly effective' for assessing the impacts of C4D programmes.

Table 9: Ratings for methods considered effective for assessing C4D impacts

Method	UN C4D Focal Points	Expert Panel
In-depth interviews	100%	91%
Focus group discussions	89%	83%
Community/village mapping	88%	78%
Channel/media usage and preference analysis	75%	64%
Channel/media coverage analysis	67%	50%
Communication Environment Analysis	44%	64%
Participant/audience analysis	50%	67%
Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviours and Practices (KABP) surveys	60%	58%

This indicates that commonly used qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and participatory tools such as community/village mapping were seen as particularly effective in assessing the impacts of C4D. Other methods nominated by respondents that were often used or considered effective were:

- Media content analysis
- Testimonies and feedback from project participants
- Participant/nonparticipant observation
- Observational analysis
- Observations of on-the-ground impacts such as audience reaction to a particular radio programme
- Participatory tools such as body mapping, photo-novella, pocket or voting charts, story with a gap
- Key Informant Panel interviews
- Analysis of relevant secondary quantitative and qualitative data
- National and regional mapping of regulatory policy and legislative frameworks
- Mapping of institutional capacity, media environment assessments
- Peer review

A wide range of strengths and weaknesses (or limitations and constraints) of some of the key impact evaluation methods, described by the respondents, are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10: Strengths and limitations of key evaluation methods

Method	Strengths	Limitations or weaknesses
In-depth interviews	They enable more in-depth and closer exploration and understanding of issues and impacts of a communication initiative, and the nuances of a programme from the participants' point of view that can be very rich and telling.	They take time, are labour and resource intensive and therefore generally not suitable for use with large numbers of people. Since they are necessarily individual and inevitably selective it may be difficult to

	They allow probing and discussion of sensitive and personal information that could be more difficult to discuss with wider audiences.	extrapolate to a general finding and may provide biased views. They should be conducted with focus group discussions in order to validate results.
Focus group discussions	Can elicit and capture rich, in-depth and varied input, feedback, views, problems and information from a number of people in a short time and can usefully inform wider surveys and interviews. They can validate information through in-depth interviews or triangulate related data and information obtained quantitatively as well as those from other qualitative methods. FGDs also provide an opportunity for connecting people, and enable participants to debate or discuss issues and learn from each other. They open up communication flows, stimulate participation and commitment, and can foster an openness to new ideas in a safe and supportive environment.	Can be time consuming and costly and need to be done with several groups. They require systematic preparation and strong facilitation, interpersonal and listening skills and skills in documentation and analysis, an ability to deal with sensitive issues, to be open, and to deal with conflict and power differentials. The quality of information may vary according to context, quality of facilitator and attitude of the focus group on the issue/topic. FGDs can be manipulated towards a particular outcome, there can be some constraints on what can be said, there are issues with influence, and the group may be skewed towards more important members of a society. They can rarely be used on a very large scale but can inform larger-scale data gathering.
Community/village mapping	This was seen as an important method to identify social strata in a village and for introducing the spatial perspective, and how a community relates to the external world. Allows for the unexpected and unpredictable, enables comparisons between different time periods, groups, genders etc., and has benefits for children and less literate groups. Participants usually enjoy and learn a lot through the process. The picture created can facilitate ownership and use of the process and findings.	Should only be used with other qualitative methods and requires expertise in facilitation to ensure that the process achieves its potential, that differences are adequately captured, and that the environment is conducive to honest sharing and reflection.
Communication environment analysis	This is seen as a holistic approach to addressing political, socio-cultural, economic, geo-physical determinants of communication environment at family, community and national levels. It can help identify, as a priority, which communication channels or vehicles not only exist but are open and better positioned to use to achieve results. This method puts the subjects in the context of their environment and uses quantitative and qualitative methods.	It needs thorough research, using both primary and secondary sources (a challenge and not a weakness) and may not be able to account for a quickly changing environment. The value of this method depends on the nature of the research question.
KABP surveys	If they are planned and executed well,	They do not capture underlying causes

	provides baseline data for setting SMART C4D objectives as well as for developing M & E outcome indicators. KAPB levels are seen as essential to establishing the worth of a C4D effort and as a pre-requisite activity for cost benefit analysis. They are more people centred than other types of survey methods and allow the researcher to cross-check subjects' responses.	of behaviour and issues around social norms, may not include enough background to place responses in context and may be difficult to quantify. Require research skills normally acquired through PhD studies, thereby limiting the pool of researchers available to carry them out.

Selection of R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods

This section considers some of the key factors that need to be considered in selecting the approaches, methodologies and methods for the R, M&E of C4D including:

- The extent to which the approach, methodology and methods will provide outcomes and information that will best meet the expectations of key stakeholders and be most useful to them.
- The particular research and evaluation questions, which will determine best methodologies and methods and the types of data that need to be collected.
- Achieving clarity about the particular paradigm that underpins the R, M&E work.
- How consistent the R, M&E approach is with the C4D approach and the R, M&E for C4D principles set out in this report.
- How well the methodologies and methods will engage the primary stakeholders and participants in the R, M&E process.
- Which particular mix of methodologies and methods will best provide the desired evaluation outcomes.
- The resources and support available.
- The flexibility and robustness of the evaluation design.

Meeting expectations and usefulness of the results: An important initial step in an R, M&E process is to clarify the expectations of key participants and stakeholders (including funders and beneficiaries). The aim is that the results of the evaluation are useful to the end users of the C4D initiative and that the results and findings are used to improve the initiative and understandings about the process of behaviour and social change and the role of C4D in bringing about change. These factors will also affect the selection of appropriate methodologies and methods. For example, if results are needed quickly, planning to implement the full Most Significant Change technique would be inappropriate since this is quite a lengthy process. In addition, MSC is not a stand-alone technique and should be used with other evaluation methods.

Clarifying the research and evaluation questions: A further issue is that qualitative or action research approaches do not usually begin with clearly specified research questions, but rather formulate questions after open-ended field research has been completed. One solution to this issue is for qualitative work that uses open-ended data collection methods such as in-depth interviews to be embedded in structured research (Westat, 2002: 45). The questions that guide R, M&E work will

determine the type of data that needs to be collected and the approaches and methods that can best be used. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004: 17 - 18) suggest in relation to using a mixed methods approach to research: 'What is most fundamental is the research question - research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers'.

Clarifying the research and evaluation paradigm: This report has advocated the use of a participatory mixed methods approach to R, M&E of C4D. However, we would argue that mixing research and evaluation *paradigms* is problematic and tends to result in confusion and inappropriate compromises that limit the outcomes of evaluations. This means that it is necessary to be very clear about the particular paradigm that underpins R, M&E work. Use of an empirical, interpretive, holistic, systems-based, participatory action research-based or pragmatic paradigm will clearly affect your choice of methodologies and methods and the way in which they are implemented.

Consistency with C4D approach and M&E for C4D principles: The process of selecting methodologies and methods should be flexible, participatory and consistent with the C4D approach and the principles of R, M&E for C4D proposed in this report.

Engaging primary stakeholders and audiences: Consideration also needs to be given to how well the methodologies and methods will engage primary stakeholders and audiences in the R, M&E process, are appropriate for the groups involved, and will lead to findings that they will see as useful, trustworthy and credible.

***Best mix of methodologies and methods*:** Another step is to consider which particular mix of methodologies and methods will best fit the evaluation outcomes being sought. This requires becoming familiar with the main purpose of various methodologies and methods and understanding their strengths and limitations or constraints. The aim here is to consider the extent to which any limitations or constraints outweigh the strengths of the methodology or method and how well different methodologies and methods balance or complement each other.

Resources and support available: Several different types of resources and constraints also need to be considered before finalising the questions that guide the R, M&E process and selecting the methodologies and methods. A key question here is 'Will the particular approach, methodologies and methods provide the type of information that we want, when we want it, and help to answer our particular questions? Other factors include:

- The budget and costs involved, including staff time, training and travel costs.
- Time constraints (especially if participatory and qualitative methods are used and a large amount of data is collected). Finding ways of integrating M&E into existing systems and processes can help to reduce time constraints.
- The scale and scope of the evaluation – this should be proportionate to the scale of the program.
- The level of skills, knowledge and experience in using particular approaches and methods, and any additional training that may be needed.
- The level of organisational support (especially for non-mainstream or unfamiliar R, M&E approaches).

***Flexibility and robustness of the design*:** The design of an evaluation needs to be flexible and open to revision as data is gathered and those involved learn from the process. If some methodologies or methods prove unsuitable or do not yield the results that were sought, other methodologies methods need to be readily available for use. The R, M&E design should allow further exploration of key questions or identification of gaps in the information that is being collected. Such a robust design allows for this type of growth and change, yet preserves the overall intent of the evaluation (University of Tasmania, 2003).

Further details and key questions to consider in selecting the most appropriate and effective approach, methodologies and methods used in R, M&E of C4D will be provided in the practical Guide section of the Resource Pack, which will be further developed in 2011.

Conclusion

There is a need for openness, freedom and flexibility in selecting and using R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods to ensure that they are appropriate and fit the underlying aims and values of the C4D initiative. They also need to take into account various constraints such as time, resources and organisational challenges. Participatory approaches to M&E have been advocated given their many benefits, including strengthened evaluation capacities, greater utilisation of findings and learnings, and the empowerment of participants. They are also seen as 'open approaches that can be adapted locally'. We provided more justification for using a mixed methods approach to R, M&E, and emphasised the importance of using methodologies and approaches that can take account of the wider context and larger structural issues.

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation was recommended as an effective way of actively engaging key stakeholders in all stages of an evaluation and increasing ownership of the process. The following participatory, qualitative or mixed methods approaches and methodologies were considered the most effective for assessing the impacts of C4D:

- Case studies
- Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal
- Rapid Rural Appraisal
- Outcome Mapping
- Most Significant Change technique
- Ethnographic Action Research.

Other participatory, qualitative or mixed methods methodologies that were nominated as effective included Developmental Evaluation, rights-based approach methodologies and contribution assessment. Quantitative survey-based methodologies and cost benefit analysis were also seen as effective for assessing the impacts of C4D. Causal analysis/problem analysis, the Theory of Change approach and the logical framework approach were considered the most effective for planning impact evaluations of C4D. Commonly used qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and participatory tools such as community/village mapping were evaluated as particularly effective in assessing the impacts of C4D. However, strengths and limitations or constraints were identified for each of the methodologies, approaches and methods that were seen as effective which need to be taken into account.

A number of key factors were identified that need to be considered in selecting the approach, methodologies and methods used in R, M&E of C4D. They included: the extent to which they will provide the most useful and desired outcomes and are consistent with the particular C4D approach and the principles outlined in this report, the particular research and evaluation questions being asked, and the level of resources and support available.

8. Indicators of C4D impacts

Summary of key findings

- Indicators measure progress against pre-determined aims and objectives or development targets. They are a key element in a results-based approach to M&E.
- Indicator setting is often challenging, complex and time consuming. In participatory M&E approaches, indicators should be developed through participation and dialogue to be locally meaningful.
- Indicator setting can highlight the different information needs and ideas of change of different stakeholders. Conventional evaluation stresses pre-determined indicators of success principally related to cost and outputs. A participatory approach requires acknowledgement of different registers of success.
- There are a range of types of indicators, which can roughly be described as baseline, process and outcome/impact indicators. There are variations of these, depending on the application and purpose. Indicators need to measure physical and visible change, but also less tangible attitudinal and behavioural chance. They can be qualitative as well as quantitative. In C4D, qualitative indicators are often the most effective and appropriate.
- Different approaches to indicators are required for the four main UN C4D approaches.
- Indicators are unable to capture complex realities and relationships and the reasons behind social change. In some C4D evaluations, alternatives to indicators, such as 'significant change stories' and 'verifying assumptions', can be more useful.

Introduction

This section reviews the literature on indicators of C4D impacts. It starts by introducing the idea of indicators, and their roles. Different types of indicators are presented before looking at some general indicators developed specifically for C4D, and the kinds of indicators that might suit the four main approaches to C4D used across the UN. Some of the challenges in the areas of new thinking in the field are presented, followed by a summary of some key ideas on indicators in C4D.

The concept of indicators

Indicators are, quite simply, 'objective ways of measuring (indicating) that progress is being achieved', with 'progress' determined by the aims and objectives of a particular initiative (Gosling & Edwards, 2003: 338). In international development, indicators are used to measure the impact of development interventions and monitor the performance of projects in relation to pre-determined targets (Bennett & Roche, 2000). This apparent simplicity obscures the fact that indicator setting is considered by some to be 'the most difficult step in establishing a reliable evaluative approach' (Guijt, 1998 and Mikkelsen, 1995, cited in Classen, 2003: 24). As one of the Expert Panel commented:

> *one of the points about indicators [is] that they might seem (misleadingly) simple to develop and use, but in reality if you try and cater to the 'Checklist of Indicators' and the SMART framework, plus multiple contexts and diverse initiatives, even developing one common, meaningful indicator is a challenge.*

As Gosling and Edwards (2003) point out, indicators simply indicate progress, 'they are not proof'. They also cannot tell us how change occurs, or why communication made a difference (DANIDA, 2005). Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative. Furthermore, many 'so-called "intangible" qualitative impacts can be measured with quantitative indicators, or vice versa' (Guijt, 2000: 204). Clarification and agreement on programme objectives is essential before beginning the process of indicator setting.

Quantifiable and 'objectively verifiable' indicators are now a key element of the results-based management approach to M&E in which logframes are used. This approach is now a key requirement of many international donors. As we have previously noted, a number of issues have been raised about the incompatibility of this approach with the complexity of assessing the impact of C4D, compared with other development interventions, given the complexity of behaviour and social change processes and the rapidly changing communication contexts within which C4D initiatives are implemented. However, the participants at the New York consultation felt that creatively approaching and developing indicators of social change impacts could help mainstream evaluation experts in the UN to obtain the kinds of data that are otherwise difficult to obtain. Creating channels for discussions across evaluation approaches might help to create more complete understandings of social change.

In C4D, and in particular Communication for Social Change, where dialogue and participation are stressed, it is widely considered that indicators themselves should be developed through dialogue and negotiation between key participants, so that indicators are chosen based on local assessments of what participants want to know and why (Balit, 2010b; Byrne et al., 2005; DANIDA, 2005). This helps to identify what information is critical, clarify goals, views on change, information needs and values (Guijt, 2000: 204). This in turn is considered to be empowering 'as it allows local views to dictate what constitutes success or change'. 'However, for indicator development to be empowering is an impressive feat and one that few M&E efforts can correctly claim to have achieved' (Guijt, 2000: 204).

Guijt (2000: 202) points out that 'indicator and method selection are intertwined. An ideal indicator may be selected, but if no feasible method exists to assess it, then the indicator must be adjusted'. She goes on to make the important point that: 'much innovation *can* occur when principles such as participation and usefulness drive the choice of methods, rather than fixed ideas about what others (notably scientists and policy makers) would consider acceptable'. We consider some alternatives to indicators later in this section.

Types of indicators

There are different types of indicators, and many ways to think about them. Indicators need to measure physical and visible (measurable) outcomes, but also changes in attitudes and behaviour, which is often less tangible and not always amenable to counting. While quantitative indicators are emphasised in mainstream M&E approaches, for C4D they often need to be qualitative to be most effective and appropriate. Byrne et al. (2005: 8) explain that 'the most important indicators are often not quantifiable. For example, the number of people participating in a social network is relatively unimportant compared to the *quality of relationships and dialogue* within that network'. Qualitative indicators are generally more descriptive.

Indicators can be thought of as input, process, output and outcome/impact indicators (DANIDA, 2005: 12), or as baseline, process, short-term, intermediate and long-term outcome/impact indicators (Webb & Elliott, 2002), or more simply as process and outcome indicators (Figueroa et al., 2002), or output and impact/outcome indicators (Guijt, 1998, cited in Classen, 2003: 24).

Webb and Elliott (2002) define the indicators used in different stages of an HIV/AIDS intervention:

Baseline indicators: Used at the pre-intervention, participatory exploratory research or existing data review stage. Examples include existing attitudes and self-reported behaviours.

Process indicators: Used at the stage of training/participation, information distribution or service provision. Examples include the number of people trained. The initial identification of process indicators 'is essential, to allow documentation of inputs, activities, outputs, numbers of beneficiaries and coverage. The key point is that impact assessment is virtually impossible without good information as to what projects have actually *done'*.

Intermediate indicators: Used at the short-term, post-activity stage. Examples include short-term changes in knowledge and attitudes within the target group. 'The purpose of intermediate indicators is not to measure the behaviour, but to be predictors of the behaviour'.

Long-term/outcomes/impacts indicators: Used at the long-term, sustained activity stage. Examples include maintenance of positive self-reported behaviours and changed social/peer norms. However, 'measuring the long-term impact of HIV-prevention programmes is not easy' (Webb & Elliott, 2002: 37-38).

Examples of different types of indicators for monitoring and evaluating communication for social change provided by DANIDA (2005) are:

Input indictor:

- Funds covering the planned communication activities
- Qualified staff

Process indicator:

- Number of participatory radio programmes aired
- Number of people reached through popular theatre activities

Output indicator:

- Percentage of participants by men and women
- Exposure to needed information/messages
- Expanded public and private dialogue

Outcome/impact indicator:

- ICT increasingly used for dialogue and debate
- Percentage of men and women who know about voting procedures

Estrella (2000: 9) explains that, 'while there are no set rules to select indicators, one guideline is to use the acronym 'SMART': indicators should be specific, measurable, action-oriented, relevant, and time-bound'. This tends to suit quantitative indicators in particular. Another contrasting acronym recently offered is 'SPICED': 'subjective, participatory, interpreted, communicable, empowering and

disaggregated' (Estrella, 2000: 9). As Estrella points out, the acronym SPICED 'reflects a shift towards placing greater emphasis on developing indicators that stakeholders can define and use directly for their own purposes of interpreting and learning about change' (2000: 9), rather than simply measuring or attempting to demonstrate impact for donors. Souter (2008: 168) considers that SMART describes the properties of the indicators themselves, while SPICED relates more to how indicators should be used:

SMART indicators	**SPICED indicators**
Specific (to the change being measured)	Subjective
Measurable (and unambiguous)	Participatory
Attainable (and sensitive)	Interpreted (and communicable)
Relevant (and easy to collect)	Cross-checked
Time bound (with term dates for measurement)	Empowering
	Diverse and disaggregated

Souter makes the point that many of the terms in the table are ambiguous, and these meanings need to be explored by agencies both within their own organisation and the context of the intervention. Essentially, indicator choice depends on what the stakeholders want to measure. Furthermore, the objectives and information needed depends on the context (Parks et al., 2005: 18).

Indicators for C4D impact

In preparation for the 11th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, Puddephatt et al. (2009: 28-32) drafted a set of outline indicators for assessing the effectiveness of C4D. They advocate a SMART framework, and a toolbox through which the most relevant indicators and approaches could be developed.

Five principal C4D 'results' and some key questions are presented as a mechanism for developing relevant indicators. The C4D results are:

> **Result 1**: the level of local awareness about the development program and the issues covered by the initiative
>
> **Result 2**: evidence of direct impact
>
> **Result 3**: participation and empowerment
>
> **Result 4**: level of media coverage
>
> **Result 5**: country capacity

In the 'toolkit' approach they take, these results are placed in a table, along with key questions for each result, and suggestions for the focus of the indicators. Methodologies thought to be appropriate for each are also suggested. For example, the first result is linked to three key questions:

1. Are local stakeholders aware that the development program is in place?
2. Are they aware what the goals of the program are?
3. Has knowledge of the issues covered by the program increased?

For each key question a possible focus is suggested, so for question 1 the suggested focus is:

> Evidence of local communication about the program – e.g. survey data.

An appropriate methodology put forward for this focus is 'KABP surveys using market research tools such as surveys, and experimental impact evaluation studies' (Puddephatt et al., 2009: 31).

In our consultations in preparation for this review, we consulted with the UN Focal Points and Expert Panel about this approach to indicators. While two Expert Panel members suggested that the list of indicators was 'fine' or 'quite comprehensive', one of them suggested that 'typical agencies' and specific examples should also be given'. Another thought the list corresponded with the principle of defining simple indicators but emphasised the need to define indicators with local stakeholders. One of them also appreciated the advice about using indicators sparingly and flexibly.

However, some problems were raised with the C4D results areas, the indicators, and the assignment of appropriate methodologies. It was thought by some that the C4D results could be better linked to the definitions of C4D identified earlier in the Discussion Paper. One of the Expert Panel also commented that these result areas do not seem aligned to the definitions of C4D put forward in the Rome Consensus, which emphasised

> *Systematic, planned, evidence-based, strategic, integral to programmes, participation, networks etc… Almost all of these definitions relate to the HOW*

which this respondent does not see reflected in the results areas, and that

> *Key indicators intended to be universally applied across the field should be based around those elements…*

Specific comments on the five results areas included:

Result 1: **Level of local awareness about the development program and the issues covered by the initiative:** *Doesn't this depend on the scale of the program, the intended primary beneficiaries and other stakeholders to be involved? Importantly, is it enough to "be aware of" the program, its aims and objectives etc ... the more important question is shifts in the awareness of those directly involved with the program on certain critical and focus issues.*

Result 2: **Evidence of direct impact**: *So much impact of programmes can be indirect ... e.g., from our community dialogues on HIV/AIDS issues, if young people participating change their attitudes and behaviour apparently (but not solely!) as a result of the initiative, good. But what about their family and friend networks whom they might influence positively? In communities where community dialogues have been running for some time there are often significant knock-on effects that result. Another problem with 'direct' impact is that it automatically downplays the significance of wider contextual factors. This is the point about attribution vs. contribution towards. In all likelihood, the dialogues contributed towards positive change, but not in isolation from other factors.*

Result 3: **Participation and empowerment**: *The precise stakeholders cannot be specified in advance, it will depend on context and program aims. 20 indicators could be developed around each of these dimensions, if they are key to the program ... needs lots more thought to come up with nuanced and widely-appropriate indicators of participation and empowerment that might be relevant to all C4D programmes. This could also include empowerment more broadly: Has the project built people's capacities to speak out and participate more in other areas? Has it established new information sources or new communication flows between classes of stakeholders which might improve accountability and dialogue generally? Has it contributed to changing cultural norms around communication and power? Etc.*

Result 4: **Level of media coverage**: *The definitions of C4D above would not suggest that this is of overriding importance for every C4D initiative, given all the other how dimensions mentioned in the definitions. This is one of the easier-to-measure aspects, but not necessarily one of the most significant.*

Result 5: **Country capacity**: *This might be critical for C4D in UN-wide C4D initiatives, but this is not apparent from the definitions above. What about critical issues of capacity at every level, including country? And how would each of these best be assessed over time, given how long effective and sustainable capacity development takes?*

Another approach to C4D indicators is provided by an integrated model for measuring the process for CFSC and its outcomes, published by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2002 (Figueroa et al., 2002). The Communication Initiative website features a set of six indicators for measuring social change communication, to explore the development of indicators from a social change and social movement perspective (http://www.comminit.com/en/node/1747/347), drawn from this work within the communication for social change arena. The CFSC Consortium continues to put forward this set of six indicators (Grey-Felder & Deane, 1999: 21-22; Parks et al., 2005: 31):

1. Expanded public and private dialogue and debate.
2. Increased accuracy of the information that people share in the dialogue/debate.
3. Supported the people centrally affected by an issue[s] voicing their perspective in the debate and dialogue.
4. Increased leadership role by people disadvantaged by the issues of concern.
5. Resonates with the major issues of interest to people's everyday interests.
6. Linked people and groups with similar interests who might otherwise not be in contact.

These indicators include both process and outcome indicators. In the long-term, the purpose is to measure positive change in the issues of concern, whether that is greater gender equality, less HIV/AIDS, better nutrition, and so on. As social change can take a long time, progress toward long-term social change can at times be an acceptable measure of effectiveness. (Parks et al., 2005: 17). When measured in the short-term, stakeholders need indicators that indicate a strong likelihood of short-term change in the issue being addressed and are applicable across issues. In communication research intent to change has been used as a predictor of actual change (Parks et al., 2005: 18).

A further issue is that, as DANIDA notes, C4D interventions are extremely gender sensitive. In most countries men and women have unequal access to information and freedom of expression, and 'it is necessary to mainstream gender in all C4D interventions. This means that indicators on

communication for development interventions should reflect the need for sex disaggregated data' (DANIDA, 2005: 13).

Indicators and the UN C4D approaches

There are several challenges involved in developing indicators, some of which are discussed in the latter part of this section. In terms of generating, and gaining consensus on, broad or general indicators for C4D, and approaches that support them, we might usefully think about the main approaches the UN takes to C4D as described in *Communication for Development: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the United Nations* (McCall et al., 2010).

Behaviour Change Communication

As Webb and Elliott (2002: 37-38) explain, different types of indicators can be used at different stages of a BCC program, including health related behaviour change. These stages might include 1. Pre-intervention, to explore attitudes and self reported behaviours, where baseline indicators can be used; 2. Documentation of inputs, activities and outputs, beneficiaries and coverage – i.e. what the project or programme has actually done, which requires process indicators; 3. Measures of short-term changes, for example in attitudes and behaviours, which requires intermediate indicators, and can predict behaviour change; 4. Long-term indicators of change, at individual and social levels, in reported behaviour and social norms. Both SMART and SPICED indicators would be appropriate to this approach, and both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Communication for Social Change

In the CFSC approach, indicators, like M&E questions, measures and methods should be developed with those most affected and involved rather than pre-determined (Parks et al., 2005: 1). As well as thinking about what indicators are relevant, who should develop and use these indicators will be a central consideration. The process is as important as the results. A wide group of stakeholders would be involved, facilitated by inclusive processes and dialogue, and an empowering approach. SPICED indicators would be particularly suitable to this approach, which is likely to draw heavily on qualitative and descriptive measures. SMART indicators and quantitative approaches also have a role, depending on the indicators and their purposes as designed through participatory processes.

Communication for advocacy

A similar approach to that used in CFSC could be adopted here, given the focus on change in power relations and social relations. Communication for advocacy tends to require an evaluation that measures both external and internal changes (Morariu et al., 2009: 5). External changes consist of things like support through partnerships and development of leaders; improved awareness and response to opponents of the desired change as well as political, social and economic environments; and, progress with decision makers. Internal changes refer to the development of capacity to effect external changes. A learning-focussed evaluation approach to assess internal change is recommended.

SPICED indicators would in general seem more suitable than SMART indicators for communication for advocacy. Since communication for advocacy might be working toward large-scale political or environmental change, including changes in media and communication environments, the kinds of

comprehensive indicators developed by UNESCO (see below) might also be appropriate in some cases.

However, it is worth noting that advocacy evaluation, as recommended by Morariu et al. (2009), does not include indicators at all. The challenges presented by advocacy evaluation are the long time frame that is often required before changes through advocacy campaigns are evident; the need for advocacy work to be sustained over long periods of time; the need to pay attention to contribution, not attribution as we discussed in Section 4 of this report; and, the need for interim measures of success due to the long-term goals of advocacy (Morariu et al., 2009: 1). They recommend an 8-step approach to advocacy evaluation, which includes a Theory of Change step (step 3) to agree on the ultimate goals and interim outcomes, followed by a step to determine what is to be measured, including both external and internal changes. A learning-focused methodology is recommended, because the ultimate goal is to enable advocates themselves to make more informed decisions and provide information to decision-makers. In this way it is less about proving impact, than learning from evaluation for more effective work towards long-term goals.

Strengthening an enabling media and communication environment

UNESCO (2008) produced a comprehensive set of media development indicators, based on the objectives of promotion of freedom of expression and media pluralism; development of community media; and human resource development (capacity building of media professionals and institutional capacity building). There are five major categories for analysing the media development of a country, and for each of these there is a set of key indicators. The categories are:

> **Category 1**: A system of regulation conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity of the media
>
> **Category 2:** Plurality and diversity of media, a level economic playing field and transparency of ownership
>
> **Category 3:** Media as a platform for democratic discourse
>
> **Category 4:** Professional capacity building and supporting institutions that underpins freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity
>
> **Category 5:** Infrastructural capacity is sufficient to support independent and pluralistic media

Each category is broken down into a set of issues, which each in turn contain a series of broad indicators. So, for example, in category 1, there are four main issues identified, each with their own set of indicators and means of verification. So within the issue of 'censorship' one indicator is identified as 'The State does not seek to block or filter Internet content deemed sensitive or detrimental', and the following set of more nuanced indicators are listed:

- Internet content is not blocked or filtered by the state because of its content or source
- Internet users are not subject to sanctions for accessing or publishing content on the Internet deemed sensitive or detrimental
- Internet service providers, websites, blogs or Internet broadcasters are not required to register with or obtain permission from a public body

These can be verified by looking for:

- Documented cases of Internet users being subject to sanction for accessing or publishing content deemed sensitive or detrimental
- Documented cases of forced closures or threatened closures of websites
- Internet users subject to sanction for accessing or posting news items or opinions deemed objectionable
- Evidence of state activity in blocking or filtering websites (UNESCO, 2008: 18)

While this example can be seen to provide a fairly straightforward set of visibly or quantitatively measurable indicators, another example, from category 3, provides a different set of indicators more interested in measuring perceptions: The issue is 'levels of public trust and confidence in the media', and one of the broad indicators is 'the public displays high levels of trust and confidence in the media'. The more nuanced indicators are listed as:

- Perception that the media reports on issues of real concern to people
- Satisfaction with the balance of local and national news and information
- Perception that journalists and media organisations have integrity and are not corrupt
- Perception that news reporting is fair and impartial
- A high level of citizen participation in media as shown by: the level of participation of audiences in talk-back programmes, space devoted to readers' comments in newspapers, etc.

This can be verified as follows:

- Public opinion polls relating to trust and confidence in the media
- Assessment of media by e.g. radio listening clubs
- Household surveys and other fieldwork relating to perceptions of the media
- Interviews with samples of listeners/viewers/readers on their perceptions of the media
- Evidence of community involvement in evaluating community broadcasters (UNESCO, 2008: 42)

Challenges and alternatives to the use of indicators

The challenges involved in the use of indicators for C4D are numerous, as will be clear already. Section 4 of this literature review sets out new thinking and trends in R, M&E that are highly relevant to C4D. Here we think about challenges concerning indicators in relation to some of this new thinking, specifically in terms of complexity theory and participation.

Holism and complexity thinking

Indicator setting is a complex process, attempting to provide indications of change in complex contexts. Indicator setting can occupy a lot of time since they are 'approximations of complex processes, events or trends' (Guijt, 2000: 203). Parks et al. (2005: 17) echo this statement, going on to suggest that indicators can 'measure the tangible (e.g. service uptake), the intangible (e.g. community empowerment) and the unanticipated (i.e., results that were not planned). Ideally indicators reveal changes related to a specific phenomenon that in itself represents a bigger

question or problem'. At the same time, and precisely because of the time and complexity involved, 'a small number of meaningful indicators which can be looked at regularly and carefully is more useful than a long list which is too time-consuming to use' (Save the Children, quoted in Souter, 2008: 168).

As explored in Section 4, an approach that encompasses complexity recognises the need to understand rather than measure social change processes (Lacayo, 2006). Such an approach requires looking for different ways to do things, asking different questions to get different answers, trying different strategies, understanding the importance of context, and how and why social change happens (Lacayo, 2006: 48). The requirement therefore is for indicators that are flexible and encompass complexity, or, an alternative to indicators. Creative approaches such as those using pictures or stories can be particularly useful with working with community groups that include those with low levels of literacy. Parks et al. (2005: 22) insist that 'we should be wary of forcing CFSC initiatives into existing or pre-determined monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems', and remind us that, as Chapman and Wameyo (2001) note, frameworks can help us gain an overview of areas to look at and can facilitating creative thinking, but the challenge 'is to remain open to unintended outcomes that fall outside the framework of assessment that may have been adopted' (cited in Parks et al., 2005: 22).

As one of the Expert Panel commented:

> *However strong certain indicators might be, their ability to meaningfully capture complex, dynamic processes of social change, over time and in multiple and diverse contexts, will always be limited.*

Guijt (2000) provides two suggestions for alternatives to indicators, 'significant change' and 'verifying assumptions'. As an example of the significant change approach Guijt cites Davies (1998) who describes a Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) initiative. A network of credit groups, funded by CCDB, provided monthly reports which detail the single most significant change that occurred amongst the group members. These changes relate to people's well-being, sustainability of people's institutions, people's participation, and one other open-ended change,

> The report asks for the 'facts' (what, when, where, with whom) and an explanation of why that change is the most significant one of all the changes that have occurred. This last aspect ensures a process of reflection and learning by the group members, an aspect that is missing from most M&E systems that seek numeric data without any interpretation of the numbers. So, instead of pre-determined questions, CCDB's monitoring aims to find significant examples related to its long-term development objectives (Davies, 1998, in Guijt, 2000).

The strengths and limitations of the Most Significant Change technique, which was later developed by Davies and Dart (2005), were outlined in Section 7. MSC was previously described as 'monitoring-without-indicators' (Davies & Dart, 2005: 8). In a critique of indicators, one of the Expert Panel emphasised the benefits of this alternative approach:

> *If capacity is low, time and essential support and resources for research and evaluation are minimal/inadequate, we have found that stories of change for example can reveal far more, more accurately and in timely ways, than can indicators. And that's before you get to the strengths and benefits of participation in the process itself!*

Participatory approaches

An example of 'verifying assumptions' is provided via Harnmeijer (1999) who promotes a flexible and creative approach to evaluation that prioritises participation. In the Small Dam Rehabilitation Project, implemented by CARE international in Zimbabwe, an in-depth review was considered more appropriate than a conventional, broad evaluation. The evaluation team was made up of one external evaluator based in Zimbabwe, and two Zimbabwean consultants. The evaluation was designed through a workshop, which included field staff. The evaluation was then conducted through a series of workshops with dam users. The evaluation team had identified ten project assumptions about expected changes, including '*Perceived impacts:* Improved nutrition and income security are the main benefits perceived by users of the project dams' (Harnmeijer, 1999: 2). The idea was to work with local dam users to find evidence to support, refine or reject these assumptions. Findings from the evaluation led to revision of key assumptions found to be untenable through the evaluation. Simply measuring impact against pre-determined indicators, based on those assumptions, would have failed to have allowed the initiative to adjust its assumptions and improve its practices, which made it more likely to succeed in the future.

Another example of an impact assessment of a rural development project in Vietnam which was undertaken without indicators is provided by Innocenti (2008). This process involved 'a deep assessment of project history and consolidation of the information taken in the monitoring reports produced during the project life time' and was based on a basic principle of participatory evaluation 'investigating impact through stakeholders' perception of change' (Innocenti, 2008: 7). He suggested that tools such as MSC could have strengthened the process and that one of the constraints was 'the relatively complex analysis and design of the overall methodologies used'. However, a strength of the process was that it was 'rapid and cost effective' (Innocenti, 2008: 9).

As Parks et al. (2005: 17) remind us, selecting indicators is one of the most difficult steps in setting up a PM&E approach as it 'highlights, more than any other, the different information needs and expectations that the different stakeholders have of the monitoring work'. Participatory approaches to C4D, and M&E, require that the development of indicators 'focus not just on what is measured, but also on how it is measured, and especially on who decides which indicators are important' (Bennett & Roche, 2000: 26). Guijt (2000) provides various examples of participatory indicator identification and states that 'in each of these experiences indicators were identified by primary stakeholders, often local people who live with the changes being tracked'. She goes on to recommend that indicators do not have to be perfect, 'only sufficiently relevant and accurate for those who are going to interpret the information to be able to do so'.

Estrella and Gaventa (1998) explain the difference in approach to indicators between conventional evaluation and participatory evaluation as predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs, compared to indicators of success identified by people themselves, which may or may not include cost and production outputs. A participatory approach requires recognition of different registers of success.

Parks et al. (2005: 22) suggest that it may well be that 'combinations of locally-generated measurements and PM&E processes and externally derived indicators and M&E approaches are at times the most appropriate way of monitoring and evaluating CFSC initiatives'. Having said that, externally derived indicators should only be used to stimulate discussion. Identification of indicators

is best begun after dialogue about the community's concerns, goals, issues and obstacles and the vision of the change they seek.

Parks et al. (2005) cite Roche (1999) who proposes the following:

- A multi-level approach including annual judgments of impact by stakeholders, facilitated peer reviews, independent evaluations and infrequent long-term impact research.
- Tracking and correlating change occurring at the level of individuals, organisations, and communities or societies as a whole.
- Expanding the possibilities for collecting evidence of what is changing in people's lives and why for other people, including partners, but also from a wider range of people, possibly using the Internet.

Fontalvo-Herazo et al. (2007) used four sequential activities to identify priorities and indicators for coastal management:

- Remembering past problems and current solutions
- Stating current problems
- Thinking about desires for the future
- Defining indicators of change.

Conclusion

To conclude, the literature review, our survey and further consultations suggest a few key ideas concerning indicators and indicator setting in the C4D field:

- Develop the types of indicators that are appropriate to your initiative, through processes that are appropriate – link them very strongly to your aims and objectives.
- Relevant indicators should be developed with input from relevant stakeholders.
- Keep them manageable.
- Keep them to a reasonable number.
- Ensure that they reflect the need for gender disaggregated data, or data on other important differences.
- Understand that this means that indicators are not able to capture complex realities and relationships – they are, after all, good ways of measuring change but not of capturing the reasons behind such change.
- Use methods that are appropriate for the type of indicator (tangible/intangible; process/outcome).
- Consider indicators as just one part of a R, M&E strategy - they can allow you to demonstrate progress towards defined objectives, but cannot tell you why, or what this means to people's lives.
- Some practitioners have begun looking for alternatives to indicators, such as stories of significant change. They may be better ways to monitor significant and sometimes unanticipated or negative impacts associated with long-term development goals.

9. Conclusion and ways forward

Introduction and overview

This report has highlighted some significant trends, challenges and approaches associated with researching, monitoring and evaluating Communication for Development within the UN and international development context. We begin this final section with a summary of the key challenges, tensions and issues that were identified. Drawing on the new thinking and trends identified in this report, we then present an emerging Framework for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring of C4D. This framework incorporates the principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D laid out in Section 2.

The framework is divided into two parts:

1. Conceptual and theoretical framework
2. Methodological and reporting framework

Next, we list various strategies that aim to address the many challenges and issues that we identified in this research, and to gradually refine and implement elements of this framework. This clearly needs to be seen as a flexible, long-term process of change, given the many barriers to changing existing systems, policies, attitudes and practices that we have identified.

We recognise the need to be pragmatic and realistic about such a process of change, given that effective implementation of alternative approaches is more difficult within hierarchical and bureaucratic organisational structures and cultures. While this report emphasises the benefits of alternative approaches to evaluating C4D, we acknowledge the strengths and limitations of both dominant and alternative approaches, methodologies and methods. We also emphasise the need for evaluation of C4D to use a flexible and open approach that draws on complementary approaches and methodologies.

Finally, we outline plans which were developed during consultation meetings in New York in December 2010 for the further development and implementation of the R, M&E for C4D Resource Pack and related capacity development strategies, over the next five years and beyond.

Key challenges, tensions and issues

This report has highlighted some significant challenges, tensions, issues and barriers in the areas of C4D, R, M&E of C4D and evaluation capacity development within the UN and international development context. The following summarises the key challenges, tensions and issues that were identified.

Approaches to Communication for Development

We identified a shift (in rhetoric at least) from vertical, one-way, top-down models of C4D to horizontal models that aim to facilitate participation, inclusion and empowerment. However, many C4D approaches refer to both perspectives in contradictory ways, resulting in confusion and inappropriate compromises that limit the effectiveness of C4D. We also identified a recurring issue of decision makers in development organisations not appreciating what C4D actually means or its

important role in the development process. However, institutions that communities might engage with through C4D are often structurally unsuited for listening to the community. Full and direct participation was therefore seen as difficult to achieve within dominant organisational cultures, practices and evaluation approaches. This is exacerbated by the issues of power and inclusion that participation raises, the politics involved, and perceptions about the greater time and resources required to implement alternative participatory approaches.

Approaches to R, M&E

Our review and consultations identified a lack of funding and support for alternative R, M&E approaches that are often more appropriate for C4D. Policy makers and managers within the UN system, who often have a hard science background, tend to lack an understanding and appreciation of the potential of alternative approaches and the value of participatory tools for eliciting information that is often more credible and useful to communities. They question the rigour and validity of alternative approaches, which are criticised for lacking 'objectivity', 'rigour' and 'validity'. We also noted that participatory, mixed methods approaches, which we have advocated in this report, require a wide range of skills and knowledge to use effectively. In addition, there are particular challenges concerning rigour when using this approach in some resource, skill and time poor developing countries.

Assessing the impacts of C4D

We highlighted that demonstrating the impact of C4D is notably more complex and difficult than for other types of development initiatives. This is because it involves assessing changes in how people think and respond to issues and their local contexts, which can be affected by many different factors. In addition, it can be easier to isolate individual changes in the environment in other development initiatives (Souter, 2008). Given the complexity of the change process, social and behavioural change often needs to be assessed against a moving baseline, which is inconsistent with dominant evaluation practices. Another key challenge is the attribution of impact in a complex and rapidly changing world. The politics of aid means that agencies often inappropriately claim credit for impacts, and reporting focuses more on 'successes' than on 'failures'.

Our review and consultations indicated that M&E is often approached in a vertical rather than an integrated manner, in which it is considered right from the design and development stage, and fully incorporated into the programme cycle. As with other research conducted for the UN C4D Round Tables, we identified issues with inadequate funding for R, M&E, generally weak research and evaluation capacities, and inadequate resources, including time to undertake impact assessment of C4D. Donors were seen as often wanting to see results in an unreasonably short time frame. They were also seen as reluctant to fund longitudinal studies. As a result, there is a lack of strong evidence on which to build C4D research and demonstrate its value. Indicators (which are often required by donors and funding agencies) were seen as largely unable to capture complex realities and relationships or to capture the reasons behind social change. They are usually set without input from key participants, are often quantitative and unrealistic, and do not fit C4D outcomes very well.

Evaluation capacity development

It can be difficult to develop evaluation capacities and 'buy-in' and ownership of M&E and C4D initiatives. This is especially difficult in pressured and resource constrained organisational contexts in developing countries. There can be cultural, communication and language issues and barriers to effective ECD, including issues of power and access to ICTs.

We argued that managers need to act as models of learning, and that greater funding and support is needed for long-term, sustainable capacity development at all levels. However, this is often difficult to achieve, particularly for organisations based on hierarchical or bureaucratic structures and policies. We identified numerous challenges and issues that have a particular impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of ECD in the C4D context including:

- *The diversity of C4D approaches*, which affects capacity development and training needs.
- *The complexity inherent to assessing the impact of C4D:* Many staff working on C4D programmes at country and field level were considered not well equipped to deal well with these challenges and complexities.
- *Attitudes to M&E* among donors, C4D organisations and NGOs: Many donors and mangers were seen as not valuing alternative M&E approaches. The attitudes of some programme staff and management indicated a lack of support for evaluation and a lack of understanding of its important role in the programme design and development process.
- *Maintaining, supporting and sustaining evaluation capacity.* High staff turnover and loss of change agents was considered to be a key challenge that can undermine ECD efforts in organisations developing and implementing C4D programmes.
- *Facilitating wide participation in M&E for C4D.* Achieving a high level of participation by a wide range of stakeholders in R, M&E of C4D can be difficult, especially for time and resource poor organisations.
- *Coordinating M&E with the programme content and improvement processes*. The time required for effective M&E, including mixed methods data analysis and reporting, may not match the needs of C4D programme developers, who often require M&E findings more quickly.
- *Developing the wide range of skills required.* It is time consuming to develop the particular skills required to effectively monitor, evaluate and assess the impacts of C4D programmes, especially when using participatory, mixed methods approaches.
- *Lack of practical and sustainable impact assessment frameworks for C4D*. Frameworks often have to fit the narrow upward accountability demands of donors. This was seen as incompatible with effective impact assessment of C4D, which entails a long-term approach based on ongoing learning and programme improvement.

Framework for research, monitoring and evaluation of C4D

Drawing on the new thinking and trends in this area that we have identified in this report, we now present an emerging Framework for R, M&E of C4D that incorporates the principles for effective, appropriate and sustainable R, M&E of C4D set out in Section 2.

1. Conceptual and theoretical framework

A holistic perspective based on complexity and systems thinking

The framework highlights the value of taking a 'bigger picture' holistic perspective that draws on complexity and systems thinking. Systems thinking and complexity theory are important to understand complex social problems, such as those that C4D addresses. They provide better and more flexible and organic frameworks and strategies for understanding the dynamics of social change, how and why social change happens, what works and what does not work in different contexts, and the system and contexts within which evaluations are undertaken (Byrne, 2008; Lacayo, 2006). One of the implications of adopting a holistic view 'is a recognition that any explanation of a phenomenon will not be able to point to single causes and effects' (Hearn et al., 2009: 36).

Takes the wider context into account

Adopting a holistic perspective based on systems thinking means that the wider context and larger structural issues are taken into account. This entails gathering information and developing an in-depth understanding about the social, economic, political, cultural, communications, technological and environmental context. It involves paying attention to the particular contextual and cultural issues and barriers that affect a C4D initiative and are of concern and interest to beneficiaries or users of the initiative. The rapidly changing information and communications context in which C4D initiatives are implemented, and different levels of access to and use of new communication technologies, clearly affect the outcomes of these initiatives and their evaluation. The framework highlights the value of using a range of complementary methodologies and methods to better understand these contextual issues.

Focuses on gender, power and social norms

The process the framework advocates involves actively and explicitly addressing issues related to gender, caste, race and other differences, and unequal power and voice among participants. Giving value to diversity and difference and taking an inclusive approach is seen as important to enabling a more adequate understanding of social problems and issues. It provides new insights and understanding of alternative perspectives (Morgan & Ramirez, 1984, in Hearn et al., 2009). Inequalities in gender, power and knowledge need to be more openly acknowledged and taken into account in the evaluation process, since this can have a major effect on the outcome of C4D programmes and their evaluation.

Our literature review highlights the urgent need to focus attention on the importance of local social norms. As Burns (2007: 36) argues, if interventions do not attend to local social norms, 'many policy initiatives will fail to win community support, rendering them unsustainable'. This has major implications for C4D programmes that aim to change harmful social and cultural practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation and to prevent the spread of significant health problems such as HIV/AIDS. Changing harmful social norms is the area where there is likely to be the most cross-over between mainstream and participatory approaches to M&E.

Holistic approach to evaluation capacity development

The framework advocates taking a long-term perspective on evaluation capacity development, focusing on organisations as a whole and the development of learning organisations (Horton et al., 2003). In this approach, staff at all levels and key stakeholders (including community members) are involved in ongoing capacity development. This approach aims to address issues such as staff turnover and the sustainability of evaluation systems and capacities within organisations and stakeholder groups.

Capacity development should aim to increase understanding of the fundamentals of R, M&E, and provide practical guidance and simple, user-friendly information for managers, field staff and community members. This requires the development of guides and other resources in close cooperation with country-level UN staff and others who will use this information.

Evaluation as an ongoing learning and improvement process

When this alternative approach to evaluation is taken, evaluation is seen an ongoing learning and programme improvement process that is integrated into programmes and organisations and the whole project cycle. It is also seen as an important means of strengthening capacity and improving organisational performance and relationships and understanding between staff in different organisational areas and between staff and key stakeholders. The aim is to develop learning organisations that are constantly critically reflecting on their work, identifying ways that their programmes and practices can be improved, and then putting these new strategies and plans into practice. This entails a greater focus on the impacts of the actual process of participating in an evaluation, which can result in positive changes to the capacity, processes and culture of an organisation (Horton et al., 2003; Patton, 1998). It also involves a wider range of staff and stakeholders taking responsibility for research and evaluation, rather than it being mainly seen as the responsibility of M&E staff or specialists.

Long-term, sustainable perspective

As we have indicated above, this framework takes a long-term perspective on R, M&E and evaluation capacity development in the C4D area. While a participatory, mixed methods approach can require more time and resources to be effective, our review and consultations clearly indicate that a long-term view of the many benefits of these approaches is needed. The aim here is to make M&E and ECD systems sustainable and effectively integrated into organisations and C4D programmes through the use of holistic, participatory and system-based approaches.

2. Methodological and reporting framework

Open, flexible approach to designing evaluations and selecting methodologies and methods

The Framework responds to an identified need for greater openness, freedom, flexibility and realism in planning and designing C4D evaluations and in the selection of methodologies, methods and indicators. As Souter (2008: 174) argues, it 'is not possible to construct a single impact assessment model or framework for ICD projects ... because different methodologies are required for the very different contexts and types of objective involved'. This process begins by stakeholders agreeing on

the initiative's objectives and outcomes and clarifying the evaluation's purpose and stakeholder expectations of the evaluation.

Methodologies and methods need to be appropriate and to fit the underlying aims and values of the C4D initiative. Ideally they would be underpinned by the principles proposed in this report. They also need to take into account various constraints such as time, resources and organisational challenges. Participatory, qualitative and mixed methods approaches and methods have enormous value, if they are effectively used.

It is necessary to take a critical approach to selecting approaches, methodologies and methods that is based on an awareness of their strengths and limitations. This includes the strengths and limitations of both alternative and mainstream approaches to R, M&E.

Uses participatory approaches as appropriate

Participatory approaches to R, M&E of C4D are particularly effective and appropriate in C4D programmes, given that the key aims of C4D include facilitating community participation and empowerment through two-way communication, dialogue and information sharing. The many benefits of participatory approaches include flexibility, the encouragement of ongoing critical reflection and learning, strengthening of capacities, and an increase in the utilisation of evaluation results. However, R, M&E processes need to be *meaningfully* participatory and inclusive, and well facilitated, to be most effective. The aim here is for participants to develop an ownership of the initiative and its evaluation and to become active and equal partners in decision making, which is an honest and transparent process. As well as local ownership, participatory processes should aim to foster national ownership of the initiative and the evaluation. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation methodology (Byrne et al., 2005; Myers, 2005; Parks et al., 2005) is an effective way of actively engaging key stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation of C4D and strengthening evaluation capacities and ownership of the process.

Uses a mixed methods approach and triangulation

The evaluation of C4D needs to be based on an appropriate combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, complementary approaches and triangulation, in recognition that different approaches are suitable for different issues and purposes, and different approaches to C4D. A pragmatic, mixed methods approach to research and evaluation often results in superior research and is appropriate for complex development programmes (Bamberger et al., 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The many benefits of using a mixed methods approach and the triangulation of various data sources and types include that they can: shed light on different issues, provide much needed flexibility, increase the strength and rigour of evaluation and impact assessment findings, be more effective when time and budgets are constrained, and can contribute to developing qualitative indicators (Bamberger et al., 2010). Effective triangulation also ensures that a diversity of voices and views are included in the evaluation.

Impact assessment uses contribution assessment and a dynamic theory of change and involves longitudinal studies

It is often more important to focus on *progress towards* long-term social change and the *contribution* made by C4D, rather than attempting to 'prove' impacts of programmes in the short-

term (Byrne, 2008). This is a realistic measure of effectiveness that can provide practical and useful recommendations for the implementation of policies and programmes. This approach considers the short-term, intermediate and long-term impacts of initiatives and uses methodologies such as Outcome Mapping (Earl et al., 2001).

Given the complexity of the social change process and often rapidly changing social and communication contexts, we identified the need to use a dynamic, moving theory of change. Evaluation of C4D also requires adjusting baseline information to recognise changes in the context. Evaluation and impact assessment data needs to be disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity and other relevant differences in order to better understand impacts on particular groups, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

There is a need to fund and support longitudinal studies of C4D in order to better assess impacts and outcomes and to build a stronger evidence base. Longitudinal studies are the best way to assess lasting and sustainable change.

Makes more use of qualitative and participatory indicators

Qualitative indicators are often the most effective and appropriate for assessing the impacts of C4D. In some C4D evaluations, it may be more useful to use alternatives to indicators such as stories of significant change and 'verifying assumptions'. There is a need to develop both locally and externally derived indicators. Developing indicators in dialogue with relevant community members and other stakeholders provides more realistic and useful indicators of social and behavioural change.

Evaluation is independent and learns from 'failures'

Adopting a learning and improvement-based approach to evaluation means that the process is underpinned by a high level of independence, integrity and honesty. There is a need for evaluation to be open to negative findings, weaknesses and 'failures', as well as 'success stories', in order to learn from these findings.

Establishes open communication and feedback systems

This framework includes the establishment of open communication and feedback systems and methods in order to share evaluation and impact assessment findings, learnings, outcomes and experiences with a range of staff and stakeholders (including donors and beneficiaries). This involves openly reporting positive, negative, unplanned and unexpected results using a range of methods that match the needs of different groups. The framework advocates the use of creative and engaging ways of communicating results and learnings such as digital storytelling and sharing stories of significant change where ever possible.

Proposed strategies to implement the R, M&E for C4D framework

Implementing both the conceptual and methodological parts of the framework requires a clear strategy. As this report has identified, there are a number of challenges to be addressed in order for the Resource Pack for R, M&E of C4D that is now being developed, to succeed.

The following elements of a strategy can be clearly identified, not only from the review of literature and consultations undertaken as part of the development of the Resource Pack, but also from various preparatory reports and discussions and recommendations from the UN Round Tables for C4D over the past few years.

Advocating for C4D and R, M&E

There is a clear need for advocacy across the UN and with other organisations and donors, to highlight the importance of C4D and R, M&E in development. A greater appreciation of what C4D means is required. It is necessary to demonstrate C4D's contribution to development goals and results, and the cost-effectiveness of investing in C4D. To do this, there is a need to identify creative and innovative R, M&E approaches and examples to illustrate what works best and to demonstrate the results of C4D and the rigour and effectiveness of alternative R, M&E approaches, methodologies and methods. Greater understanding among mainstream evaluation specialists, of the appropriateness and long-term benefits of participatory approaches is required. This report has the potential to begin this process.

Institutionalisation

Connected to the need for advocacy, creating a common understanding of C4D and its various benefits for different Agencies might facilitate collaborative research and evaluation between those UN agencies that focuses on common C4D goals, and changing social norms. Through such collaboration it might be possible to provide sufficient budgets, resources and time, including for longitudinal studies.

This report identifies the need to improve capacity in conceptualising, managing and planning R, M&E of C4D within the UN, and with partners. Long-term capacity development for staff at all levels is required, with high quality and yet accessible training and reference resources. On the one hand it is necessary to demonstrate the rigour, usefulness and appropriateness of alternative and participatory approaches to R, M&E for C4D to mainstream evaluation specialists and managers. This requires a detailed and thorough presentation of current thinking and trends in the field, and this report aims to deliver that. On the other hand, for those planning and implementing R, M&E of C4D on the ground, evaluation guides, methodologies, methods and M&E systems need to be as practical, user-friendly and simple as possible. This is the role of the Guide section of the Resource Pack, which is still in development.

Given the inadequate funding and resources available for R, M&E of C4D, institutionalisation of the required capacity development, along with the development of learning and support resources would be highly beneficial and cost effective.

Broader view, sharing of skills and knowledge

This report has detailed a range of creative and innovative strategies to enhance stakeholder engagement and participation in R, M&E of C4D. Stepping back, similar creative and innovative strategies might be employed to develop the framework, using participatory and collaborative methods.

In addition to the need to collect and present good examples of highly effective R, M&E for C4D, there is also benefit in undertaking meta-evaluations of these examples, to identify and frame issues, improve evaluations and increase the utilisation of evaluation results. The open sharing of both positive and negative, intended and unexpected findings needs to take place within an environment that understands the huge benefit of learning from both success and failure.

The consultations undertaken for this report recommend the establishment of a community of practice with online access to expert advice.

Further development of the Resource Pack

At the New York consultation meeting, plans were developed to complete the Resource Pack, and roll it out. We have set out our recommendations for further development of the Guide section of the Pack in the initial outline of the Guide.

From May 2011, extensive consultation of the Guide section of the Pack will take place, along with testing. This will involve receiving and incorporating feedback from programme staff in the field, piloting the Guide in Nepal and other countries, contingent on availability of funds and human resources, convening a joint UN meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal in mid-2011 to gain further feedback to develop a workable version of the Guide, to be presented at the 12th UN Inter-agency Round Table (UNRT) on C4D in November 2011. The version will be developed around the theme 'Advancing the Rights of Adolescent Girls through Communication for Development', which is the theme for the 12th UN Round Table on C4D.

After incorporating feedback received at the UNRT a 'living' Resource Pack will be rolled out regionally from the end of 2011 until 2015. This requires that the UN system's C4D focal points will wish to take this process forward and that resources are made available to do so.

Between 2015 and 2020 a consolidation phase will collect and incorporate feedback. New post-MDG theories can be incorporated into a new version of the Resource Pack, to bring it up to date.

Final comments

This report is the first part of the Resource Pack to be completed. The next part of the Pack to be fully developed will be the practical Guide to R, M&E for C4D for use across the UN. In collaboration with the Expert Panel for this project and other UN agencies, UNICEF will also develop a Directory of specialists who can deliver training and provide expert advice and support to those using the Resource Pack. The further development of the Resource Pack will benefit enormously from the inter-agency approach adopted so far, to great effect. It will also depend on good communication and collaboration as well as key 'champions' across the different agencies to put these strategies and plans into action.

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Appendix 1: List of Expert Panel members, C4D Focal Points and other participants

Expert Panel members

**Silvia Balit*
Freelance C4D consultant, formerly with FAO (retired)
Rome, Italy

**Krishna Belbase*
Senior Evaluation Specialist
UNICEF, New York, USA

Penelope Beynon
Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, Impact and Learning Team
Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England

**Ailish Byrne*
Research and Evaluation Specialist
Communication for Social Change Consortium
(based in Nairobi, Kenya)

Gary Coldevin
Independent Consultant on C4D
(based in Cebu, Philippines)

**Jackie Davies*
Consultant
Communication for Development (C4D) Consulting and MediaME
London, England

Alfonso Gumucio Dagron
Independent Development Communication Specialist
Mexico

**Will Parks*
Deputy Representative
UNICEF, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Rafael Obregon*
Director, Communication and Development Studies Programme
Ohio University, USA

Andrew Puddephatt
Independent Consultant
Global Partners, London, UK

**Nora Quebral*
Professor Emeritus, College of Development Communication,
University of the Philippines Los Banos, Philippines
(based in Hawaii, USA)

Jan Servaes
Professor
University of Massachusetts, USA

Matthew Smith
Program Officer, Connectivity and Equity in the Americas
International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada

Silvio Waisbord
Director of Graduate Programs, School of Media and Public Affairs
George Washington University, USA

**Kitty Warnock*
Senior Advisor, C4D
PANOS, UK

Other expert contributor

Caroline Davies[17]
Former ALINe Project Manager
Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England

C4D Focal Points and M&E Experts

FAO

**Ricardo del Castello*
Communication Officer
Rome, Italy

ILO

Regina Monticone
Chief, Development Partnerships, Department of Communication
Geneva, Switzerland

Carla Henry
Senior Evaluation Officer
Geneva, Switzerland

[17] Caroline completed the survey for Expert Panel members but was unable to participate in the Panel because she left IDS in early July 2010.

UNESCO

**Venus Jennings*
Programme Specialist, C4D
Paris, France

UNDP

Le Lan Le
Team Leader, UNDP Viet Nam M&E team
Hanoi, Viet Nam

Paavani Reddy
Programme Associate, Oslo Governance Centre
Oslo, Norway

UNFPA

Neil Ford
Chief, Communications and Media
New York, USA

Boniface Kalanda
M&E Specialist
Sierra Leone

UNICEF

**Paula Claycomb*
OIC/Senior Advisor, C4D
New York, USA

** Teresa Stuart*
C4D Specialist
New York, USA

World Bank

Masud Mozammel
Senior Communications Officer, Department of Operational Communications
Washington DC, USA

Other participants

In addition to those marked with an asterisk (*) above, the following people provided input at the consultation meetings in New York in December 2010:

UNIFEM, New York

Belen Sanz, Head, Evaluation Unit
Isabel Suarez, Evaluation Analyst

UNICEF, New York

Antonia Antonopolous, Communication Specialist
Jeffrey Bates, C4D Specialist, Health/Immunization
Samuel Bickel, Officer in Charge, Evaluation Office
Ivana Bjelic, MICS Specialist
James Dawson, C4D Web Consultant
Therese Dooley, Senior Advisor – Hygiene & Sanitation
Asha George, Health Specialist
Rina Gill, Deputy Director, Division of Policy and Practice
Neha Kapil, C4D Specialist
Marina Komarecki, Knowledge Management Specialist
Jesus Lopez Macedo, C4D Specialist, Health
Francesca Moneti, Senior Child Protection Specialist
Kent Page, Senior Adviser for Strategic Communication
Akiko Sakaedani Petrovic, C4D Specialist
Shalini Rozario, Communication Consultant

Graduate Student Participant

Alicya Lloyd, University of Massachusetts, USA

Administrative Support

Anna Burlyaeva-Norman, Administrative Assistant, UNICEF, New York
Barry Pamer, Rapporteur, New York