

Lessons from introducing Most
Significant Change into
traditional M&E systems/ large
Poverty Relief Program

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What is Most Significant Change

- story based, qualitative M&E
- stories of change – incl unintended outcomes
- surfaces diverse perspectives and values
- dialogue process (selection panel) select the most significant change
– DOES NOT have to be “the best”
- Feedback process
- Fosters learning and improvement

- So VERY DIFFERENT from the traditional approach

- Three programs
- Enthusiasm curtailed – manage expectations
- Disappointment turned to some success but not reach potential
- Some success - unintended results



Background and context

- **Malawi** EU funded (32 Mil Euro) –Phase II - Roads & irrigation infrastructure, reforestation – project team **engineering/infrastructure** focus
- 50% local government authorities impacted
- 4 weeks input 2012

- **Zimbabwe** DFID (50Mil GBP)– Phase II, multi donor funded poverty relief program,
- 30 **NGOs** dispersed across country, diverse focus - very complex home care, agriculture, inputs, employment etc
- 2 weeks input 2009

- **Indonesia** AusAID support facility (\$@76mil) to national program program
- Incredibly complex, **government programs**, partner organisations
- 4.5 weeks total over 1 year (2012-13)

Why MSC & what context ?

- **Malawi** – Baseline survey, no plan/\$ for end point survey
- M&E Specialist convinces management to try—capture outcomes, foster learning
- Rules & stick to the plan

- **Indonesia** –statistics dominated , partners with mixed qualitative background
- experiment with some qualitative approaches

- **Zimbabwe** Longitudinal approach to Impact assessment M&E- MSC complements quantitative
- participatory skills & investment in evaluation

Approach – field based training & initial support to integrate and implement via pilots



- **Differences**
- Preliminary work to test interest (Indo)
- Incorporate MSC within M&E framework (Zimb)
- ID & Assess potential local trainers-consultants vs train staff
- ToT role

Practical field work (pilot) essential



- Engineers/Statisticians/manager vs NGOs/partners – each has own challenge
- Additional complementary tools/local facilitators (Indo)
- Different approaches to implementing (M vs E), follow up training and implementation plans
- Over designed vs well balanced vs episodic

Insights from training/initial input

- Initial challenges re searching for expected results
- Trainers focus on negatives and lessons (Zimb)
- Clarified misunderstandings – Success story
- Issues with quality of story collection
- Issues of staff morale (Malawi)
- Positive reaction from staff
- Management/Donor participation positive (Malawi /Indonesia)

Further down the track

- **Malawi** M&E coordinator resigned; momentum lost
- Training rolled out by replacement but ... question re level M&E, management support
- **Indonesia** – selected inputs in to large national evaluation after we'd road tested it again, but some issues
- **Zimbabwe** - ongoing support & training over 2 years
- Regular reviews on learnings (program & MSC), including benefits of technique and limitations

Even further

- **Malawi** – not follow MSC steps – success story focus
- Zone manager support = level of implementation, 90/500+ stories
- Donor interest ? Revert to old ways

- **Indonesia** –evaluations with local consultants, but too late to make a difference (project ended)

- **Zimbabwe** – Process and implementation worked well, completed report, min 100+ stories
- issues to manage community /staff expectations of focusing on success, limited verification

Benefits /results

- **Malawi** - Some initial insights very powerful, but acted on ?????? , perception not add much new over time, use in quarterly reports
- **Indonesia** – participative for right program, built qualitative skills for some, good results but too late
- **Zimbabwe** - built NGO M&E skills base within country, esp narrative data
- Acknowledge personal issues ie. social inclusion, dignity, social relations ,
- Community opportunity to learn and participate

Zimbabwe cont'd



Thembekile,s failing garden

- Strong learning process –gender, “least significant”
- Report highlighted positive and negative stories
- All NGOs continue to use MSC – post 2012
- Jumping on the bandwagon by some other NGOs - success stories = MSC stories

Indonesian & Malawian insights

- **Consider the broader context- quantitative paradigm**
- MSC comparatively unknown and 'untested' - risk. 'NGO driven approach' = not rigorous vs other Qual approaches
- longer time to convince
- support - **donors & managing contractors** = safe to try
- flexibility to change program ?
- selective entry points - knowledge sector initiative for future use (Indo)
- Use local consultants earlier – qualitative interview skills (Indo)
- Need M&E support, simplify process - contribute towards mid term/endpoint evaluations ? (Malawi)

Insights from Zimbabwe

- Clarity of purpose and fit within the M&E system upfront
- Supportive organisational mindset of program, champions
- Local consultants/trainers - quality control undertaken
- Facilitation, participatory and qualitative interview skills valuable
- Ongoing support-
- NGOs vs management/donor mind set – interest/benefit using MSC

Fit for purpose, right vehicle for the job

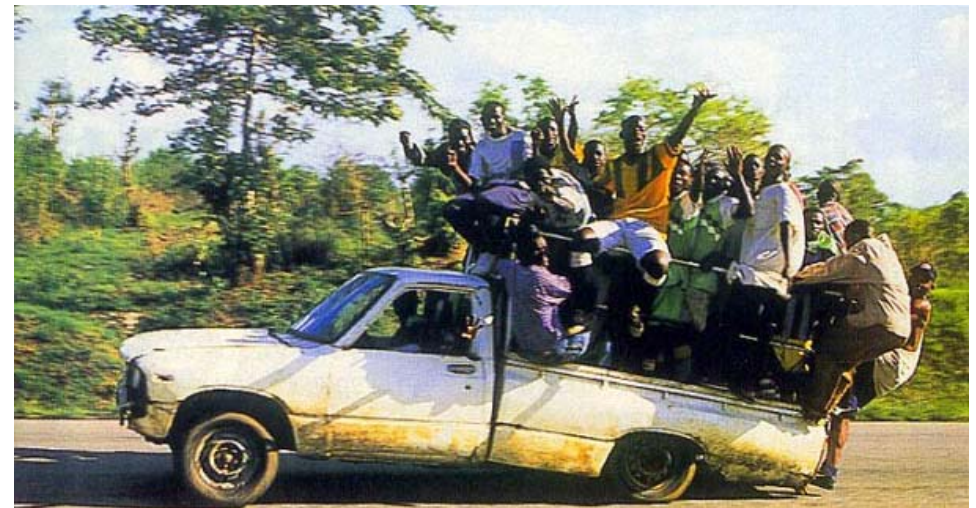


Can it do the job and get us there ? Are we all going in the same direction and right pace to avoid breakdown ?

Have we got the right people on board ?

Does the driver & navigator (champion) got the skills, trust of the team, influence ?

Do we know the local road conditions - avoid the ditches, take the short cuts to get us there safely ?



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