Capturing Change in People's Lives and Livelihoods within Organisational Systems

Learning from Good Practice and Experiences of Conservation/ Development Organisations to inform WWF practice

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Contents

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Background and Rationale

WWF-UK has commissioned this report as part of efforts to strengthen organisational capacities and systems to understand how effective WWF's interventions are in generating lasting change. Monitoring and evaluation is crucial in order to assess the extent to which programmes and projects are effectively meeting their objectives, achieve equitable solutions for people and the environment and to increase accountability to all stakeholders. The challenge for both WWF's conservation and footprint programmes is to mobilise social change. Where peoples' lives are heavily dependent on the environment, this requires programmes to understand and address poverty issues.   WWF's Position Paper on Poverty and Conservation recognizes that 'conserving and managing natural resources is essential in the fight against poverty and that conservation will only be successful in the long term if it addresses the development needs and aspirations of local communities' (WWF, 2009). A greater understanding of how to capture change in people's lives and livelihoods, through access to and use of practical frameworks and methodologies is needed to achieve this.

This study aims to learn from other conservation and/or development organisations, and is part of a longer process consisting of: learning from WWF's own practice in the network; applying this knowledge to generate guidance, and – perhaps the most challenging- creating the momentum to take this forward across the WWF Network. A 'sister' document 'Capturing Change in People's Lives and Livelihoods within Programmes: Learning from Good Practice and Experiences of Conservation/ Development Organisations to inform WWF practice' (Turrall & Studd, 2009) focuses upon the learning from this consultancy specifically for WWF programmes.

There are particular challenges associated with establishing M&E systems to captures changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods:

1. **Objectives and perspective**: There are many different lenses that can be applied depending on what the intention of the work is.

2. **Managing/reducing complexity**: There is the potential and often the temptation to try and measure all aspects of peoples' lives which makes it unmanageable – there needs to be clear messages within an organisation on what is sensible and realistic.

3. **Accommodating diversity**: Communities are not homogenous, and people will respond to project initiatives and changes in the environment in very different ways.

4. **Understanding the nature of change**: There are temporal and spatial fluctuations in peoples' lives and therefore the relative distribution and significance of costs and benefits is not constant.

The paper is not intended to be comprehensive, rather to focus on the insights from different organisations about the issues and tensions that surround particular elements of M&E systems and how they have responded to them to inform future practice within WWF. Similarly, the aim is not to recommend that WWF simply picks up and copies a system used by another organisation. Each organisation has its own individual history, objectives, culture, size and structure which may particularly lend them to a particular M&E system. Furthermore, some of the organisations are at an early stage of their M&E system and thus have little practical experience to share of how their system has worked in practice over time. It is for the WWF network with its own particular network structure, changing focus, and history to develop or adapt its own system commensurate with its current focus and needs.

The primary audience is aimed to be those within the WWF network involved with, and those who have an interest in, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) organisational systems and capturing changes in people's lives and livelihoods.

Methodology

Key areas to explore with organisations were developed by WWF-UK, with comments by the consultant. These are listed in Annex 2. Organisations that were selected to share good practice were a mixture of development and/ or conservation organisations and included the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Birdlife International (BI), CARE International, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), The International Union for Conservation and Nature (IUCN), Oxfam and Practical Action. Semi-structured telephone interviews were carried out with individuals from the selected organisations. The list of those contacted is shown in Annex 3.

A literature review was also carried out in order to understand the issues further, explore ideas provided by interviewees and contextualise the findings.

Structure of the report

The main focus of the paper contained in the next section is how organisations have addressed the challenges in developing M&E systems to capture changes in people's lives and livelihoods, learnt through interviews (and where necessary supported by the organisation's literature). This aims to be as succinct as possible. There is further information about the different organisation's organisational systems established in brief, learnt through interviews, in Annex 4.

Findings from the Study: Issues

An observation by Bose in a paper analysing the impacts of projects on livelihoods amongst development organisations is that 'the majority of problems of carrying out M&E at a field level originate at an organisational level' and that it is important to not only examine the evaluation methodology but critically an organisation's systems and culture (Bose, 2007). In a conference report, as part of the same initiative, it was found that even though conservation organisations can learn a lot from development organisations in terms of their systems and methods to capture change in people's livelihoods, they also struggle with many of the same challenges in terms of mainstreaming M&E organisationally and doing it well.

The issues/ challenges highlighted in this paper are those which other development and/or conservation organisations have experienced, and WWF are exploring:

- Establishing the purpose of the M&E system? Is it for meeting donor requirements, or an organisation's own needs?
- How can complex information collected at the local level be aggregated in a meaningful way?
- Should M&E systems link to global indicator sets?
- To what extent are organisations focusing upon downward accountability?
- Whether, and if so how, do organisations attribute change in outcomes and impacts to a particular intervention?
- How do organisations cope with resource and capacity constraints?
- How can organisations learn from information generated and the process of monitoring and evaluation systems?

The WWF Network - Challenges and Opportunities for Change

It is helpful to look further at the organisational context of WWF, and the challenges and opportunities posed before looking at how different organisations addressed the challenges above. The WWF network is by no means a homogeneous organisation and that there is a great deal of diversity, in particular across the different country offices in terms of culture, capacity and approach. In recent years the WWF Network has shifted to a more standardised approach to project management through the WWF Network Standards. This encourages projects and programmes to adopt a systematic process of planning and analysis throughout the project cycle. Use of these practices remains mixed across the Network. In addition, it is acknowledged that the Standards in their current iteration tend to emphasise design and M&E for biological change rather than social systems. The reality is, at present, that different country offices adopt different M&E systems, capacity and practices, and donor offices place different reporting requirements on other parts of the Network according to their interests and information needs.

An opportunity exists now with the preparation of the WWF Global Programme Framework Monitoring and Report system being led by WWF International. The aim of the GPF monitoring and reporting system (MRS) is to support organisational learning on how the Network can improve the effectiveness of its priority programmes and enhance its strategic decision-making for its future conservation and footprint portfolio investments (WWF, 2009). The system requires the *effectiveness* of WWF programmes in achieving their goals and objectives to be tracked, as well as an analysis of internal and external factors that influence programme effectiveness. At a higher level, the system will monitor the *status* of WWF's priority places, species and footprint areas to inform future allocation of effort and Network strategy.

In comparison with the previous Target Driven Programmes, WWF no longer has overarching, top-down goals, objectives or indicators. Instead the Global Programme Framework Monitoring and Reporting system requires priority projects and programmes to set indicators and monitoring system that shows progress to their own goals and enables effective reporting, learning and adaptive management at the programme level. Overall analysis of progress across programmes is based on a simple rating system, with ratings based on analysis of evidence from programme specific M&E systems. This system has been developed, modeled on global institutional monitoring and evaluation best-practices as employed by the major development and conservation organisations including World Bank, UN Agencies, Global Environmental Facility, UK Department for International Development, Asian Development Bank and other institutions.

Initial attempts to develop livelihoods and governance monitoring within the WWF Network, identified the necessary organisational changes needed to build livelihoods and governance into the work of WWF, as shown below in Box 1 (see Hobley et al. 2006).

Organisational changes:

- Agreed framework and strategic vision for incorporating livelihoods / poverty work into conservation across the organisation which clearly articulates WWF's niche and sets the parameters within which it engages with and works on social and poverty issues in relation to its mission
- Senior network leadership position on social and livelihood issues able to negotiate at the highest level with thematic directors
- Senior management buy-in and leadership to release the 'permissive' space for people to do things differently. Without this catalyst any demands made will not necessarily be met with a response.

Operational:

- Organisational change directed at linking technical expertise to new ways of working
- Incentive systems that support staff to take poverty/ livelihood issues seriously
- Staff with the skills, position, mandate and resources to build livelihood approaches into the mainstream of WWF programmes
- Long-term funding to follow expectations – clear acceptance of the longer time-frame required to embed changes in livelihood and biodiversity outcomes
- Tracking system that captures the integration and allows sufficient time to demonstrate impacts

Box 1. Changes needed for WWF to become more Livelihoods / Poverty Focused (Hobley et al. 2006)

A 'Poverty Mapping' exercise conducted by Rietbergen- McCracken et al (2007) had similar findings:

- There is virtual unanimity among WWF poverty project staff on the interdependence of conservation and poverty alleviation objectives.

- The upfront thinking on poverty is often weak. Most WWF poverty projects make no formal attempt to understand what poverty means in the local context or in relation to the planned project activities. Only about half of the poverty projects have included a baseline on poverty and livelihoods issues and a similar proportion has developed indicators on these issues. Even fewer projects have undertaken any monitoring of project impacts on these issues.

- Where poverty-related indicators have been developed, they often apply only to the financial capital assets (e.g. income levels or levels of participation in alternative income-generating activities). There is therefore a real disconnect between what the poverty projects are doing on poverty (taking a broad-based approach) and what they are measuring (a narrow, income-based approach).

- WWF project staff are clearly committed and motivated to tackle poverty but their ability to do so is constrained by their lack of time and capacity/expertise. There is widespread concern, and

> a growing sense of frustration, among poverty project staff about the lack of leadership within WWF on poverty and livelihoods – more precisely the lack of clear policy or guidance on institutional issues such as what is expected of WWF projects with regards to their work on poverty and livelihoods, and when should WWF be implementing the poverty work itself and when should it be working through partner organisations with more experience in this field.

Since these papers, positive changes and new initiatives have emerged. As stated above there is now a Position Paper on Poverty and Conservation and a commitment to roll it out. This recognizes that 'conserving and managing natural resources is essential in the fight against poverty and that conservation will only be successful in the long term if it addresses the development needs and aspirations of local communities' (WWF, 2009, pp1). Implementation of the Policy requires commitment, roles and responsibility in addressing poverty and conservation, including (importantly for this review) senior managers in each WWF office and of each major programme to be responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented; a procedural framework developed so there is consistent implementation ; institutional capacity strengthened; principles integrated into a guiding framework and policies and poverty-related indicators integrated into programme monitoring.

Efforts are underway to link good design with M&E, to prevent 'bolt on M&E', and to integrate understandings of social and governance systems into both design and M&E systems. In addition there is significant momentum under the Partnership Programme Agreement between WWF-UK and DFID for programmes which are designed, implemented and monitored as to how they address their poverty and conservation goals, thus challenging country offices to provide evidence of positive effects on people's lives and livelihoods. The PPA includes a specific objective on the development of Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation, Communication and Learning systems (Objective 4 of the PPA).

It is too early to say whether these initiatives will lead to long-lasting change , but learning from other organisations and how they have addressed some of the challenges that they have found (albeit for many with a strong development mandate) may help to feed into this process.

We now turn to the different challenges faced by organisations in developing M&E systems which capture change in people's lives and livelihoods.

Challenge – Clarifying the purpose of the M&E system

Although some organisations leave M&E processes to the discretion of programme and project managers, most organisations develop a broader organisational M&E & learning system which helps to establish clarity around expectations, a shared framework and system and perhaps most importantly a culture of M&E.

The way in which the M&E system is designed and the choice of tools used to implement the system depend very much on the purpose of the M&E system. There can be different purposes of an M&E system –accountability, supporting operational management, supporting strategic management, knowledge creation, empowerment (IFAD, 2002). In reality, a project or programme may feel the tension of trying to meet M&E demands for a number of different purposes, and indeed, conflicting demands for one e.g. different donor demands for their own accountability. Achieving clarity around the purpose of M&E, can be helped by asking who it is designed for.

Who is it designed for?

NGOs often carry out a balancing act between developing M&E systems to meet donor requirements, an organisation's need for relevant information as well as principles such as downwards accountability and transparency.

Different organisations had different approaches to respond to this. AWF, who are relatively small in comparison to WWF have such diverse funders, partners and capacity that they have felt that 'one size does not fit all' and have not developed an internal M&E system common to all projects and programmes, leaving M&E to the discretion of programme and project managers.

An interesting move for some NGOs is that they are being less driven by donor requirements, but are establishing their own M&E systems and attempting to persuade donors to accept them. For example in the case of IUCN, they have 10 framework donors and have established one reporting system for all (though there are still one to two donors of the ten asking for additional information for their own accountability purposes). As an interviewee from Oxfam stated 'it is about making a credible system and a credible case for it'.

Certainly, as felt by several of the NGOs, the Paris Declaration and move towards greater aid harmonization is a strong justifying point in making the case for shared M&E systems acceptable to different donors. Clarity about the purpose and who the system is for can help to focus the system from the outset.

What is being measured?

There is growing consensus that there should be a focus upon achievement and measurement of outputs, outcomes and impacts. This signals a move away from a focus on resource inputs (what is spent) and activities (what is done).

There is also a growing focus upon understanding of the pathways of moving from achieving outputs, outcomes, and impacts. It is now widely acknowledged that the relationships between output and outcome, and between outcome and impact, are dependent on processes or pathways which facilitate or obstruct the adoption and adaptation of programme or project outputs and their eventual impact on the environment and people's livelihoods. This shows greater acknowledgement that programme interventions operate within complex social systems. This analysis of pathways is part of the 'theory of change' which aims to understand how change may happen within a project or programme and how it could be influenced through intervention strategies (for further information on this , see sister document).

Key Lesson: Develop and communicate a clear vision about the purpose and function of M&E across the organisation. This should include clarity of expectations in terms of donor requirements…. With particular regard to Changes in Livelihoods and Peoples' Lives, the potential value in developing conceptual framework outlining the types of changes in peoples' lives drawn from the literature and existing good practice should be explored. This could be used to guide the development of M&E systems in programmes rather than as a reporting mechanism.

Challenge - Tension of collecting complex information at the local level and simplifying up

A further challenge that emerged from organisations was the difficulty of rolling up information from the community to project to national and then international levels. Organisations often need to be able to say something about what they are achieving, which requires some effort to scale up from individual project-level M&E and synthesise information from an entire portfolio.

When data is collected at the local level about people's complex livelihoods – how could this then be aggregated upwards but still retain meaningful results? The difficulty of comparing against non-commensurate indicators - 'comparing apples and pears' -was highlighted as an issue. For example comparing poverty and livelihood outcomes for farmers in Afghanistan with farmers in Bolivia (where living conditions, socio-political contexts and therefore programme expectations are vastly different), or one part of a region to another. The indicators and measurements developed within country projects and programmes when taken out of context can become meaningless.

Different organisations have responded to this challenge in different ways. Some organisations are attempting to develop common tools, processes, indicators or methods for common use in all projects. This brings with it certain challenges, not least the problem of defining comparative 'global' indicators that are relevant in every local context. Other organisations are attempting to synthesise from diverse, locally-defined indicators and approaches to M&E. This also brings challenges of scaling up and non-comparability between projects, but may be a more appropriate approach (AWF et al. 2007).

Those organisations which are developing systems for data aggregation use standardized indicators. AWF is using 4-5 indicators for all projects which are then aggregated up. DFID are also moving towards standardized indicators . An example is DFID Bangladesh who are in the process of trying to develop standardised monitoring frameworks with similar indicators across their five country programmes, so that they can aggregate across the country portfolio(even though they acknowledge the difficulty of aggregating across different contexts) . They are using the following mixture of methodologies : household income and expenditure surveys for baseline and targeting; income and expenditure surveys carried out every 2-3 years; monthly monitoring of livelihood assets; nutritional outcomes (every 6 months)and also proxy indicators (e.g. the 10% poorest who are those classified to have an income of less than 15 pence/ day are categorised as landless, female-headed households, have a limited no. of assets, or none of the households have worked for last 6 months). This reflects a wider organisational move towards standardised indicators. For organisations where the programmes are working towards the same goal, standardized indicators can be a desirable system to adopt .

Some, although not focusing on systems which can be aggregated across the board, are still trying to aggregate in some way. Practical Action tried to set up standardized indicators but it was felt that individual country offices often had, to certain degrees, different languages and concepts and thus again the indicators became less meaningful when out of context. However they do request information from projects and programmes about the number of people directly and indirectly benefitting from an initiative. They then aggregate these figures broadly across the projects and programmes, and use alongside more qualitative 'highlights' and storytelling of results.

Interestingly, Oxfam have decided against aggregating across programmes . It was felt that by aggregating the data , it was taken out of context and thus not meaningful. They do use two methods now for showing performance across the portfolio. Within their Programme Partnership Agreement with DFID , at the end of the three year period when all (25) programmes have monitored and evaluated against their own targets , they then extrapolate across the programmes as to the number of programmes that have achieved their own objectives. In addition, they carry out syntheses studies in key thematic areas to collate evidence of what has been achieved, but also to assess the quality of the evaluations themselves.

IUCN use a system whereby all data from projects is collated to programme level which is then sent to an M&E unit. PhD students are contracted to develop general sable results across the programmes using statistical software. IUCN is in the process of trying to develop a more systematic approach to M&E across it's projects and programmes.

The approach as to whether to aggregate is a defining feature of an organisation's M&E system when developing/ adapting a system, particularly given the complex nuanced data that emerges when trying to capture changes in people's lives , aggregate across different contexts and achieve meaningful data. This again reinforces the importance of ensuring clarity around the purpose of the M&E system and whether programmes and projects are trying to achieve the same type of changes.

Challenge – Should organisations link to global indicator sets?

The notion of trying to link to global indicator sets such as the Millennium Development Goals, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment or CBD targets can be appealing in terms of being able to show how an organisation's work is links to higher global poverty goals, and also communicating it in ways that are clearly understood by many.

Again, the extent to which organisations are attempting to do this is varied. It is not a surprise that those who are trying to aggregate across their projects, programmes , country offices and organisations are more likely to attempt to attempt to link to global indicators.

CARE has developed 'UBORA' , an organisational performance and learning system which provides a common framework for the ongoing measurement of performance across offices (UBORA means 'excellence' in Swahili). UBORA's data collection system is streamlined so there are 20 topline output indicators which are modified MDG targets (not the indicators) and also draw from CARE's unifying framework (around poverty of human conditions, social positions,and the enabling environment (improving governance)where CARE considers that needed in addition to MDGs . Country and regional offices show how they are contributing to some of these targets (not necessarily all 20), and each of the

3-4 country programmes focuses on 3-5 of the 20 targets (for more information, see http://p-shift.care2share.wikispaces.net/Ubora?f=print)

Birdlife International make a concerted effort to use local level indicators but then link them to global level indicators. This has not developed into a standardized system but is being used to different extents across the organisation. Local level indicators are developed by projects, these are then clustered by staff and structured according to global monitoring frameworks such as the OECD – DAC dimensions of poverty. (See Thomas and Fanshawe, no date).

Others including IUCN do not attempt to do it as part of their system but do articulate the link if there is a case/ request to do so.

In brief, the tension caused by trying to aggregate data to achieve meaningful results can be summed up by CARE as 'often an ideal but not very realistic'.

Key Lesson: Unless there is a clear purpose, rationale and audience for organisationally aggregated data and/or external Global Indicator sets it is not recommended that organisations pursue this approach. This would only be successful if the organisation was to redesign its programmes to deliver against these indicators.

Challenge – To what extent are organisations focusing upon downward accountability?

The issue of downward accountability to the poor and local community targeted under the programme, has become more prominent in recent years with a greater focus on participatory approaches and monitoring and evaluation for empowerment.

Interestingly, of those interviewed, there was no organisation-wide policy or system in place for downward accountability. It was largely left to the discretion of different projects and programmes as to how it would be managed. However many of the projects and programmes use participatory M&E and it was felt that there would be downward accountability to varying extents in many initiatives. In one case – CARE – a specific participatory impact assessment methodology is being developed for this purpose (for further information in the future see www.careinternational.org.uk).

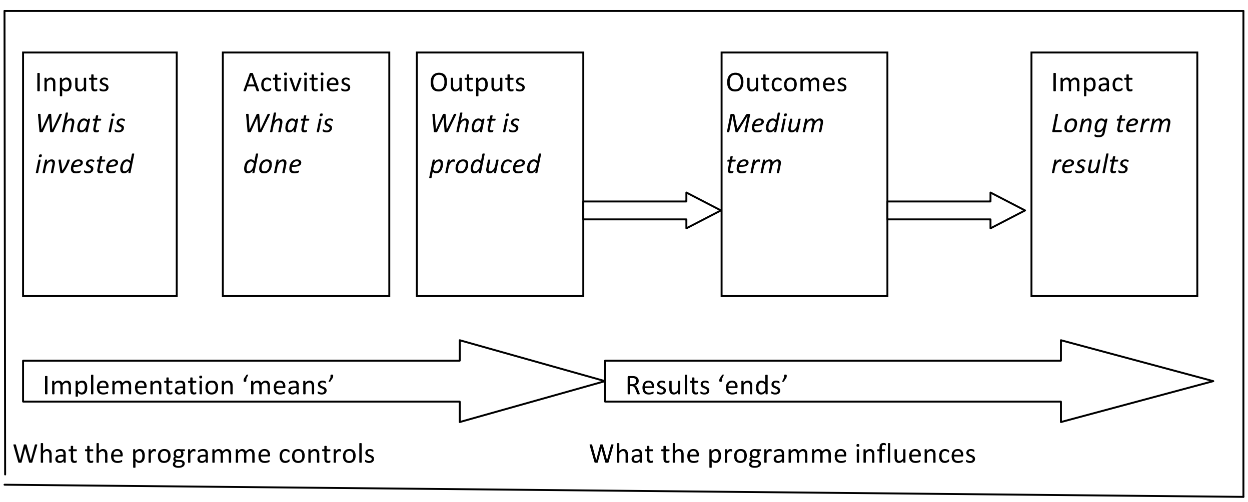
Although beyond the organisations interviewed, one noteworthy example of an organisational system developed , driven by downward accountability goals is Action Aid's Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPs). ALPS emphasises accountability to all stakeholders, but most of all to poor and excluded people, especially women and girls. It sets out the key accountability requirements, for planning, monitoring, strategy formulation, learning, reviews and audit also personal attitudes and behaviours. It is very much value driven and defines standards, not only about what they do but also how they do it (see ActionAid, 2006 for further information) .

Key Lesson: Downwards accountability is an important element in programmatic M&E, particularly in projects and programmes which work with and through community based organisations. The importance of this should be incorporated in an organisational vision for M&E and promoted as a key principle of good M&E. However, the exact nature of how interventions engage partners and communities in feedback and M&E will vary on a programme by programme basis so can't be prescribed.

Challenge - Whether, and if so how do organisations attribute change in outcomes and impacts to a particular intervention ?

The question of how to attribute whether a particular outcome or impact for people's livelihoods is due to a particular intervention raises methodological and in some cases ethical issues. This is particularly the case when working on programmes with various other organisations. It has also become more difficult to attribute when trying to monitor and evaluate against outcomes and impacts rather than inputs and activities which are less within an organisation's control, with more external factors likely to impede performance and results (see diagram below).

Figure 1 Attribution Across the Programme Logic



Adapted from IUCN, 2008, Monitoring the IUCN Programme, pp 6

As Brown (2007) states in a paper commissioned by Oxfam , attribution relies on establishing the counterfactual – the with/without scenario, or before – after. The difficulty methodologically with the before- after scenario is that it is impossible to know what would have happened had the intervention not taken place. The with/ without scenario which relies on finding a comparison group (i.e. selecting a 'similar group') is said to pose two difficulties (i) there may be spillover effects from a programme if the control group are geographically close; (ii) target groups are chosen according to criteria or even self-selected so the control group should reflect the same criteria/ characteristics. There is a move towards 'randomisation' i.e. choosing participants at random, and a random sampling for a control group. Oxfam in certain circumstances are using randomized assessments of programmes (see more information from

Poverty Action Lab http://www.povertyactionlab.org/research/rand.php). This is not without its ethical debates.

Oxfam place emphasis on attributing their efforts to different extents across different programmes. A typology mentioned in an interview with them is below:

- adequacy - purely meeting objectives (not trying to attribute impacts to the organisation)
- plausibility - can make plausible case as to the contribution that made
- probability - e.g. randomised impact evaluation where can state more re attribution

In most cases the focus is upon adequacy.

To many of the organisations including IUCN, it was as much about assessing the contribution to an outcome or impact rather than attribution, as set out within a theory of change. Contribution analysis is defined by the Network of Networks of Impact Evaluation (NONIE) as 'telling a well-founded, credible story about how an intervention is performing against intended results'. A strength is that it can 'identify a chain (or several chains) of expected results, [and] can be helpful in identifying those short-term impacts which are likely to provide an indication of the achievement of longer-term impacts' (for further information see Leeuw and Vaessen, 2009).

This approach was reflected within interview by Practical Action and IUCN who emphasized that if there is clarity about what an initiative is trying to achieve, the intention is clear about how change is likely to happen , and the effectiveness of project achievements can be shown, then it is possible to make some claim as to how an outcome or impact was achieved and how they contributed.

Thus for organisations deciding whether it is realistic and desirable to focus on attribution or their contribution to a programmes outcomes and impacts on people's lives and livelihoods, there are implications for the evidence of impact that they can elicit, the approach and methodologies used.

Key Lesson: Ensure all programmes are clearly able to articulate how they anticipate change will take place from activity through to impact. This understanding of the change process then allows the testing of the assumptions through M&E for future learning.

Challenge - How to cope with resource and capacity constraints?

Ideal systems for M&E designed centrally are not always reflected at the programme and project level. Sufficient and appropriate resources and capacity was considered to be a challenge by all of the organisations. This is of particular concern in the current economic climate.

The following specific issues were mentioned:

- A lack of social science skills to assess changes in people's livelihoods
- Once data has been collected there is found to be a shortage of good data analysis skills
- Low wages and incentives means that M&E specialists are often lost

- At the end of projects, many of the good quality staff leave to move on to another project, losing institutional knowledge (this was one incentive for CARE to move towards a programmatic approach)
- With new M&E systems in place, there can be difficulty in finding the appropriate consultancy expertise to support roll out of the system to projects and programmes

However NGOS are finding ways to cope with these issues. It is interesting to note that some felt strongly as discussed earlier that it was as much about ensuring that there was clarity of the purpose of the system, the type, nature and detail of information that was needed, rather than being less focused and generating unnecessary amount of data to be analysed. This means realigning people to focus upon those particular information needs, and drawing upon appropriate internal expertise.

Some innovative approaches are being developed. Within IUCN an electronic portal is being used to share M&E insights and papers across the IUCN network. They are also developing a network of co-ordinators who bring M&E standards to designated staff across different country offices.

Also technical backstopping has been increased in the case of CARE where new systems are being brought in. Also in country programmes that are experimenting with a new approach (impact assessment framework) they are referred to as 'learning laboratories' and then play a role in distilling and sharing that learning with other 'satellite' offices that trial the approach.

Thus although resources and capacity are restricted, different organisations are trying to focus on what information is really needed from an M&E to streamline resources, and find innovative ways to cope.

Key Lesson: Acknowledge that it will take time to build the necessary capacity and be realistic in terms of expectations of how quickly an organisation can roll out a system to monitor changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods. Start simple first, and build up to more complex analysis of change within programmes over time as capacity develops. Ensure that programme plans for M&E incorporate time and budget for data analysis, information management, reflection and learning and sharing findings with partners and community members. Less is more. Start to work with a selected group of projects or programmes which have capacity in place, and are willing to act as 'learning laboratories' for the organisation. If possible, work with new and emerging programmes to build M&E into programme design.

Challenge – How to learn from information generated from M&E systems

As stated above there is now a greater focus upon learning within M&E systems so that the evidence gathered and lessons learned are not only directly provided to donors but is also absorbed within an organisation, and feeds into future decision-making at community, project, programme and organisational levels. This requires an organisational culture around the importance of M&E and learning which encourages reflection and acknowledge that failure, as well as success, is a part of learning.

In order for individual projects to embrace a learning culture, it is often the case that headquarters needs to lead the way to create the space and culture. It is important that there is strong information exchange between HQ and the field. Providing feedback to the field level on the results of the reporting process, and eliciting feedback from the field level on the process, can help improve buy-in and create this learning culture (AWF et al. 2007).

It is interesting that different organisations have different approaches to learning within their M&E systems. For relatively small organisations there is more of a reliance upon ad-hoc conversations for learning, as is recognized by AWF, who also have a strong culture of mentoring between staff.

For bigger organisations, a change in the organisational culture also requires altering internal systems. For IUCN for example it has been important to change perceptions within the organisation from M&E as a way to monitor individual's performance to one of M&E as part of broader learning. This is said to have taken approximately three years and involved the delinking of management performance from evaluation systems.

Action Aid within their ALPS system (see above) use Participatory Review and Reflection Processes (PRRPs) which are annual reflections including as many stakeholders as possible to share learning within programmes so that they can improve the responsiveness and quality of their work. Stakeholders include the poor and excluded, programme team, partners and donors – so requires careful facilitation. PRRPs are said to have been a catalyst for: the beginning of greater accountability to partners and the groups of people with whom they work at grass roots level.; led to the encouragement of learning processes, which improve ongoing work; the opening up of ActionAid's work to more criticism from their peers, donors, partners and the people with whom we work in communities; internal challenging and rethinking of their work with partners; more transparency in sharing honestly with others the difficulties of development work (for further information see David and Mancini, 2004).

IFAD focus on creating a learning environment as a core element within their guidance of learning and managing for impact (IFAD, 2002). The idea is that if there is a positive response to the questions below (Box 2) then it can be said that the programme or project is actively learning.

- Individuals feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued
- Mistakes and failures are considered important by everyone for learning and not shameful
- All the key groups involved in project implementation communicate openly and regularly
- Project implementers, including primary stakeholders, regularly and informally discuss project progress, relationships and how to improve actions
- Managers listen carefully to others and consciously seek solutions together
- During regular meetings and workshops, time is set aside for discussing mistakes and learning lessons
- The question, "Why is this happening?" appears often in discussions.

Box 2: Indicators of a learning environment within a project or programme

It is noteworthy that from the experiences of the organisations interviewed and literature that a learning environment can be created through many small changes as well as more far-reaching events and changes (read more in IFAD, 2002).

Key Lesson: Emphasise reflection and learning as much as data collection as a core part of M&E. Require programmes to set out and plan for reflection events within their annual work plan. Encourage use of external facilitators if necessary.

Conclusions

Monitoring and evaluation is clearly part of a broader organisational system and culture. For WWF, establishing a system to capture change in people's lives and livelihoods is part of a wider challenge which involves establishing the right vision, clarity around poverty and conservation objectives, internalization of poverty/ livelihood issues and the appropriate systems and capacity to support change.

Capturing the complex, nuanced data which emerges when exploring changes in people's lives places particular challenges on an organisation as to how to aggregate in a meaningful way, whether and how to use standardized indicators, whether and how to attribute changes in people's lives to a particular initiative and to what extent to focus on downward accountability. Different organisations have managed these in different ways.

The insights shared by other development and/ or conservation organisations can help to feed into WWF's thinking and adaptation of their own systems to capture poverty/ livelihood outcomes and impacts as well as conservation outcomes. Each organisation has responded according to their own history, objectives, and culture. It will be for WWF to develop or adapt its own systems to suits its own current priorities and needs. Continually learning from the results and feeding that back into WWF decision-making should help ensure that any guidance is effective.

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Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Overall Purpose: To improve the relevance, quality, usefulness of WWF's monitoring and evaluation systems to capture changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods[1] to strengthen capacities and systems to ensure pro-poor conservation.

Purpose of Consultancy: To scope and inform the development of future guidance for the WWF Network on monitoring and evaluation of changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods lives by bringing in good practice from outside of WWF.

Background and Context:

Monitoring and evaluation is crucial to ensure that work is on track to meeting its objectives, to generate insights and learning to inform better decisions on future strategies, demonstrate the impact of work, and increase our accountability to all stakeholders. Good monitoring and evaluation should capture the intended, unintended, positive and negative consequences of WWF's work. Where appropriately designed, monitoring processes themselves can build the capacity, self reliance and confidence of community members, and implementing staff and partners. Where relevant participatory monitoring approaches should be encouraged, which enhance downwards accountability.

WWF wishes to strengthen its capacities and systems to ensure pro-poor conservation. To achieve this, we require improvements in systems to understand peoples' lives to inform the development of programmes, and the application of methods to monitor changes in those peoples' lives. Improving monitoring and evaluation practices are part of a broader effort to improve the quality of WWF's work – the varied quality of design – particularly relating to how we work with and through local communities – will also be addressed.

As part of this process WWF-UK is seeking a consultant to improve our knowledge of what methods and approaches will best help us to achieve effective and realistic monitoring systems that will capture changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods. In a relatively time-poor organisation like WWF, the consultant

[1] Livelihoods is interpreted in the broader sense of the word as the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. WWF is interested not only in changes in capital assets but ultimately livelihood outcomes (i.e. improved wellbeing, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, more income, more sustainable use of natural resource base).

is required to help the WWF Network improve its access to the vast array of information and experiences from other organisations that have established systems to monitor changes and impacts on peoples' livelihoods.

This consultancy is intended to inform work to be continued by WWF. It is not anticipated to be comprehensive in terms of the level of detail, but to help the organisation have access to the most relevant and high quality information to inform future work.

As a result, specific time is built into the consultancy contract to work with a small group of WWF-UK staff to discuss and debate key issues emerging from the work, so the results are shared and owned by WWF.

Key Consultancy Questions:

1. **What have been the experiences from other conservation / development organisations who have tried to identify and understand changes in peoples' livelihoods from their work?**

2. **What are the different methodologies that WWF could use to monitor and evaluate changes in peoples' lives and livelihoods over time?**

3. **What are the accepted aspects of good practice that must be considered when monitoring and evaluating changes in peoples' lives and livelihood?** (e.g. disaggregation, community involvement etc?)

Consultancy Objectives:

1. Capture good practice and lessons learned from the experiences of other conservation and/or development organisations with particular attention to:
    a. Developing meaningful livelihood* M&E systems / indicators at a community /programmatic / organisational level
    b. Dealing with Scale and the links between different scales
    c. Capacity, Time, Skills

Key questions and contacts to be finalised in conjunction with WWF staff

Identify key challenges and difficulties that have relevance to WWF as well as good practice

Make reference to how any M&E system relates to the values / principles and approach being promoted by the organisation

2. Develop an 'annotated list' of a maximum of 20 different methodologies used by different organisations to act as a future resource for WWF programmes.

(*If necessary consultant will contact people for more information if not available in literature)*

These methodologies will be grouped according to Organising Themes / Typologies that emerge from analysis of the types of methodologies and their potential application with WWF staff.

3. Clearly set out accepted good practice in monitoring and evaluating changes in people's lives and livelihoods (to include designing and setting up system, gathering, analysing and managing information), based on lessons learned from Objectives 1 and 2, plus discussions of emerging issues with a selected group of WWF-UK staff.

Deliverables:

1. Finalise and submit questions for interviews, and structure for reports to WWF-UK

2. Annotated list of a maximum of 20 methodologies / tools (20 pages) – (structure and key headings to be agreed between WWF and consultant).

3. Maximum 10 page document outlining good practice and 'tips' in setting up and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems to capture changes in people's lives and livelihoods*, drawing on examples from other conservation and/or development organisations and WWF (structure and key headings to be agreed between WWF and consultant)

4. Key documents for bibliography (ordered and filed) to be submitted on a flash drive and/or links to relevant websites, provided, so the WWF-UK Team and other interested people in the WWF network can access more information.

5. 2 Presentations / discussions to a group of WWF-UK staff (Preliminary findings from research with external agencies and literature to finalise good practice presented in **April** meeting – date to be confirmed); Exploration and Presentation of final findings, plus experiences from WWF (**May** - date to be confirmed)

Methodology:

- Agree structure questions, and of final report with WWF–UK
- Literature review of relevant reports and methods documents (see list)
- Structured interviews with selected people in a few key organisations (see list and suggested questions)
- Group work / discussions with WWF-UK Staff to share findings and further develop thinking
- Final presentation of results

Additional Information

This consultancy is part of ongoing work within WWF-UK and the WWF Network to build capacity and good practice in monitoring and evaluating changes in people's lives and livelihoods. The consultant is providing a support, research and literature review function which will go on to be developed into good practice guidelines by WWF. The consultant will share knowledge gained through this work through participation in internal discussions within WWF-UK. Contribution to discussions is as important a means of reporting back to WWF, as are written reports.

Core Team

This contract will be under the supervision of Kate Studd (WWF-UK), but with inputs and review from a wider group of WWF staff.

For some aspects of the work the consultant will directly work with the WWF-UK team.

Annex 2: Questions Asked in Interviews Regarding Organisational Systems

1. What systems (at organisational, office, programme, project, community) do different organisations have in place to capture and report changes in peoples' livelihoods? To what extent are these systems actually implemented across organisations?
2. How do these systems relate to the overall **values / approaches** of the organisation?
3. Is there a strong commitment to M&E systems from senior management within organisations? (and in particular those concerned with assessing changes in people's livelihoods)?
4. **Organisational Structures** (i.e. do they have separate teams for evaluation, impact assessments, monitoring support etc.)Do they only rely on **programme monitoring systems** to capture livelihood impacts? If not, what other processes do organisations use? (what resourcing goes into this?)
5. How do organisations deal with the challenge of attribution?
6. **Dealing with Scale:** Do these organisations try to 'roll up' information from community to project to national to international level? If so, how? If they don't – what do they do instead? How do they deal with qualitative information in scaling up?
7. How do organisations balance the need for M&E systems to meet donor requirements and building a culture of learning and critical reflection?

B. Global Frameworks / Indicator Sets for Livelihoods.

1. Do organisations have global framework / common indicators at the organisational level? If so, what value does this provide? What are the advantages / disadvantages?
2. Do any organisations align themselves to global indicator sets such as the MDGs or national indicators sets? How does this work? What are the resource implications?

C. Complexity and Accountability

1. How have organisations resolved the need for a balance between analysing the complexity and diversity of changes of peoples' livelihoods, and the need for simple, communicable information for upwards accountability? (e.g. disaggregation of impact etc.)
2. How do they provide for lateral and downwards accountability?

D. Resources and Capacity:

1. How many resources do they invest in monitoring and evaluating changes in livelihoods? What factors influence this decision? (Staff, Skills (including training), Budget (%?), Time)
2. Are there capacity issues for carrying out such M&E systems? Are there incentives in place for staff to carry out M&E?
3. How do they deal with differences in capacity between countries?
4. Are there specific challenges for organisations implementing M&E systems when working through / with other partners?

E. Methods and Indicators:

1. What methods and indicators have they found particularly useful at a community, project, programme, organisational level?

Think about:

- indicators for capturing material and non-material changes (empowerment, equity, rights).
- methods to capture changes in access to or benefit from natural resources or ecosystems services,
- use / promotion of participatory monitoring approaches

Annex 3: Organisations and Individuals Contacted

Organisation	Name and role
CARE	Sarah Gillingham, Consultant, particularly regarding her work with CARE
	Michael Drinkwater, CARE USA
CARE Bangladesh	Eliza Islam and Mr Mehrul
IUCN	Alex Moiseev, Head of M&E, HQ
	Jeffrey Sayer
DFID	Penny Davies
Practical Action	Barnaby Peacocke
AWF	Jo Elliott
Oxfam	James Stevenson
Birdlife International	David Thomas
Consultant	Helen Suich

Annex 4: Notes on Different Organisational Systems

Notes on **Oxfam's** Organisational System from an Interview with James Stevenson

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) System

Programmes**:**

- At the heart is good programme monitoring, programme teams collaborate with partners and communities to collect quality data against outcome programme level indicators.
- Monitoring information is then analysed during monitoring reviews – this is the bedrock of the system. These are reviews at programme level which are carried out at least twice / year by programme staff and partners to reflect upon information gathered and what it means for their future work. Use data from programmes, and feed into reflection events. Information is used locally, where needed. The idea is that teams constantly need to be reflecting on whether objectives are appropriate etc.
- There are a few mandatory requirements for monitoring of programmes :
    - Link with programme plans
    - Must be based on reliable monitoring information (i.e. not just opinion based)
    - Must include time for reflection and analysis and learning
    - Must be followed by action and feedback
- Programmes over £1m have independent evaluations (and some carried out below this threshold), and generally published (unless sensitive)
- Strategic evaluations e.g. global evaluation of partnerships led to a new partnership policy (available on web)
- Impact assessments, more rigorous standard programme evaluations.
- Support is provided by M&E staff e.g. to help with baseline data, try to get external funding (* see below)
- NB made focus on outcomes central to MEL system (output easier, but just about delivery and not about how effective they have been)

Country and regional levels:
- also have monitoring reviews and meetings, sometimes themed, around performance or more strategic

* A randomised assessment of a programme, monitoring changes in village where are involved in the programme and those that not. E.g. 50 with , 50 without. Runs alongside a programme, and helps to assess whether to scale up , use in other areas. Testing for three year period. NB ethical issues of including those control 'without ' communities but if results good, then work with them after the test period. Cost about £500,000. Some resistance to it by academics
Difficult to bring into ongoing programmes, needs to be new programmes. E.g. Pakistan working with partners in river valley and want to bring into new areas, so will do randomised phase.

Notes on CARE's Organisational System from Interview with Michael Drinkwater

Organisational system

- Trying to have one M&E system - referred to as monitoring , reflective, learning and impact system in each programme for all partners.
- CARE has developed a new organisational performance system, Ubora, the Swahili word for "excellence." Ubora provides a common framework for the ongoing management of performance across country offices, and regional management units. It serves as an umbrella system, overarching CARE's various reporting systems, pulling together key information and implementing processes for strategically reviewing, analyzing and acting on this set of information throughout the year.
- UBORA's data collection system is streamlined so there are topline 20 output indicators which are modified MDG targets (not the indicators) and also draw from CARE's unifying framework around poverty of human conditions (increasing opportunity), social positions (improving social equity)and the enabling environment (improving governance)where CARE considers that needed in addition to MDGs
- At country level (country offices) , and regional offices will show how they are contributing to some of these targets (not necessarily all 20)
- A shift towards 3-4 programmes in each country office. Each one will have 3-5 of the 20 targets to work towards (these would be quantitative but may have been collected using quantitative or qualitative info). Programmes have 10-15 year time frame
- Projects are designed to deliver against 1 of the targets (though may work towards different programmes)

Programme level

- In the process of developing an 'impact assessment framework' as used within CARE Bangladesh
- An impact assessment framework is a process including steps of: identification and focus upon working towards a particular target population, analysis and understanding of their underlying causes of poverty , a vision or goal for impact for the target group, analysis of how change is likely to happen (the theory of change, see above) and initiatives to contribute to such change.
- Further elaboration and an example from CARE Bangladesh is available in the sister document regarding programme frameworks

Notes on IUCN's Organisational System from Interview with Alex Moiseev

Context of M&E in IUCN 'at a glance'

- Highly decentralised organisation , have over-riding 'global monitoring framework' which programmes have to contribute to , and project portfolios have to contribute to the programmes
- There are 5 thematic areas within the global programme monitoring framework- poverty and security is one
- They have shifted to a results-based planning, m& e system, and have made a conscious decision to keep planning, monitoring and evaluation together.
- Behavioural change is considered very important, as much of their work is to do with policy change (at project level 20% of indicators are traditional indicators, 80% are about policy change)
- Reporting is a challenge , in the past have used stories (light version of most significant change) but aiming for a more systematic approach
- Evaluation is their strongest area , and good at innovative techniques (e.g. Organisational assessment, zero policy review, evaluating events) but not so good at traditional areas

Organisational M&E and Learning Systems

- Planning system is over 4 year horizon (to coincide with World Conservation Events) and each unit does their own planning document which must contribute to the global framework.
- There are 600-800 projects going on at any one time so difficult to keep track.
- Trying to support projects to develop systems that work for them, with tools available to help projects adopt a more systematic M&E approach
- Central Team based in Gland who will undertake sample spot checks of projects to be in practice in 6 months.
- an improved electronic system to cope with the new data that will be generated.
- The programmes send collated, analysed, processed data from their own project portfolios to M&E team who then work with the 25 programme results sets to develop a report for the donors
- They use PhD students to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data sets that emerge from the 25 programmes to develop a report for framework donors (have data sets for two months, analyse and 'see what emerges')
- They have 10 'framework donors' who all provide funding, and under condition that one reporting system to all (sell it to them as aid harmonisation/ co-ordination.. in practice most do but one or two want much more detail for their own systems linked to higher (e.g. MDG info that needed)
- There is a v strong commitment to planning, M&E systems from senior management– Alex ' one degree away from director general

- Re emphasis on social/ livelihoods/ wellbeing etc. , there is an emphasis on this at project

- In future, planning to do some thematic evaluations e.g. cluster evaluations from few programmes re rights-based work
- M&E used to be a very much top-down bureaucratic procedure , and felt that people were being 'evaluated' . It has taken time (about 3 yrs) to change the mindset to evaluation for those involved and for learning. Also delinked evaluation from management performance so not feel that they are being evaluated though have HR systems to support.

- Planning, M&E very much part of wider organisational learning systems (and part of HR, finance and membership support systems)

Notes on Practical Action's Organisational System from Interview with Barnaby Peacocke

Organisational level:

- Two parts:
    - Highlights from each programme re what are the 1-2 changes that occurred (using Most Significant Change, filtering , aggregation system), presented as case studies (aggregated from project to programme to country level
    - Programme level indicators (can be quantitative) This is standardised , and a simplification of work .
    - All projects / programmes try to answer the number of beneficiaries that have directly benefited or indirectly benefited over the year. These are categorised by social and political benefits (people's capabilities enhanced; social, economic and institutional systems for innovation and use of technology improved) and material benefits (e.g. access to energy, food, markets; turnover)

Project / programme work

- Three key elements:
    - Programmatic output-purpose clarity indicators (qualitative or quantitative).A form of standardised approach, each programme has up to 5 indicators.
    - Stories of change, MSC (more nuanced qualitative), case studies and 'highlights' re impacts (also use participatory video on ad hoc basis). Gives idea of performance and is fed back to partners at the local level.
    - Activity – output data , record keeping day to day plus also relationship mapping (see http://practicalaction.org/?id=pmsd_relmatrix_ia2). Functional data.
- In process of change, working towards doing all of these three consistently but at moment are doing to lesser or greater extent
- These are used for own international and national objectives.
- Reviews are held at project level, programme level , national and international in order to learn from critically reflect upon them and also aggregate the figures
- They do not link to MDGs etc. Yet to see case for linking to such targets , but if donor does require it then will see where information that can be made relevant and do the analysis

Brief Notes on African Wildlife Foundation's Organisational system from Interview with Jo Elliott

Overall

- AWF relatively small, 160 staff, $16 million programmes
- Difficult to get affordable M&E systems and get results
- Have been working over last 10 years using the livelihood impact assessment methodology , that developed with Caroline Ashley at ODI (see programme document)

Indicators and Aggregating

- Develop 2 sets of indicators within 'priority interventions' (projects)
- 4-5 standardised indicators applied across all the projects and also cite specific.
- There are a menu of 84 indicators that were developed three years ago that can be chosen from
- They aggregate to landscape and organisational level (not national because many are transnational)
- Surprisingly costly, difficult – trying to make it more affordable. At one site in Kenya, cost $50,000 to develop baseline
- Staff mostly biologists and prefer hard measurable quantitative indicators. Do not do story-telling (MSC etc.) though do have a meet every year when share stories but not formalised.
- Have a challenge common to most conservation organisations of absence of socio-economic baseline data , need deeper understanding of poverty, wellbeing, trade-offs, variety aspects of biodiversity