Monitoring social impacts of conservation interventions *without indicators*

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Conserving wildlife
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Overview

- Why do we need a different tool?
- What is the tool?
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Case study: Elephant conservation in Cambodia

Why should FFI monitor livelihoods interventions?

- We claim that our activities *"…take account of human needs."*

- Significant effort and resources invested

- Improving project management

- Sharing learning throughout FFI…and beyond

- Demonstrating successes and failures

How does FFI monitor its livelihoods interventions?

- Tracking just activities/outputs

- Indicator-based monitoring
  - Household surveys
  - Awareness questionnaires
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - Incident records (human elephant conflict)

Why non-indicator-based monitoring?

Much useful evidence of impact:

- Is not possible to count *(qualitative)*
- Is hard to explain *(intangible)*
- Is unexpected or unplanned
- Needs contextual info to explain the causal link

Why do we need a different tool?

- So much information is as **stories** *(anecdotal evidence)*

But…

- No systematic capture
- No opportunity to learn from the stories
- No opportunity to demonstrate success

What is MSC? *(1)*

- "Most Significant Change"
- Developed by development sector
- Participatory M&E
- Systematic collection of stories
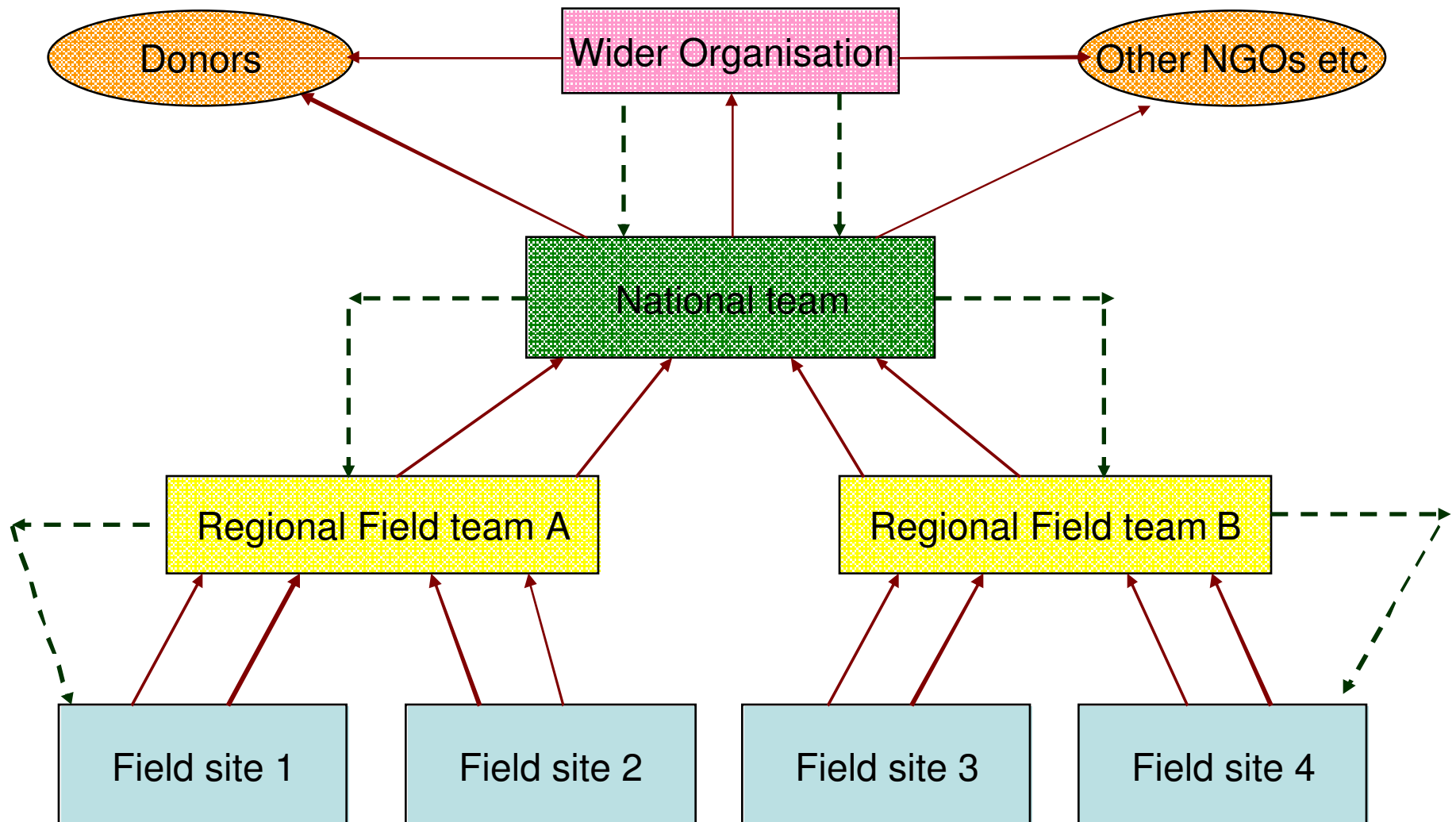- Discussion and analysis of stories

What is MSC? *(2)*

- Feedback to field
- Uses broad 'domains'; not indicators
- Further analysis possible
- Used in conjunction with other quantitative methods

How is MSC used in practice?

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Donors

Wider Organisation

Other NGOs etc

National team

Regional Field team A

Regional Field team B

Field site 1

Field site 2

Field site 3

Field site 4

Most Significant Change
Form for collection of stories

Name of person recording story: ………………………………………………………………

Province: ………………………………………………………………

Date the story was recorded: … /… /……

Title of story…….

1) Tell the story. *(Write the story, including details about **where**, **when**, **how** and **why** it happened, and **who** was involved.*

✓ or 1, 2, 3	Which domain does the story apply to? *If the story applies to more than one domain, please indicate which domains it relates to most strongly, using 1, 2, 3 etc.*
	a) Change in **attitudes & awareness** of communities to **project team & conservation**
	b) Change in **attitudes & awareness** of communities to **elephants** and their **habitat**
	c) Change in **biodiversity**
	d) Change in **project methods**
	e) **Social** change (income, social cohesion, capacity, empowerment, etc)
	f) **Institutional** change
	g) **Other** sort of change (please specify):

To fill in during the provincial team meeting

2) What can the group **learn** from this story of change? Are there any **recommended actions** for the team?

3) Record the reasons for selecting this story

To be filled in during the national CECG meeting

4) What can the group **learn** from this story of change? Are there any **recommended actions** for the team?

5) Record the reasons for selecting this story

FFI | What's so good about MSC? *(1)*

- Compliments other methods
- Intangible, qualitative, unexpected
- Context → causality
- Focuses on impacts, not activities

What's so good about MSC? *(2)*

- Participatory
- Capacity building
- Opportunities for learning & adaptive management
- Promotes examination of programme goals

...and the disadvantages?

- ## Not a strict 'scientific' method
  - Stories vs numbers

- ## Time consuming
  - But it is time well spent in discussion and reflection on project's progress

- ## Open to subjectivity
  - But perceptions of staff and stakeholders are valuable for assessing impact and future direction

FFI's experiences of MSC

Cambodian Elephant Conservation Group

CECG – background

- Imperilled elephant population in Cambodia
- FFI in collaboration with government authorities
- Field teams work with farmers

→ Reduced HEC
→ Improved tolerance
→ Reduced threat

FFI | CECG and MSC

- **Existing database of HEC incidents**
  - Quantitative data

- **Does not capture important evidence:**
  - Lessons about methods: + & -
  - Causality
  - Broader livelihoods impacts

Implementation

- Methodology adapted to local situation
- Training of Team Leaders
- Team Leaders train Field Teams
- Reinforce training
- 1 year review

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Challenges

- Natural / Social science barrier

  → Conceptual difficulties

- Identifying *change*

- Identifying *CECG-related* change

- Choosing 'most significant' story

- Data management – next steps

FFI Strengths

- **Programme management - feedback**
- **Capacity building**
  - Critical thinking
  - Initiative, independence
  - Team building
- **Information sharing**
  - Basis for discussion with other teams

Conclusions

- Implementation is resource-heavy
- Language issues
- Management of data is arduous
- Useful data? Or just organisational learning? Effective for capturing certain information
- Benefits are wide-ranging
- Compliments other forms of monitoring

Thank you

Implementation steps

1. Raising interest
2. Adapting process to local context
3. Collecting Significant Change stories
4. Selecting the most significant stories
5. Feeding back the results of the process
6. Verification
7. Quantification etc
8. Feeding out to other parties (donors etc)
9. Revising the system