The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation

Thursday Talks
“Outcome Mapping Evaluation Approach in Peacebuilding: Case Study in Tanzania”

Part 1: Overview

Adrienne Lemon, Design Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist at Search for Common Ground gave a presentation on the experiences of Search for Common Ground’s The Team: Tanzania project with an outcome mapping external evaluation. Outcome mapping is an evaluation methodology that focuses on measuring behavioral changes amongst program participants. This fills a gap often left by traditional methodologies of evaluation, which can be successful at capturing changes in knowledge and attitudes, but struggle to capture changes in behavior.

Outcome mapping is a relatively recent methodology that captures the casual connections between behavior and programming in order to support organizational learning. The goal of outcome mapping is to examine how programs influence changes in behavior such as the relationships, actions, or activities in which partners engage. This approach emphasizes that programs can improve their contributions to change, but cannot control the changes that people make in behaviors. Because of this, it also allows us to see unintended outcomes of programming, both positive and negative.

Watch the recording here (audio only) to listen to Adrienne’s full talk, as she explains the experience of Search for Common Ground’s The Team: Tanzania project with an outcome mapping final evaluation, and how it enabled them to capture behavior changes to which their project contributed, both intended and unintended- and why that makes it such a useful methodology for peacebuilding evaluation. Check back soon to view a set of slides that we were unable to show during the live presentation.

The resources mentioned in the talk can be accessed through the following links:

• Outcome Mapping community of practice, with many great resources on the methodology: http://www.outcomemapping.ca

Part 2: Question & Answer

Participants in the Thursday Talk posed many great questions, and while there was not time to respond to all of them during the discussion, Adrienne provided a written response to the outstanding question, that is included below. The following includes the questions posed, and a summary of the answers. For Adrienne’s full responses, please listen to the recording.

1. Selecting outcomes: You mentioned that there were originally sixty-four outcomes identified to which the project contributed- how did you choose which nine to investigate?

Adrienne Lemon: First, I have to say that I did not do the study, it was an external evaluation. So the external evaluators chose nine outcomes to use as case studies to a) make the report more digestible and b) demonstrate the types of changes that were occurring. Further, many of the outcomes were similar, so it wasn’t really necessary to investigate each outcome; for example, there were multiple
individual-level outcomes of men deciding to change some of their behaviors related to gender equality.

2. Internal vs. external evaluations: Why did you decide to use an external evaluator?

Adrienne Lemon: An external evaluator has a fresh view on things, and does not arrive with a set of expectations that are based on prior knowledge of the project, the way an internal evaluator might. Outcome mapping enables you to capture both intended and unintended outcomes, so we decided that an external evaluator may be more easily able to uncover a wider range of outcomes than someone from our team, whose prior expectations and experiences of the project might create a bias towards intended outcomes. So that’s why we chose an external evaluator, and we found the process to be very valuable.

3. Uncovering outcomes: Were outcomes uncovered through observations (e.g. someone observing a man who counsels his friends) or through self-reporting?

Adrienne Lemon: Through self-reporting, as that’s the way outcome mapping works. However, a self-reported change was not considered valuable unless the participant was able to be very specific about how and why the change happened, e.g. specify which TV episode affected their views. Sometimes, the outcomes are more easily verifiable; in the soccer team example, the principal watched the TV episode with a girls’ soccer team, and decided to implement one- so the existence of the soccer team and the ensuing 30% increase in girls’ attendance at the school verify this change. The creation of the girls’ soccer team was not an expected outcome, and it’s important to note that this wasn’t something that was happening everywhere; this was a single principal who got an idea based on the TV show and was inspired to do things differently.

4. Integrating learning into practice: How, if at all, was the learning from this evaluation integrated into the day to day practice of the project?

Adrienne Lemon: As this evaluation only just came out, we have not had lots of opportunities yet to integrate it into our practice. However, I can touch on one of the major recommendations from the report. The report showed that participants who had the most significant changes didn’t just watch the programs, but were also able to participate in discussions. This is something that the outcome mapping process showed us very strongly, that traditional evaluations of similar projects weren’t able to demonstrate as well- that it is very important for participants to have exposure to different types of programming in order to increase the chances that they change their behaviors.

5. Focus on behavior change: How important was it to SFCG to be able to link attitudes to behavior changes?

Adrienne Lemon: For The Team, we’d had several of our projects in different countries evaluated, and the evaluations could speak really well to the attitude change. But with Tanzania, where you’re looking at sexual and gender-based violence, access to women’s rights, etc., it’s very different to say that “women should have access” versus actually taking measures to create access to education or to owning property, etc. So it was really important for us to say that The Team, being such a longstanding project that we’ve been working on since 2008, was something that was not just achieving that attitude change but was setting the ground for real, sustainable changes in behaviors. What I really appreciated about the evaluation was that it could show some of the biggest issues for women in different areas, and investigate those contexts separately, and show whether we were actually making changes- and it turned out that we were. Even though The Team is a fairly short project, it lays the groundwork for changes to continue to be made long after the program is done.

6. Applicability to developed world contexts: Is outcome mapping useful in capturing behavior change in developed countries as well?
Adrienne Lemon: Yes, I would think so. I don’t have experience doing evaluations in developed countries, but for programs trying to achieve social change, you can use outcome mapping to track behavior changes, so that’s still valuable and relevant.

7. Data triangulation: Other than ensuring valuable instances of self-reported changes are very specific, what other mechanisms do you use to triangulate the data, make sure that it is solid? Do you use quantitative data at all?

Adrienne Lemon: In terms of making sure that the data was solid, they tried to do as many interviews and focus group discussions as possible, so you’ll see that there is quite a lot of data. So it is through this that they can quantify in some ways how large the impact of the program was. Outcome mapping is different in the sense that it doesn’t address this directly; one of the things that I think it is able to capture so well is the process, but perhaps it doesn’t capture the numbers as well. Everything about outcome mapping is a sort of case study that highlights what is happening on a larger level; each of the sixty four outcomes identified is essentially a case of a change happening. So it does help you identify the scale of the impact, and when you look through the evaluation you can see how many interviews were conducted and you can see how the sixty-four cases of outcomes fit within that, but it won’t give you the large-level quantitative data. A big difference between the previous evaluations and this one is in the previous ones, you can see big numbers, for example, a 35% increase from a prior attitude to a new attitude, with a very large sample that yields statistically significant data. With outcome mapping, you don’t have that, but you can understand how the project is working and why. We also looked at how program funding and money was spent, and understanding what sort of change was achieved given the money that was spent in a particular area, so that helped us understand how effective we were being given the level of funding, and whether we were being as effective everywhere.

8. Familiarity with outcome mapping: What was the process like for your field team, were they familiar with outcome mapping?

Adrienne Lemon: The process was very new to everyone, both our partners and The Team staff. It was a very positive experience and process, particularly with finding all the unintended outcomes. There was a lot of appreciation for the process despite how new the methodology was, especially because many of the data collection tools (focus group discussions, interviews, etc.) aren’t new tools; what’s different is the way they’re analyzed.

9. Incentives: Were there any incentives offered to participants in the focus group discussions or challenges getting people to join?

Adrienne Lemon: I don’t know, because I wasn’t a part of the evaluation team. I’ll ask someone who was involved, and will post the answer online later.

10. Evaluation utilization: What are your plans to utilize the evaluation?

Adrienne Lemon: First of all, SFCG is really trying to ensure that the lessons learned from The Team: Tanzania are shared. The programming there has ended, but we’re continuing to work on The Team and other similar programs in other countries, so it’s important to use the lessons that we learned in other ways. So one of the things I’ve been working on is writing a blog on the main things we’ve learned from The Team and seeing how they could apply in other countries, and ensure that we’re thinking about the potential for behavior change when we implement programs in other countries. Note: the link to the blog will be posted soon.

11. Attitude vs. behavior change: Are there operational definitions for "attitude change" and "behavioral change"? Specifically, how do the two overlap or how do you distinguish them in the outcome mapping and evaluation processes?
Adrienne Lemon: Attitudinal changes are grounded in perceptions, opinions and ideas, while behavior changes refer to actions. If I change my opinion about whether girls should go to school, that is an attitude change. If I also decide to enroll my daughter in school because I changed my opinion, that is a behavior change. Behavior changes are more concrete, and they are also often the hardest to achieve. They also suggest that people are becoming their own agents of change, which speaks to sustainability. To use Tanzania's project as an example: The men who changed their opinions on violence against women after participating in mobile cinema actually went and talked to their friend about how he treated his wife and encouraged him to stop beating her. Their discussion with their friend (and the fact that he stopped beating his wife) indicates behavior changes that stemmed from attitude changes. The outcome mapping was able to capture that, and also identify the sessions and episodes that inspired this type of change.

Part 3: Wrap Up

Lena Slachmijlder, SFCG Vice President, Programs:

I think that one of the reasons why we adopted this approach of outcome mapping with the donor was because we were part of a large number of different initiatives that the British government was funding that were all about creating an enabling environment for citizen participation and better governance, including the aspect around gender engagement. So what was interesting for us was being part of a process that tried to look at those larger changes and larger shifts that other projects were also contributing to, and I think that the opportunity for learning moving forward is to come back to DFID and look at a meta perspective about the particular contribution of using this engaging TV and radio drama format, broadcast outreach, etc., in combination with other different initiatives around capacity building, enhancing accountability, better service delivery, etc., between the civil society and government. So that’s one learning opportunity that we can take forward.

The second thing I want to point out is that outcome mapping has been a really interesting way for us to identify more solid ways of getting to that attribution of behavior change. We’ve been able to measure things around the shift in knowledge and attitudes, and we’ve been able to come up with examples of behavior changes, but working with this external evaluation team, they were able to offer us even more rigor, and in the end more credibility, in the way that we can capture those stories of behavior change and link it back to the real, overall changes and theories of change that we were working towards. And that’s important, because when we’re looking at behavior change in complex conflict contexts, you won’t always have an increase in one type of behavior; the transformation we seek to effect looks different in different situations and amongst different people. Outcome mapping gave us the opportunity to be able to capture diverse examples of those behavior changes, and still link them up to some of those larger indicators of outcomes, and I think that that was very interesting and relevant for our field.