Frequently Asked Questions

on the research component in the TLP programme.

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1. Why do we need to do research in the TLP programme?

> *"It is the season of accountability. . But over the past few years, almost every organisation or project I have visited is stressed with issues of monitoring and evaluation, anxiously shopping around for methodologies to measure and report on impact to satisfy donors. Adverts for M&E specialists abound as donors seek to further outsource this function to experts, robbing organisations of rich learning processes to which M&E should contribute." (Reeler, 2007)*

The quote from Doug Reeler of CDRA provides a convincing description of what is happening in the development sector and the risks that we run when we don't invest in internal reflection, research and learning processes. In the spirit of this idea, the PSO Thematic Learning Programme (TLP) on 'PME of complex processes of social change' is making a clear statement to strengthen the in-house PME capacity in the North and the South, instead of outsourcing it.

The TLP involves enriching the PME practices of development actors in North and South in view of strengthening their capacity to plan and support complex social change, but why do we need to research this? By now there is international agreement that we are faced with more questions than answers when it comes down to PME of complex social change programmes. There are no easy solutions, and attempts to improve the existing PME practice might not be effective if they are designed as just a technical change to procedures and templates. Most often, changing our PME practice triggers fundamental discussions about the change we are actually envisaging and how this can best be achieved and followed-up. It might require forms of double loop learning or second order change by NGOs and their partners, to fundamentally reflect about the values, principles and approaches that underpin our work. It is useful to guide these kinds of change processes by types of action-research

This is why Dutch NGO's and their partners explore alternative PME approaches in a number of pilot programmes and, at the same time, research their own emerging practice to be able to improve it gradually and share it with others inside and outside the organisation. While doing so we need to reflect both on the process of how we are implementing these alternative PME approaches, as well as on the outcomes of the implementation process.

2. How do we see action-research in the TLP?

Action research in this TLP is seen as a systematic process of reflection by the organisations themselves on the implementation of the PME approaches that they are piloting. The participating organisations are in the driving seat of the research process. This way they are able to extract lessons that can inform their PME practice. These lessons also feed back into the collective learning process allowing us to answer the central learning question of the TLP.

Action research is a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time is informed by that change. People affected by the change are usually involved in the action research. This allows the understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment (Dick, 2000).

Action research (AR) can be distinguished from the everyday professional practice in the following ways (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1992):

- AR is not usual day to day practice. AR is more systematic and collaborative in collecting evidence on which to base rigorous group reflection.
- AR is not simply problem solving. It is motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made.
- It is NOT research done on other people. AR is research by particular people on their own work, to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others …
- The AR process is characterised by a spiral process of planning – acting –reflecting – learning.

The figure below visualises some essential parts of the action research process.

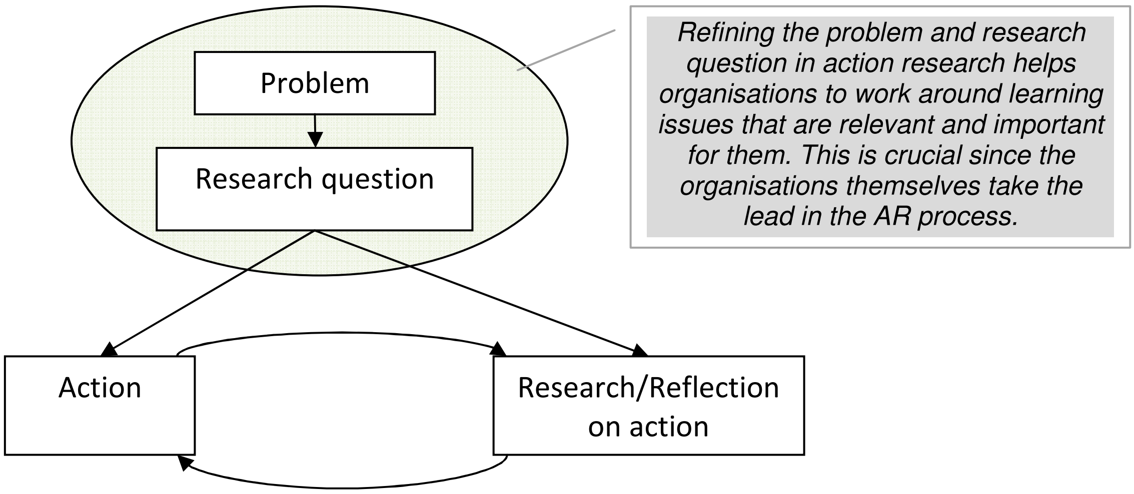

Figure 1.Adapted from the Bamenda model of practical action research

The 'action' in figure 1 refers to the implementation of the PME approach by the participating organisations. The 'research' refers to the reflection process about the implementation of the PME approach. Both processes will inform each other throughout the action research process. At the end of the study, the findings or improved action should show how the performance of action benefits from the knowledge gained in research. The action research cycles at the level of the participating organisations in turn inform a similar research cycle across the different organisations. This will allow us to draw lessons across the different organisations and explore the overall research question of the TLP.

In the TLP action research we are seeking to draw lessons from the implementation of alternative PME approaches by the participating organisations. To be able to draw these lessons it is important to consider the unique context and relationships that are at play for each organisation. In fact, to understand how people and organisations function it is necessary to consider the relationship between context, how people act and how they interpret what has happened (Flyvberg, 2001). Accordingly in our analysis we are trying to find out **why** things happened, and **how** they happened so that we can use this knowledge in support of future PME practice.
A well suited approach to understand context and relationships is the **case study method** (Yin 1994, Stake, ….). 'Case studies are particularly useful in answering 'how' and 'why' questions, because they look to processes, relationships, and changes over time, whereas one might use a survey or other methods to answer the more static 'what' questions' (Carden, 2009 p..179). Case studies as research instrument must be concerned with the rigorous and fair representation of data. While they can help to illuminate a particular case, they can also address explanatory research questions involving data collected over time to illuminate, for example, how a process of introducing, developing and implementing a particular initiative was enacted or evolved, or how a change has taken place (Yin, 1994).
The case study approach in the TLP action research can be best typified as a collective interventionist case study (Stevenson, 2004). Collective because the study extends over various cases from different organisations and interventionist because of the participatory action research approach which is concerned with mobilising stakeholders to work collaboratively for change, in our case, change around PME practice.

3. Which questions are we answering?

This TLP involves learning processes at various levels and sharing of lessons between those levels: individual, team, organisational, and inter-organisational. The overall process is guided by sets of research questions. For reasons of simplicity, we distinguish between *collective research questions* (inter-organisational, shared for the group of NGO's and their partners) and *organisational research questions* (shared between one NGO and its partners in the pilot).

Collective research questions

The central learning question of the TLP reads as: "How does a diversified PME approach contribute to the capacity of involved organisations and their partners to deal with complex processes of social change?"[1]

In the working paper in support of the TLP (Van Ongevalle and Huyse, 2010), we arrived at three central questions that unpack the central question and can be used as an analytic framework that can help us to analyse the relevance of a PME approach for a specific context or situation. Question 1 looks at the relationships, roles and expectations, and questions 2 and 3 look at how PME can strengthen the capacity of the actors to deal with complex social change.

1. *How does the PME approach help to clarify relationships, roles and expectations of the actors involved in the intervention?*

   'Results Based Management' is a concept that can hide more than it reveals. This is because results can mean different things to different actors and different actors also have different roles, responsibilities and expectations as regards those results. This can lead to a rather problematic state of confusion, especially (as is often the case) when you are dealing with complex situations in which no one is very clear about the nature of the results at the various levels, or if you are dealing with a variety of actors and stakeholders. To be clear about roles, responsibilities, understanding and expectations among these actors and stakeholders can be a real challenge but is an important condition to be able to develop a useful and practical M&E plan. <u>The question is to what extent the Planning phase of the selected PME approach supports this role clarification process</u>.

   Firstly it is important <u>to clarify the intervention logic or the planning with a specific focus on the actors that play a role in it</u>. Some would call this an 'actor focused theory of change' while others may simply call it a flexible intervention logic that is build up around a shared vision and a clear understanding of the roles and expectations and influence pathways of the various actors involved in the intervention. As we choose a suitable PME approach for our interventions it can be helpful to reflect on how a specific approach will help us to clarify the relationships, roles and expectations of the various actors in the intervention.

   Secondly we have seen that different actors may have an interest in different types of results at different levels. Some of those demands will need to be satisfied and it is therefore important to know which PME approach is suitable for tracking which results. So it will help <u>to clarify which type of results a particular PME approach focuses on</u>.

2. *How does the PME approach contribute to learning about the progress towards the development objectives (of the programme, partner organizations, partner networks, Northern NGOs) and satisfy downward and upward accountability needs?*

   In our work, we may be faced with different levels of complexity. It is suggested in the working paper that so-called linear and predictive PME approaches are more suitable for simple and complicated contexts. PME approaches that are more learning-centred, less predictive and more focused on context could be better suited for complex social change processes. It is clear that a one-size-one-fit PME approach will not do the trick. We will need to analyse the level of complexity we are facing and choose and customise an appropriate PME approach or a combination of approaches that make sense for the particular context. Therefore, when trying out a certain PME approach or combinations of approaches in the TLP, we want <u>to reflect if and how it supported the stakeholders to learn about the progress towards the development objectives at various levels</u>.

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[1] Last updated after the discussion during the Collective Learning Moment on 31 March 2011.

In the TLP we depart from a broad meaning of accountability, namely of being accountable to multiple stakeholders, in both upward and downward directions. The key principles that underpin this wider meaning of accountability are the same principles that underpin learning, i.e. participation, reflection, transparency and feedback. We have also seen that these principles are crucial in making sure that this learning is action-oriented, leading to concrete action by the participants involved in the learning process. The working paper suggests that social change programmes which are guided by strong learning-oriented practices will be better equipped to comply with many different accountability needs. This is still an untested proposition and therefore, we want to examine to what extent the selected PME approach (or combination of approaches) contributes to satisfying downward and upward accountability needs.

3. *How does the PME approach contribute to strengthening the own internal adaptive capacity[2] of the programme, partner organizations, partner networks, and/or Northern NGOs?*

The previous question looked at learning about the development objectives. This question looks at the internal learning (adaptive capacity) of the change agent itself, be it the programme, partner organisation, network, or Northern NGO. In this action-research programme, PME is seen as a way to strengthen the adaptive capacity of development organisations and networks both in the North and the South in order to remain able to deal with complex processes of change.

However, we fully understand that choosing the right approach for a specific context and purpose is one thing. The way a PME approach is implemented can be a totally different thing. PME approaches come with specific underlying principles and values that guide their implementation. As we implement alternative PME approaches that are believed to be better suited for use in complex situations then it will be important to find out how their implementation contributes to the strengthening of internal adaptive capacity at the level of the Northern NGO and its Southern partner organisations/networks.

Organisational research questions

Each participating organisation has reflected about research questions specific for its own pilot. These questions are of course central in the research and the data collection process. They should be complemented where necessary with the collective research questions as described in the previous section. A list with the research questions per NGO and a first analysis of communalities and differences is provided in annex.

Developing the case reports / collective case study approach

As mentioned above, it is important that the case study research provides a rigorous and fair representation of data. In that respect it will be important that each organisation, being in charge of the action research process, provides **rich narratives**[3] about their **exploration and implementation** of a specific PME approach and their **reflection** on this exploration and implementation process.
To help the organisations with producing this case content we are suggesting a semi-structured case format. The documentation of the case report will be a crucial element to provide the necessary data for analysis of the individual cases according to the organisation's own research questions and for the collective case analysis according to the cross case analytic framework from the PME literature review. The figure below also shows how the case report relates to these analytic frameworks.

Figure 2: The case format for the case report + guidelines

[2] Internal adaptive capacity refers to the capacity of an organisation or an actor to sustain and renew itself, to remain able to deliver development results and to continuously to adapt to changing conditions and context. The core capability 'to adapt and self-renew' from the ECDPM capabability framework (Baser and Morgan, 2008) helps to explain this: 1) to improve individual and organisational learning; 2) to foster internal dialogue; 3) to reposition and reconfigure the organisation; 4) to incorporate new ideas; and 5) to map out a growth path.
[3] A detailed description of what happened (context, actions, interactions, reactions, words, relationships, outputs, etc.), a description of impressions and feelings about what was observed, What were the factors, actors and moments that contributed to the actions and reactions of the group? It should also includes quotes and other types of narratives or visual material.

CASE FORMAT

1. Phase 1: Preparation of the PME pilot
How did you go about developing your PME pilot project?
How did you decide on the PME approach you wanted to enrich your current PME practice with?What was easy in this process, what was difficult, and why?

Note: Phase 1 deals with the first steps that you took to get involved in the TLP: e.g. the process of determining your problem statements and research questions with colleagues and partners, agreeing on the PME approach to be piloted, selling the idea of the action research within your organization and with your partners, etc. **It is important to go beyond the description of this process but also provide rich information about the insights that emerged during this process and to include perspectives from different stakeholders involved.**

2. Phase 2: Developing the M&E Plan
How did you arrive at the M&E plan (main steps of planning the M&E plan, who did you involve and how)?What was easy in this process, what was difficult, and why?

Note: Phase 2 deals with the process of setting up the PME system using the approach that was chosen in Phase 1 and customizing this approach to suit your context. Again it is important to go beyond the description of this process but also provide rich information about the insights that emerged during this process. The process of setting up new PM&E activities based on a new PME approach can already result in very useful insights about a programme even before the new PME system has been implemented. It is important to incorporate these insights in the case report.

3. Phase 3: M&E in action
How did the implementation process go (per monitoring cycle)?
Who participated and how? What were their experiences?
What was easy in this process, what was difficult, and why?...

Note: Phase 3 deals with the actual implementation of the new PME approach. Also here it is important to go beyond the description of the process but also include rich information about specific insights and lessons learned. Organisations who have not yet started implementing their new PME approach don't have to complete this section.

4. Outcomes of the M&E process
What are the insights from your case in relation to your organizational research questions and the collective research questions in the TLP?

a. *Strengthening and clarifying relationships, roles and expectations*
b. *Learning about the progress towards the development objectives*
c. *Satisfying downward, horizontal and upward accountability needs*
d. *Adaptive capacity of the change agents*
e. *Organizational research question 1.*
f. *Organizational research question 2, …*

Note: This section gives you an opportunity to answer your own organizational research questions and the collective research questions of the TLP. Try to be as specific as possible by giving concrete examples and illustrating quotes and descriptions of context that will allow the reader to understand why you make certain statements or conclusions. This section also provides you with an opportunity to describe how far the PME pilot has influenced PME practice within the organization beyond the pilot.

For each section 1 to 4: guiding questions

- *A detailed description of what happened – context, actions, interactions, reactions, words, quotes, relationships, outputs, etc.*
- *A description of impressions and feelings about what was observed*
- *What were the factors, actors and moments that contributed to the actions and reactions of the group?*
- *What are your recommendations? - any important lessons learned, what you conclude.*
- *Try to include different perspectives from different people.*

4. How can we reflect on and make sense of our work?

An action-research with multiple organisations at multiple locations requires a shared understanding of who is involved at which level and in which way. We have the challenge to connect learning and research processes at various levels. In this TLP we do not seek to force a rigid and too elaborated analytic framework on top of the action research. We see that analysis process taking place both at organisational level and collective level. The research questions of the organisations will provide a guide for analysis at organisational level. The analytic framework from the PME literature review will provide a guide for data analysis at collective TLP level.
It is important that these analytic frameworks are seen to guide the analysis process or as a minimal framework for analysis to assure that we obtain the necessary data during the action research process. It is foreseen that during the various reflection moments both at organisational as at collective TLP level new core issues will emerge that can further adjust the analytic lens through with the data can be analysed at the various levels. The various reflection moments at organisational level and the collective learning moments at TLP level will be crucial to sustain such emergent analysis process.
We think it is important to collect data, reflect and make sense of what we experience in the action-research at least at three different levels:

- **individual reflection**: How do I experience my participation to this PME pilot in my organisation/project? What do I observe?, What do I think about this?, What does it mean for the pilot?
- **group reflection at partner level, project level and Dutch NGO level**: How does the partner organisation experience the participation to the PME pilot?, What do they observe? What do they think about this? And what does it mean for the pilot? (same for project and NGO level)
- **collective learning (inter-organisational level):** When we take a step back from our own daily realities, what do we see happening across these cases? How do we feel about his? What does it mean for our practice?

The following figure describes the steps that we need to go through, the kind of data collection and sense making activities we need to do individually, in group and as a collective of organisations.

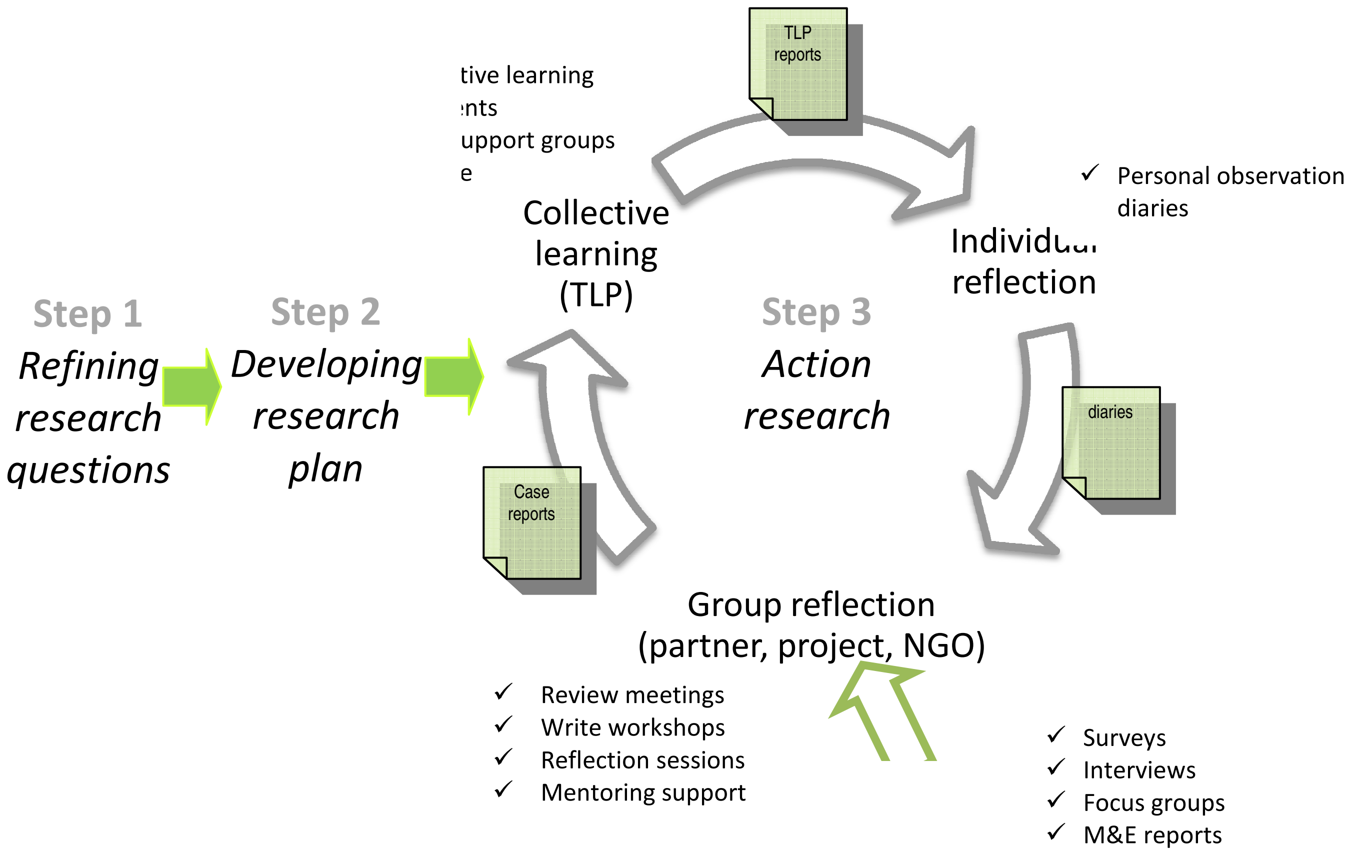


Figure 3: Overview of action-research steps in TLP programme

Step 1 is essential in view of getting the focus of the research right from the onset. The PSO funding applications contain the research questions per case, most of them reviewed on the basis of the case documentation sessions. It is not uncommon for action-research that the questions get reframed after some time, once the insights grow in the underlying change processes.

Step 2 helps to translate the research questions into an **operational research plan**, which answers the underlying who, what, where, when questions. The research plan should be simple but, ideally, at least contain the following information: the research question, the subject/object of the research activity, data collection method and sample size, responsibilities and the content. A fictive example is presented underneath.

Research question	***Subject / object***	***Data collection method / sample /coordinated by/ timing***	***Content*** *(what are u going to reflect or ask them about)*
1. Can outcome mapping contribute towards a more actor focused PME system in such a way that it assists in clarifying the roles and contributions of the various actors in the programme?	Project team x in Bolivia	▪ Personal observation diaries / 2p of project team/ self-reflection/ weekly	▪ What did I observe when OM was introduced? ▪ What kind of discussion did it trigger? ▪ Has it helped us to understand the roles and contributions?
		▪ Review meeting/project team/by project team/every 3 months	▪ What have we observed with the introduction of OM? ▪ What works well, what doesn't?
		▪ Small survey/ key project stakeholders (10p) /by AR coordinator/ after 6 months	▪ ….
	Partner organization y in Bolivia	▪ Study of organizational documents/partner org/by AR coordinator/after 6 months	▪ …
	Head office Dutch NGO z	▪ Review meeting / country coordinator & head office staff/same/after 1 yr	▪ …

Step 3 is the implementation phase of the actual action-research and the interaction between the three levels. In reality, we expect the three processes to mutually inform and influence each other. It is important that we develop sufficient opportunities for this to happen. The sense-making moments and a selection of tools which can be used here are described in the next section.

5. Which tools are there to support data collection and sense-making?

5.1 Individual reflection

On basis of which inputs?
You document your own experiences and observations on the process and the outcomes of the PME pilot programme.

How?
Personal observation diaries
It is useful to keep a diary on a continuous basis. It can contain personal accounts of observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations. Accounts should not merely report the 'bald facts' of the situation, but convey a feeling of what it was like to be there participating in it. Anecdotes; near-verbatim accounts of conversations and verbal exchanges; introspective accounts of one's feelings, attitudes, motives, understandings in reacting to things, events, circumstances; these all help one to reconstruct what it was like at the time.
The research questions that the action research seeks to answer can also give direction as to what information to include in your diaries.

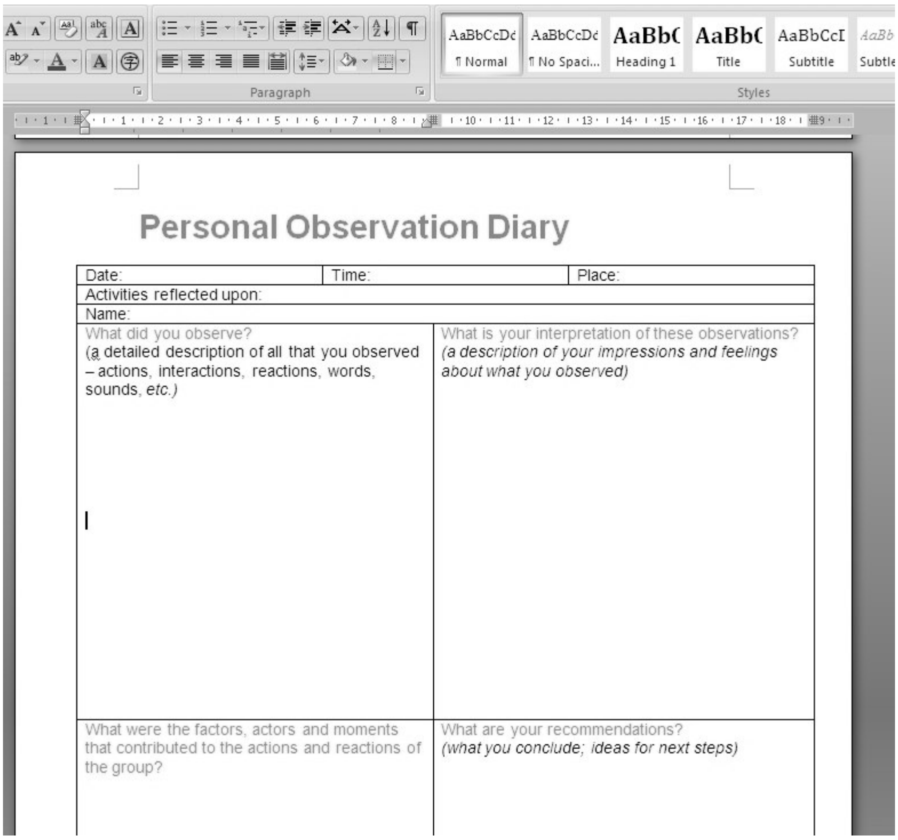
Who should keep diaries?

Staff responsible for keeping the overall picture of the action research process and for compiling the case study may be in the best position to keep observation diaries. The advantage of several people keeping diaries is that it enables comparison of experiences. It is important to remember however that keeping a diary is necessarily a personal and private matter, and that the disclosure of contents should be under the control of its author. Diaries can be filled after each M&E activity. The authors can refer to their diaries when preparing for reflection meetings during the monitoring cycle or for the compilation of the case study.

Outputs?
Short notes in diaries.

Examples?

Example 1: Answering four basic questions (shared by Kaia Ambrose who used this tool in the CEJA Andina Project.)



Example 2: CDRA reflection journal: 'Outside – Inside story'

The South-African NGO CDRA is well known for its work on the facilitation of social change processes. In recent communication, Doug Reeler shared his experiences with keeping a very simple monitoring journal that also goes beyond purely descriptive documenting of what has happened.

From: doug@cdra.org.za [mailto:general@outcomemapping.ca]
Sent: dinsdag 17 augustus 2010 10:10
To: general@outcomemapping.ca

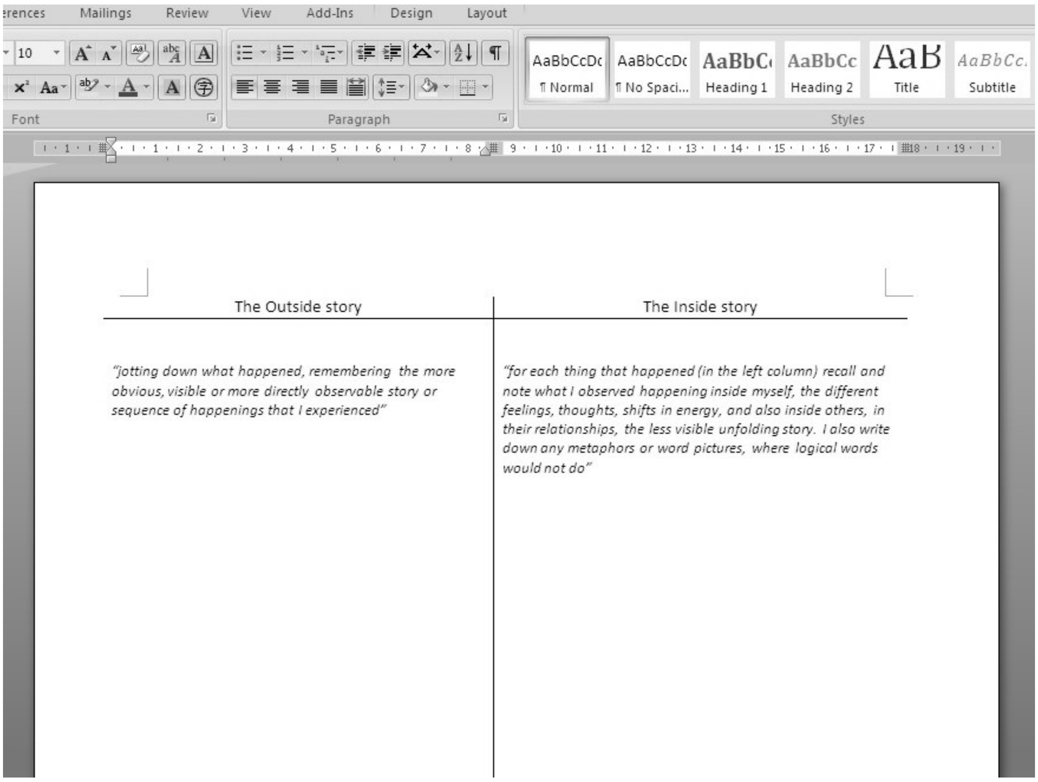
Dear All

One monitoring journal innovation that I have recently started experimenting with might be of interest to some of you. It's a way of collecting more specific and deeper data soon after an experience, process or event, although I suppose it can also be used for "live" data collection as well. What I do is draw a line down the middle of a blank journal page (or use left-hand and right-hand pages). On the left side I put a heading "The Outside Story" and on the right side "The Inside Story". The idea is to begin in the left column, jotting down what happened, remembering the more obvious, visible or more directly observable story or sequence of happenings that I experienced. Once this is done I go to the right-hand column and for each thing that happened (in the left column) recall and note what I observed happening inside myself, the different feelings, thoughts, shifts in energy, and also inside others, in their relationships, the less visible unfolding story. I also write down any metaphors or word pictures, where logical words would not do.

Most of us recognise that this right-hand column "inside story" is the realm in which real development or change takes place, but it's not an easy place to track or monitor. Here, it's about "looking again", making the less visible more visible and then, of course, if you keep looking you can see more of where the less visible was not just an effect or a parallel process, but indeed starts to explain what was happening in the left-hand column! All too often these less tangible happenings are lost or loosely described, yet we know that a key challenge for monitoring is for observation to be quite specific, building up the story so that what matters eventually gets revealed. These two columns seem to help a bit with this.

Apart from practicing it myself, I have got different people to try it out in 3 different workshop settings, which is a very specific "field", so it is hardly a tried and tested method – but so far several people have said that it really worked for them, particularly in feeding quality data into subsequent "sense-making" processes to try to draw learnings (the holy grail for us). But I thought that if the idea grabs anyone in the OM community you might like to try it in your field, play with it, adapt it, and perhaps give feedback, either to this forum and/or directly to me at doug@cdra.org.za (doug@cdra.org.za) . I hope I have explained it clearly, if not please ask.
Thanks!
Doug Reeler
Community Development Resource Association
Cape Town, South Africa

The actual journal can look as follows:



5.2 Collective reflection (at partner, project or NGO level)

On basis of which inputs?

(1) Personal observation diaries
(2) Other data collection methods:
- ✓ Surveys
- ✓ Interviews
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ M&E reports

How?

- ✓ *Review meetings*
  A systematic review of the introduction of the new PME system can be done at partner level, together with or separate by other project staff. In preparation, stakeholders should be reminded to bring their personal observation diaries and other data collection methods are added where necessary. The relevant stakeholders are brought together in ½ day meeting to review the experiences with the PME system, answering question such as: what did we do?, how did we experience this?, what worked well and what not?, What does this mean for the future planning? The meeting is preferably well documented in terms of the process and the outcomes.
- ✓ *Write workshops*
  In this kind of workshop writing is the key tool for inquiry and reflection. The idea is that through writing, our return to an experience is much more vivid as we give detail to what we remember. By describing the characters involved, the setting, the process and the feelings, we bring it alive again. (based on S. Hill, CDRA)
- ✓ *Reflection sessions*
  These can be more informal sessions to quickly review certain aspects of the PME introduction (one of the research questions,..), or to deal with specific challenges. Experience learns that these sessions can be important moments of learning, so also time should be taken to document some of the findings.
- ✓ *Mentoring support*
  The TLP programme will try to provide forms of mentoring support for the PME implementation by HIVA, PSO and the reference group during collective learning moments. This can take the shape of 30 min sessions where a specific challenge or learning issue can be discussed, reflected about and, if needed, advice can be provided.

Outputs?
Over the period of the TLP there will be a gradual build-up of the case study documentation. It is proposed to work with 2 interim case study reports (May 2011 and May 2012) and one final overall case study report. Other forms of documentation, such as audio-visual material, are also welcome to complement the reports. In FAQ question 3 a structure for the case reports was suggested. :

Examples?

Example 1: websurvey

With tools such as Surveymonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) it is easy to launch a short survey amongst stakeholders that have access to email and internet. Within certain restrictions they are free to use. For a small amount you have unlimited access and unlimited number of surveys and respondents.

Example 2: interview guide probing for learning at individual, interpersonal, and collective level

Depending on the research question, different interview guide could be developed. Underneath is an example of an interview guide that is probing for learning at the individual, interpersonal and collective level.

- *Overal objective of the semi-structured interview*
  - What have the stakeholders learned from their involvement in the PME processes?
  - How did they learn from their participation in the PME processes?
  - What factors have supported or hindered their learning?

- *Interview questions*
  [based on ORID (ICA), Preskill (2003), and de Vos (1998), Outcome Mapping (2001)]
  <u>Factual questions</u>:
  1. What do you remember from the PME process?
  2. Where you involved in the PME process for the
     a. initiation?
     b. design?
     c. data gathering, analysis and/or sense-making?

  <u>Reflective questions</u>:
  3. Where did you get excited most during the PME process?
  4. Where did you turn off?
  5. How would you describe the ways in which the PME process stakeholders have interacted with one another?

  <u>Interpretive questions</u>:
  Individual level influences
  6. In what ways has your participation affected how you <u>think</u> about:
     a. The project in general? [skill acquisition]
     b. The content of your project activities? [skill acquisition]
     c. The approach of your project activities? [elaboration]
     d. Your role in those activities? [attitude change]
  7. Can you think of any ways in which you <u>do something different</u> because if your involvement in the PME process? [behavioral change and skill acquisition]
  8. What aspects of the PME process have contributed to what you've learned? [skill acquisition]
  9. Have you noticed any differences in the learning between different stakeholders? (Who is learning?)

  Interpersonal level influences
  10. Has your participation affected how you <u>interact</u> with:
      a. Other members of your organisation?
      b. Other stakeholders?
      And how?
  11. Have you shared your learning with other colleagues? If yes, what have you shared, and how have you shared this learning? If not, why not?

  Collective level influences

12. Has the PME process influenced the relative importance of topics or issues being prioritised in your organisation, and how? [agenda setting]

General perceptions

13. As you reflect about your initial reasons to participate in the PME process, to what extent has it met your expectations?

Closing question after summary..

14. Have we left anything out?

Example 3: Focus group session

Kitzinger (1994) refers to focus groups as group discussions organised to explore a specific set of issues, such as people's views and experiences on certain issues. They are distinguished from the broader category of group interviews by the 'explicit use of the group interaction' as research data. Focus group discussions are well suited for obtaining data on a group's attitudes and perceptions and are effective for bringing to the surface issues that may be considered sensitive and/or controversial by the members (Wamahiu & Karugu, 1995). They may also be used to get discussants to talk about the problems they encounter and suggest possible solutions.
Focus group discussions could become a central approach for data collection in the TLP, where stakeholders are asked to discuss some guiding questions. Outcomes of the discussions can be captured on a flip chart and can be presented and discussed further in plenary sessions. The final outcomes are captured in the focus group reports.

5.3 Collective learning moments (TLP level)

On basis of which inputs?
- ✓ Case study reports
- ✓ Learning histories

How?
- ✓ Collective learning moments: various events to share lessons learned from the action research
- ✓ Peer support groups: exchange between NGO's that share similar challenges/interests
- ✓ Huddle: web-based electronic communication platform for sharing files, online discussions and planning meetings for the TLP PME (www.huddle.com)
- ✓ Publication of working papers, M&E guidelines booklet and case study booklet (www.huddle.com)

Outputs?
Collective Learning Moment reports: these reports will capture the essence of the collective events, important learning points and practical issues.

Examples?

Example 1: Collective learning moments

By now you should slowly be getting familiar with the concept of the collective learning moments. These are important exchanges between the participants, the conveners of the TLP, and other resource persons. The meetings can take various shapes and forms, and have the ambition to build as much as possible on the momentum of the TLP. Often they will contain moments of exchange of experiences, some joint reflection, discussion of coordination and planning issues, short training moments on selected topics, and/or review of progress of the overall process. The meetings will take place every three to four months, when possible with participation of Southern partners and/or the reference group.

Example 2: Peer support group between two or more Dutch NGO's in the TLP

We are encouraging NGO's to link-up with other Dutch NGOs in the TLP which are looking at similar issues, for example in terms of the PME system, the type of target organisations, or the type of research question. Experience learns that these kind of horizontal exchanges can be very rewarding. It can be organised in a formal way, but can also be very informal. During the collective learning moments there will be some time reserved for those peer support groups to meet and exchange. Of course, the initiative is in the hands of the individual organisations and we do hope some interesting results will come out.

Example 3: Supporting publications

The TLP is developing a number of support documents to guide the action-research process from a methodological and content-related point of view. For 2010 the following reports are available:
- *Working paper: Dealing with Complex Reality in Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation: Choosing the right approach for the right context* (Van Ongevalle and Huyse, 2010)
- *Learning histories from NGOs experiments with different PME systems*:
    - Vredeseilanden with Outcome Mapping
    - VVOB with Outcome Mapping
    - Trias with logframes
    - ETC with Most Significant Change
- *Frequently asked questions on the research component in the TLP programme* (Huyse and Van Ongevalle, 2010)

For 2011, a first cross case analysis is expected as well as several learning briefs on important topics for the TLP.

6. What are the non-negotiable deliverables in the action-research?

- June 2011; First case report on basis of collective reflection activity (write workshop, reflection session or review meeting) after at least one monitoring cycle.
  - First draft in 02 May 2011
  - Final draft 30 May 2011
- July 2012: Final case report presentation
  - April 2012: all data collection and sense-making activities (writeshops/ reflection meetings, ..) have happened
  - May 2012: first draft case report
  - July 2012: final case report
- Participation and active contribution to collective learning moments
- At least once per quarter, planning a day to reflect about and document the learning process to arrive at a well-documented case report
- Active involvement of the Southern partners in the AR process.
- Non negotiable deliverable of PSO/ HIVA/ Reference Group towards the members:
  - Process facilitation and coordination
  - Guidance and support for AR implementation process
  - Facilitation of collective learning moments
  - Access to relevant networks and resource persons
  - Cross-case analysis
  - Keeping the Huddle up to date
  - Publication of case reports and other findings
  - Publication of support documents on PME and AR