



**OutcomeMapping**  
LEARNING COMMUNITY

# The Outcome Mapping Usefulness Barometer

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How useful is Outcome Mapping to help us deal with complex change?

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## Foreword by the OMLC Stewards

“Pressure to demonstrate, measure, and be accountable for impact has led donors to conceptualize, implement and evaluate programs using tools and methods which seek a linear cause and effect relationships between a problem and the identified ‘solution’ to that problem. However, experience tells us that development is a complex process that takes place in circumstances where a program cannot be isolated from the various actors with which it will interact... [or] the factors by which it will be influenced”. (Earl et al, 2001).

Outcome Mapping was introduced to the development community by the International Research Development Centre over a decade ago as a method appropriate for use in the complexity of development and social change, as an alternative to the ‘linear cause and effect’ methods described in the extract above. Since then, the language of complexity theory for understanding how things emerge and change has spread amongst the development and evaluation communities and adds weight to the message communicated by the founders of OM in the original manual.

Reflecting on this, the Outcome Mapping Learning Community (OMLC) Stewards, a voluntary group of members with responsibilities for governing the OMLC, commissioned this study in 2012 to explore the extent to which OM lives up to this claim – that it is perceived useful for programmes that are supporting complex change processes to become more effective and to meet the learning and information needs of different programme stakeholders.

This study complements the earlier “10 years of Outcome Mapping” study, which mapped the state-of-the-art of OM practice around the world, by moving from the question of where and how OM is being used to the question of what value does OM add and how can we measure it. The report is useful for practitioners and funders alike, to help them take stock of how OM is used as part of a broader toolkit and the particular benefits that OM can bring. Three points to highlight are:

- When designing planning, monitoring and evaluation systems, the analytical framework the authors have used to guide the research and present the findings (Figure 1) is a practical ‘barometer’ for reflecting on different dimensions of complexity and the requirements of P,M&E systems to take them into consideration.
- When considering the use of Outcome Mapping, the human body metaphor introduced in the conclusions is a useful ‘readiness assessment’ for considering the conditions that determine the usefulness of OM for helping organisations to deal with complex change.
- In addition, Figure 12 in the conclusions is a helpful summary of the benefits of OM and corresponding ‘challenges’, or things that a practitioner should keep an eye on when beginning to use, and using OM.

We hope this report and the points it emphasizes, as well as other materials on the OMLC, are useful in your own work, to demonstrate the value of OM as a complementary approach and set of tools in your PME systems, one that is able to grasp change processes that are normally difficult to measure, that need to be measured in ‘real-time’ and with a developmental evaluation approach to help inform learning processes, especially learning from the less tangible and unexpected changes.

**The OMLC Board of Stewards:** Kaia Ambrose, Steff Deprez, Simon Hearn, Ziad Moussa, Julius Nyangaga, Heidi Schaeffer and Ricardo Wilson-Grau.

*December 2013.*

## Executive summary

Taking advantage of the growth in organizations and programmes implementing OM, the Outcome Mapping Learning Community commissioned a study to explore to what extent OM was perceived useful for helping programmes that are supporting complex change processes, to become more effective and to meet the learning and information needs of different programme stakeholders.

The data reviewed for this research included a web survey with 43 respondent, 15 in-depth interviews and two case studies of OM used in practice. Data collection and analysis was guided by an analytic framework that explored to what extent OM was perceived useful by the research participants to deal with four facets of complexity for planning, monitoring and evaluation (P,M&E): (1) dealing with multiple actors who come with different expectations, understandings, roles and responsibilities; (2) stimulating learning about a programme's effects in order to deal with unpredictability and non-linearity; (3) satisfying multiple accountability needs associated with the multiple actors involved in the programme; and (4) strengthening adaptive capacity of programme stakeholders to remain relevant and effective in changing contexts. The findings are presented around each of the four facets and this is followed by a summary of the recommendations.

### Findings

#### Dealing with multiple actors

- Research participants indicated that OM, through its concept of 'spheres of influence', provides a practical framework that is found helpful to develop an actor focused theory of change which is characterised by a specific focus on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the various programme actors involved in the programme. However, maintaining the clarity obtained through OM about roles, responsibilities and expectations and then meeting them can be a challenge and requires a considerable effort during subsequent monitoring cycles.
- OM's focus on outcomes as changes in the behaviour of the boundary partners was felt to make a lot of sense to people and stimulated conversation and dialogue between programme stakeholders. Furthermore, the diagrammatic representations of actor focused theories of change that visualise relationships were helpful to stimulate conversations among programme actors and also helped programme teams to explain the programme.
- OM, through its potential to stimulate social interaction and dialogue, can contribute to building trust among programme stakeholders.

#### Learning about a programme's effects

- OM was found to open up a potential result area by focusing P,M&E on changes in behaviour or relationships of boundary partners. As these changes are situated outside the sphere of control of a programme implementing team they represent potential programme effects or outcomes. Such outcomes would often be missed before OM was introduced as they would have been considered intangible and too difficult to measure.
- Getting insight in the outcomes at the level of the boundary partners was shown to be helpful for programme stakeholders to develop a more sophisticated and shared understanding of a programme and its objectives.

- The increased insight in a programme's effects through OM was found to motivate programme staff to become more involved in P,M&E but was also found useful for informing the adjustment of programme plans.
- OM offers no guarantee that learning will take place. There is a risk that the initial excitement about the OM framework during the planning stage fizzles out over time and more so if the OM framework is experienced as yet another imposed P,M&E approach, or if it is not in tune with donor requirements or if organisational capacity to support implementation is limited.

### Satisfying different accountability needs

- OM was considered useful in the sense that it helped programmes to enrich their reports to donors. It allowed them to include information about outcomes as changes in the boundary partners. There were also indications that OM was helpful to report better on how outcomes were obtained and how the programme was able to contribute to them. However, monitoring information obtained by OM was not always sufficient to satisfy information needs of donors especially if they required more quantitative information. In such case, OM had to be complemented with other P,M&E approaches.
- The fact that OM gives a framework to help clarify roles and expectations of programme stakeholders as well as stimulate the involvement of the boundary partners in the monitoring process was felt by research respondents to contribute to satisfying the information needs of the boundary partners. At the same time, regular follow up and on-going support for the monitoring process by programme staff is essential for sustaining the involvement of boundary partners.
- There was only limited evidence that OM helped a programme to satisfy downward accountability needs of the final beneficiaries. In those cases where downward accountability was stimulated, other approaches beyond OM were used.

### Strengthening a programme's adaptive capacity

- OM was mainly perceived helpful for enhancing a programme's adaptive capacity through its potential to stimulate more reflection meetings, to improve the quality of the reflection process itself and the quality of the collection and analysis of monitoring data.
- The observation that increased dialogue and reflection may occur at an informal level points towards the need to nurture and support such informal learning and reflection processes.
- Limited facilitation skills, resources and time to support dialogue and reflection processes is mentioned by research respondents as an important limiting factor.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations for practitioners

- From results based management to results based learning.** This study shows that OM, if implemented well, can provide programmes with a flexible actor- and learning centred P,M&E approach that can help them to learn from results within their spheres of influence and to adapt their strategies and plans accordingly. In addition, the study also shows that OM can help organisations to become accountable and adaptive. OM therefore represents a potential P,M&E approach that organisations can consider to respond to the results agenda through results

based learning instead of technocratic results based management. This is especially relevant for programmes that are dealing with processes of complex change.

- ii. **Invest in a learning agenda.** OM provides a framework for regular actor- and learning-centred P,M&E practice. But OM will not by itself guarantee that this actually happens. A strong learning culture and managerial encouragement to monitor and think critically about results are key. Also, regular monitoring and learning about a programme's results requires a considerable effort in terms of time and financial and logistical resources. Merely training programme staff in Outcome Mapping may be an important step, but by itself will not be enough.
- iii. **Towards methodological diversity.** The existence of planning and reporting formats required by a donor at a strategic level (e.g. logical frameworks) shouldn't stop organisations to experiment with OM at an operational level. A majority of research participants indicated that they used elements of OM to complement their 'logframe based' P,M&E approach.

### Recommendations for donors

- i. Ask funded programmes that are dealing with complex change processes to demonstrate that they have developed and implement P,M&E systems that are learning-centred and that stimulate formal and informal learning. In addition, ask for specific accounts of how lessons learned were used for programme improvement or for planning.
- ii. Adopt a broader definition of results. This would mean that donors do not only require information about impact (i.e. changes in state or changes at the level of the final beneficiaries) but also recognize changed behaviours or relations among actors directly influenced by a programme, as valuable programme results.
- iii. When reviewing funding proposals for programmes that support complex change processes, consider criteria that assess whether the proposals are clear and explicit about the various actors in a programme's sphere of control (i.e. who is responsible for inputs, activities, outputs), spheres of direct influence (direct target groups) and spheres of indirect influence (indirect target groups or/and final beneficiaries). Donors can also show explicit appreciation for programmes that are able to demonstrate a deepened understanding of their theory of change over time, even if this means that the original theory of change has to change.
- iv. Allow programmes to use part of the operational budget to facilitate learning centred monitoring activities (e.g. regular reflection meetings with programme stakeholders) and to fine-tune their actor-focused P,M&E design during programme implementation based on the lessons learned during the monitoring process.
- v. Develop the donor staff's knowledge about the basic characteristics of OM, its suitability for specific contexts, and its potential to complement (but not necessary replace) other, more established, approaches.

# 1 Introduction

Outcome Mapping (OM) is reaching an important turning point. With an increasing number of OM applications worldwide in multiple sectors (Smith et al, 2012, Nyangaga et al, 2012), a growing Outcome Mapping Learning Community and an ever increasing number of references to OM in planning, monitoring and evaluation (P,M&E) literature and manuals, OM can no longer be ignored as an interesting alternative but is entering the mainstream P,M&E field. The underlying principles of OM are becoming more widely accepted within the development sector and many complimentary tools and approaches are being developed. While there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about the advantages and challenges associated with Outcome Mapping, particularly designed for programmes that support complex change (Earl et al., 2001), there is still limited knowledge on the difference it is making towards better results based management in development programmes.

This knowledge gap is particularly pertinent in the current climate where donor agencies and policymakers are faced with a growing call for development effectiveness from their constituencies and from their peers as laid out in various international agreements (Paris Declaration 2005, Accra Agenda for Action 2008, High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan 2011, Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness in Istanbul, 2011). Furthermore, after more than two decades of implementing a results agenda, critical information and learning needs of donors and policymakers, as well as those of Southern stakeholders and the change agents responsible for the implementation of aid programmes, are still not always met (Vähämäki, 2011). Recent P,M&E literature also points out that actors in the field are faced by the limited relevance of dominant results-based P,M&E approaches that follow a logic of linearity, predictability and control when dealing with complex processes of social change. (Stern et al, 2012; Mowles, 2010; Hummelbrunner, 2010; Jones, 2011; Ramalingam, 2008; Eyben, 2006).

Taking advantage of the growth in organizations and programmes implementing OM, the Outcome Mapping Learning Community commissioned a research to find out if Outcome Mapping can help development organisations or programmes to answer the call for development effectiveness and to address the learning needs of different programme stakeholders when dealing with complex processes of social change. This paper presents the results of this research. The paper is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** unpacks our understanding of complex change.

**Chapter 3** outlines the implications of complex change for P,M&E.

**Chapter 4** outlines the research methodology and the research questions.

**Chapter 5** presents the findings of the study.

**Chapter 6** outlines the conclusions and summarises the advantages and challenges related to OM.

**Chapter 7** presents the recommendations for practitioners, donors and for future research.

## 2 Unpacking complex change

How do you define complexity? Michael Quinn Patton, in his book *Developmental Evaluation*, narrates how students at the Santa Fe Institute, ‘the citadel of complexity ideas’, were a bit shocked and frustrated when different members of a panel of experts gave different answers to this question from one of the students. (Patton, 2011, p147). While it may be difficult to give one definition that is carried by the different sciences of complexity, there is some general consensus among authors within the sector of international development and evaluation that complex change is characterised by some degree of emergence, unpredictability and non-linearity. In this chapter we elaborate on these characteristics. We also explore their implications for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

### 2.1 Emergence, non-predictability and non-linearity

Mowles (2010) explains how emergence occurs in social interaction where the effect of what someone does will be determined by the history of, context surrounding, and power within a particular setting. All these elements will be key contributors to the outcome that emerges from their interaction, but there is no simple relationship between them and their interaction will shape the outcome in a way that can often not be predicted through an analysis of the individual elements (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). Mowles (2010) uses this concept of emergence to explain how seemingly small differences between locally interacting agents can have unpredictably large population-wide effects and how local interaction can shape larger social patterns. Such non-linearity is often emphasized in the literature as an important characteristic of complex change (Forss & Shwartz, 2011). While linear change is characterized by a clear, direct, and proportional relationship between cause and effect, non-linear change processes feature a less ordered causality. **Box 1** illustrates some characteristics of non-linear change processes.

#### Box 1: Characteristics of non-linear change

“The distance between causes and effects can be long in time, and sometimes short, and whichever depends on a large number of intervening factors” (Uphoff cited in Mara 2011)

“There are usually several causes for any change that occurs, and causality must be understood as multiple at best”. (Uphoff cited in Mara 2011)

“There is no proportional relationship between the size of causes and effects” (Uphoff cited in Mara 2011). Eyben (2006) refers to the possibility of “butterfly” actions having a major effect, while major actions can have very little effect on continuously changing complex social systems.

Change is influenced by a wide variety of contextual factors beyond the control of any intervention (Forss & Shwartz 2011). “Boundary conditions play a major role in explaining how change occurs” (Uphoff cited in Mara 2011).

Feedback loops can be positive (amplifying deviation from an equilibrium state) or negative (reducing deviation, bringing the system back toward the original equilibrium state) (Uphoff cited in Mara 2011).

## 2.2 Multiple actors, perspectives and relationships

Another contributing factor to the complexity of social change processes is the fact that often multiple actors need to be involved to tackle the problem at hand. Hence, programmes that support complex change are built around actors that may hold different understandings of the programme's objectives, how to achieve these, and what the roles and responsibilities are of each of these actors (Jones, 2011a). Resources, such as knowledge, financing and networking are dispersed among various actors, that in addition are interdependent (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004). Jones (2011b) formulates this as "the capacities to tackle complex problems are often distributed across a range of players (p.1)". There is not one single actor who has control over a programme's progress towards a particular objective, and action may require different forms of interaction with a variety of actors. Collaboration, negotiation, dialogue, influencing, lobbying and conflict are just a few examples of such interactions. Guijt (2008) refers to "messy partnerships" to describe this interplay of different actors. A messy partnership is a convergence of different actors for concerted action driven by a common overarching vision and a perception of value added by collaboration. The various differences that can exist between the actors – such as governance structure, culture, mandate, capacities, priorities and commitment to collective efforts – are the basis of this messiness (Guijt, 2008).

Development programmes are therefore often not characterised by rational actors, taking long-term strategic decisions and seeking the maximization of utility. Instead, programmes and its actors are often multi-cultural, involving differing norms, values, cognitive frames or identities. In complex programme situations, decision making may be shorter-term and tactical, involving diverse understandings, convictions, emotions, passions, anger, ethics or identities that give direction to decisions. This leads to change processes that are much more difficult to predict, measure and understand (Stern et al., 2012).

## 3 Implications of complexity for P,M&E

We recognize that not all changes that development programmes seek to influence are complex and may constitute change processes that are known as simple (i.e. known, single causal chain from inputs through to outputs, outcomes and impact ) or complicated (i.e. involving knowable multiple and often alternative causal strands) (Rogers 2008, Snowden & Boone 2007). However, in this study we focus on OM's usefulness in helping organisations to deal with those change processes that are complex (i.e. in which relationships of cause-effect are unknown until the results emerge and even then, may be difficult to establish). In this chapter we elaborate on the implications of complexity for P,M&E.

### 3.1 Dealing with multiple actors

The reality of multiple actors, relationships and perspectives that come with complex change processes has some direct practical consequences for P,M&E. A first consequence is that the achievement and sustainability of programme results often depend on changes in behaviour or practices by multiple intermediate actors who in turn interact (directly or indirectly) with programme beneficiaries. As a result, a programme's resources and efforts move through a chain or network of intermediate actors before an eventual effect may be felt by the target group. This also means that the influence of a distant donor organisation or international NGO is rather limited, and depends on the actions of these intermediate actors (Earl & Carden, 2002). Therefore, within such a programme set-up, it will be important for a programme's P,M&E system to help clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities of the various programme stakeholders involved and strengthen relationships between them. At the same time, simple logic models for P,M&E that assume linear cause-effect relations through a results chain (input-output-outcome-impact) face some challenges in multi-actor settings. These include: 1) abstraction of the actors involved in the programme by representing the programme's result chain as a temporal sequence of events instead of a sequence of actors connected by their relationships (Crawford et al, 2005; Davies, 2004 & 2009); 2) they generally provide little information about the "messy" day-to-day social interaction of people trying to work with others (Mowles, 2010); and 3) rigid use of linear plans as if they were contracts, making it hard to change them (Guijt, 2010, Bakewell and Garbut, 2005). The implication of dealing with multiple actors and relationships underly our first research question shown in **Box 2**.

#### Box 2: First research question

To learn about the usefulness of OM for dealing with multiple actors and relationships we explored if OM had helped programme stakeholders to:

- clarify their expectations?
- clarify their responsibilities?
- strengthen trustful relationships?
- engage in dialogue among each other?

### 3.2 Learning about a programme's effects

A second implication of complexity for P,M&E is that effective P,M&E approaches need to enhance learning. Learning is essential when dealing with complex change because in unpredictable and nonlinear contexts, it is not useful to predict outcomes and then try to control the implementation of

predetermined plans to achieve these outcomes (Mara, 2011, p. 328). From a complexity science perspective, it is more relevant to implement a programme as ‘a process of creating the enabling conditions for triggering emergent change mechanisms’ (*ibid*). At the same time, development organisations face a challenging paradox. On the one hand, they often set themselves ambitious poverty-reduction objectives which unavoidably come with all the risks, uncertainty and conflicts associated with such high-level objectives (Eyben, 2006); on the other hand, they are pressured by a results-based agenda to claim that their solutions are certain and can be achieved without risk of failure. Such a paradox can lead to a fear of failure, which in turn can deprive organisations of the ability to learn and understand through experimentation (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Stern et al. (2012) refer to Morel (2010) and Rogers (2008) who argue for the need to receive speedy feedback about a programme’s effects in the face of uncertainty in order to learn quickly if a programme is moving in the right direction. This presents a strong argument for ‘real-time’ monitoring and evaluation designs (Stern et al, 2012) and a developmental evaluation approach (Patton, 2011). Development programmes’ challenge is therefore to organise their P,M&E approaches in such a way that they can help these learning processes. This is the basis for the second research question that this study will seek to answer (see **Box 3**).

### **Box 3: Second research question**

To find out if OM was considered useful for stimulating learning we asked if OM had helped programme stakeholders to:

- learn about the effects of the programme?
- learn about the programme’s effects at an early stage within the programme?
- adjust the programme’s strategies based on the monitoring data?
- track effects that are difficult to quantify?
- Learn about unexpected effects

### **3.3 Satisfying multiple accountability needs**

Because of the involvement of many different actors in complex processes of social change, there might be different and not always compatible information needs (James, 2009). Often, donors want the P,M&E system to provide information on the changes at the level of ultimate beneficiaries for accountability purposes. It is not surprising that this kind of upward accountability is therefore made a priority as it is directly linked with the condition for receiving funding. The survival of many organisations depends on this type of accountability. A more dynamic understanding of accountability goes beyond upward accountability and entails a wider set of stakeholders (Whitty 2008). For example, implementing partners or NGOs might want the P,M&E system to provide information that helps them to learn about what works and what does not work in order to inform future planning and implementation (James, 2009). Furthermore, forms of downward accountability to beneficiaries (e.g. rights-based approaches) and public accountability towards the wider public are becoming more common. Eyben (2006) refers to Lindblom (1990) to explain that processes of accountability can be strengthened through investing in relationships and fostering mutual responsibility derived from shared learning through trial and error. This is especially relevant in complex contexts as such focus can encourage different actors “to work with each other through mutual communication of their particular knowledge of the system or the problem at hand” (*ibid*). Eyben (2006) also warns of possible unequal power relations between the different actors in development programmes. In such cases, partners and donors “must see mutual responsibility as an

aspiration to aim for, rather than something that is easily achievable” (ibid, p56). Some trade off will be needed between the various information and learning needs (James, 2009) and have to be considered when developing a P,M&E system. The information needed, and its projected use, will determine which approaches and tools are most suitable within a P,M&E system for planning, data collection, data analysis and honest reporting (Simister and Smit, 2010). The extent to which OM is perceived useful for helping a programme to satisfy accountability needs of various programme stakeholders is the object of the study’s third research question (see **Box 4**).

#### **Box 4: Third research question**

To find out if OM was considered useful for promoting accountability we asked if OM had helped the programme to:

- satisfy accountability needs of the donor?
- satisfy accountability needs of the boundary partners?
- satisfy accountability needs of the final beneficiaries?
- make decisions in a transparent way?

### **3.4 Strengthening adaptive capacity**

Supporting complex change is a two-way process. That means that any organisation that is supporting complex change processes, will also change (Earl et al., 2001). This is in line with insights of complexity science which suggest that programmes “are involved within a mutually adaptive relationship with their environment” (Mara, 2011, p.327). Being able to change and adapt to the changing context is crucial for organisations or programmes to remain effective and relevant. Adaptive capacity therefore goes beyond the capacity of effectively implementing a programme or achieving results, but refers to the capacity of an organisation or programme to adapt even beyond a particular programme and within an often fast changing context. The core capability ‘to adapt and self-renew’ from the ECDPM five core capability framework helps to explain what is meant by adaptive capacity: 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 (Baser & Morgan, 2008). While many organisations are looking towards P,M&E for strengthening their adaptive capacity, the reality is that P,M&E practice often does not live up to that task. And even for organisations that are able to carry out their activities according to plan, there is a risk that their adaptive capacity is neglected in the process of being busy. Jones (2011a) refers to the importance of building collective capacity through supporting networks that address an issue or area of practice. P,M&E practice could help in this respect by providing actors the opportunity to hold discussions so that they can communicate, build trust and coordinate (Jones, 2011a). This could also contribute to making collective sense of the concrete significant observations the development programme has made or insights it has gained during its daily activities and interactions (Smit, 2007). However, such reflective practice may not always come easy, knowing how difficult it is to change deeply engrained behavioural patterns such as the non-prioritisation of time for reflection (Smit, 2007, Britton, 2007, Roper et al, 2003, Fisher, 2010). The perceived usefulness of OM to help programme stakeholders to strengthen adaptive capacity in their programme is explored in research questions four (see **Box 5**).

#### **Box 5: Fourth research question**

To find out if OM was considered useful for strengthening the programme's adaptive capacity we asked if OM had helped to:

- set more time aside for reflection about the monitoring information?
- learn about the external context?
- contribute to changes in the internal practices of the programme?
- gain clarity about the programme's contribution to the observed effects?

## 4 Research questions and methodology

Investigating the usefulness of Outcome Mapping is not a merely technical endeavour. ‘Usefulness’ can mean different things to different people and there are no universally accepted standards against which OM’s usefulness can be explored. This is not too surprising since implementing Outcome Mapping is a human and social activity that is given shape by the actors involved and by the context in which it takes place. It is not uncommon that the OM implementation process may change over time in one single programme and differs significantly across programmes (Smith et al, 2012).

To address this challenge we formulated four research questions (see **Box 6**) that allowed us to explore the usefulness of OM within the context of specific programme cases. The research questions draw from literature on complex change that is described in the previous two chapters and from action research carried out around complexity oriented P,M&E (Van Ongevalle et al. 2012). Each research question corresponds with specific implications of complexity for P,M&E that were also elaborated in the previous chapter.

### Box 6: Summary of research questions

In order to study the usefulness of OM in programmes that deal with processes of complex change we explored the following four research questions.

To what extent was OM useful for:

1. Dealing with multiple actors and relationships?
2. Helping programme stakeholders to learn about the progress towards development results?
3. Satisfying upward, downward and horizontal accountability needs?
4. Helping programme stakeholders to strengthen their adaptive capacity?

To answer our research questions, we used a methodology of facilitated self-assessment by a selection of OM users. We did this by means of the following steps:

1. To help us in the data collection and analysis, we first developed an analytic framework that consists of a set of sub-questions for each of our four research questions. These questions were used to develop a web survey. They also served as a guide for the in-depth interviews and the review of the OM case studies. The analytic framework is shown in Figure 1 below.
2. We launched a call on the [Outcome Mapping Learning Community](#) (OMLC) to invite organizations who are using Outcome Mapping to take part in the research process on a voluntary basis.
3. We launched a web survey to get information about the perception of practitioners about the usefulness of OM for dealing with the challenges of complex processes of social change. 55 OMLC members responded to the online survey of which 43 respondents filled the survey completely. We only considered the 43 fully completed surveys for the analysis of the responses. General information about the survey respondents’ role in the programmes, geographic location and the extent to which OM was used is shown in Annex 1. The survey

questions are available through the following link:

<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/resource.php?id=415>.

4. The scope of this research did not allow for an independent assessment of the perceptions shared by the survey respondents. However, through additional in-depth interviews we did solicit for specific examples to explain and illustrate the reasons for their perceptions about OM's usefulness. In-depth interviews were carried out through Skype with 15 respondents to the online survey who had indicated that they were willing to participate in an interview. Each interview took about 1 hour. The interview transcript was sent to the interviewee for feedback and corrections before it was used for the data analysis process. An overview of the interviews is given in Annex 2.
5. Two additional case studies of OM implementation, in which the researchers were involved in the context of other action research processes, were also included as research data within the study:
  - a. The case of World Solidarity's Global Social Movements programme (Twagilimana et al, 2012).
  - b. The case of Cordaid's violence against women programme in Colombia (Ortiz et al., 2012).

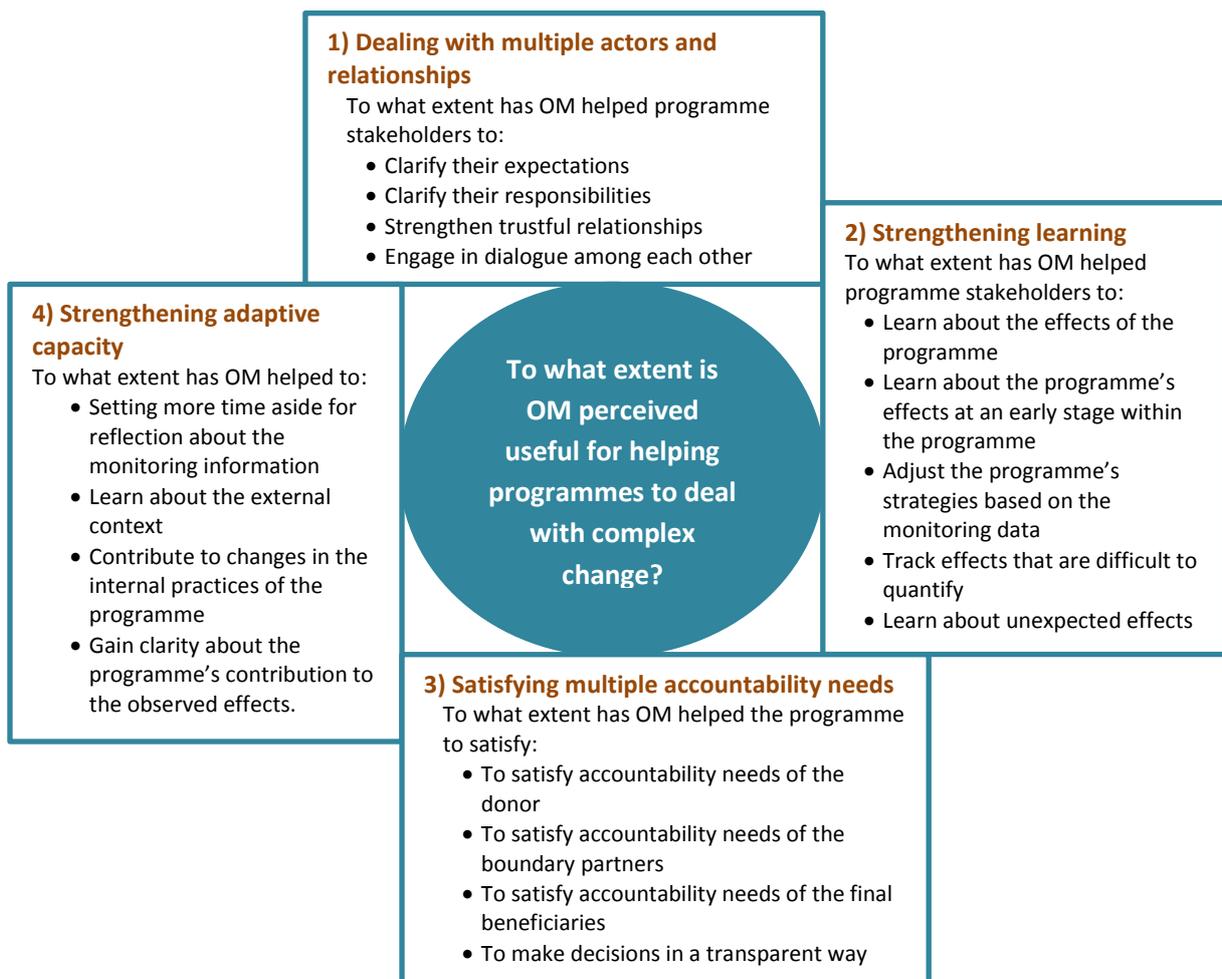


Figure 1: Analytic framework of the study based on implications of complexity for P,M&E

## 5 How does OM help organisations to deal with the implications of complex change?

This chapter presents the results of the study. Guided by the four research questions, the chapter explores to what extent OM is perceived useful by the research participants to deal with each of the four implications of complexity for P,M&E.

### 5.1 To what extent is OM perceived useful for dealing with multiple actors?

#### Summary of the findings: How useful is OM for dealing with multiple actors?

- Through its concept of 'spheres of influence', OM provides a practical framework that is found helpful to develop an actor focused theory of change which is characterised by a specific focus on the roles, responsibilities and expectations of the various programme actors involved in the programme. However, maintaining the clarity obtained through OM about roles, responsibilities and expectations and then meeting them can be a challenge and requires a considerable effort during subsequent monitoring cycles.
- OM's focus on outcomes as changes in the behaviour of the boundary partners was felt to make a lot of sense to people and stimulated conversation and dialogue between programme stakeholders. Furthermore, the diagrammatic representations of actor focused theories of change that visualise relationships were helpful to stimulate conversations among programme actors and also helped programme teams to explain the programme.
- OM, through its potential to stimulate social interaction and dialogue, can contribute to building trust among programme stakeholders.

Figure 2 below shows that a large majority of the survey respondents agrees or strongly agrees with the statement that OM has helped them in clarifying expectations and responsibilities of programme stakeholders and in strengthening trustful relationships. The one respondent who disagreed with the question if OM had helped to clarify responsibilities referred to the fact that being both a capacity builder and donor made roles and responsibilities confusing despite OM.

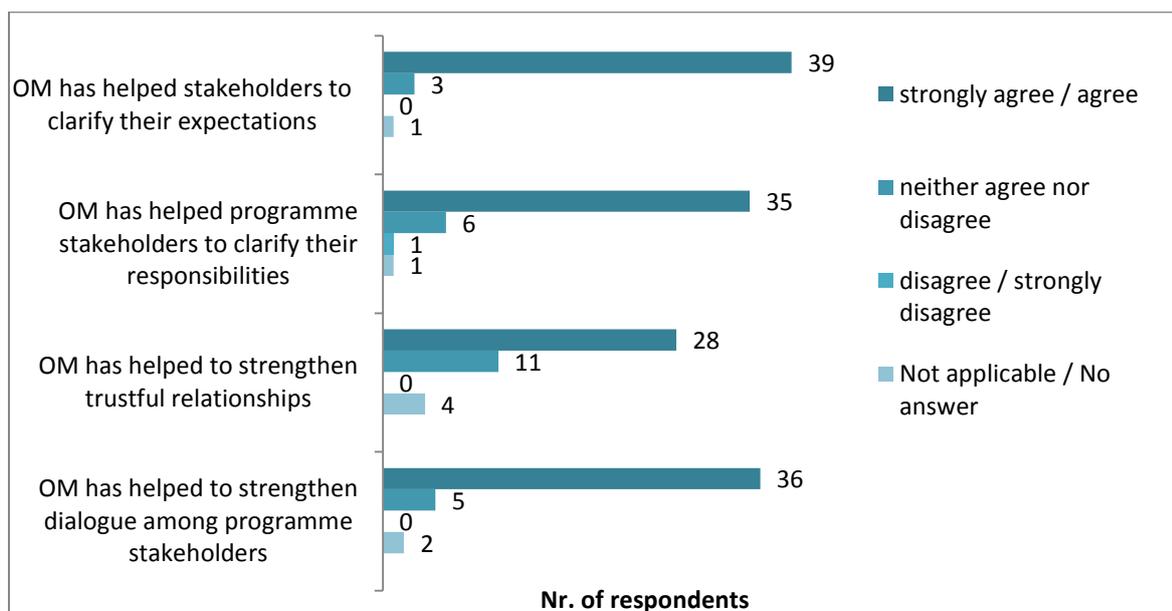


Figure 2: OM and dealing with multiple actors and relationships (n=43)

The results from the interviews and case studies and the responses to the open survey questions allow us to identify three possible explanations for the positive response rate in the survey:

1. OM provides a practical framework for actor focused P,M&E. This is seen to contribute to a better shared understanding of the expectations and responsibilities of different programme stakeholders.
2. OM provides a framework for deeper conversation and dialogue among programme stakeholders.
3. OM's potential to promote social interaction can contribute towards building trust among programme stakeholders.

In the next sections we elaborate on each explanation based on illustrative extracts from the reviewed OM cases.

### 5.1.1 Providing a practical framework for actor focused P,M&E.

The concept of 'spheres of influence', which is often used during OM's intentional design process, was referred to by a majority of respondents as a simple but powerful stakeholder analysis tool that helped them to discuss and clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities of different programme actors.

"Through OM you are forced not only to do the stakeholder analysis but you are forced to clarify roles and responsibilities. Doing this, you realize people often mix up their strategic partners, boundary partners and beneficiaries. And OM helps us to get a clear understanding of this. For example, we become clearer of who are our direct and indirect target groups."  
(M&E consultant Civil Peace Service Programme)

Interestingly, when using OM, the stakeholder analysis according to the spheres of influence does not remain a side activity in preparation of the subsequent planning or formulation of the programme. Instead, the resulting stakeholder map (as illustrated in Figure 3) becomes the basis or

the skeleton of the programme plan and hence forces the programme team to think about effects or results as changes in the actors whom the programme is trying to influence directly or indirectly. Hence it provides a programme with a planning framework to develop an actor focused theory of change (or actor focused intervention logic). Such a planning framework does not only focus on the final impact (changes in state such as improved health or increased income) but also on what various stakeholders need to do in order to contribute to this impact (e.g. changes in behaviour, practice, policy or relationships).

**Box 7** illustrates how the spheres of influence framework helped 'Light For The World (LFTW)' to develop an actor focused theory of change. This helped them to monitor change at the level of the local stakeholders (i.e. boundary partners) who work towards addressing educational needs of children with a disability in Cambodia. Before OM was introduced, LFTW would mainly focus on service delivery directly towards children with a disability. Hence OM helped the organization to change its approach from direct service delivery to the final beneficiaries towards capacity development of local actors who provide services (and who will continue doing this even after the end of the funded programme) towards the final beneficiaries.

### Box 7: Developing an actor focused theory of change using OM

Light for the World together with its local partners used OM to plan an inclusive education programme in Cambodia. A simplified version of the actor focused theory of change that resulted from the OM planning process is shown in figure 3 below.

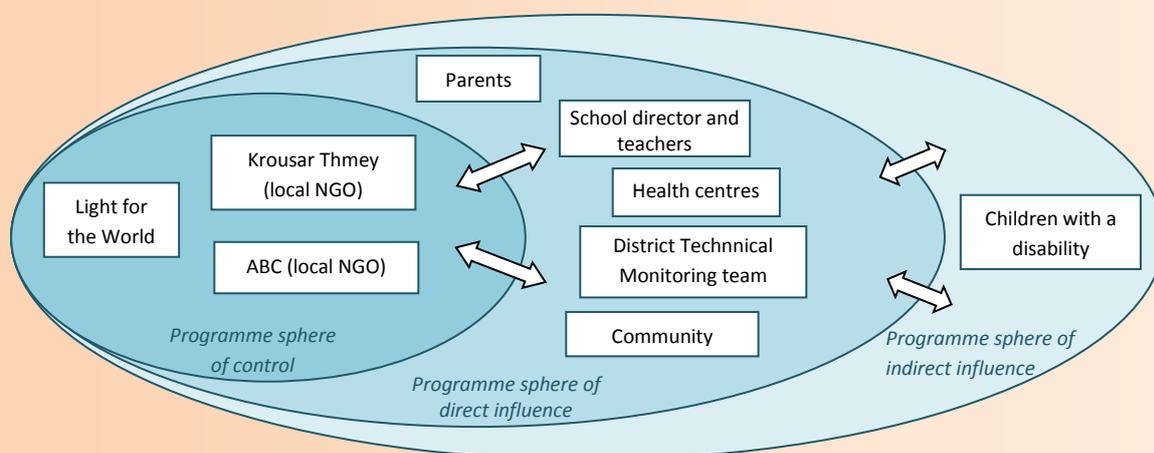


Figure 3: Actor focused theory of change in the Light for the World case

The added value of using OM was observed as follows in the Light for the World case:

- OM helped to identify those local programme stakeholders in its direct sphere of influence whom the programme could realistically support in order to achieve sustainable results in the field of inclusive education. Change within these actors (i.e. the programme's boundary partners) became an important result level for LFTW.
- OM helped the programme to realise that the two local NGOs that LFTW supports are situated within the sphere of control together with LFTW since they have control over programme resources and activities.
- The planning became more focused on how the behaviour and practice of local actors needed to change and how Light for the World could assist this change process. This helped to clarify roles and expectations of both the boundary partners as well as the implementing organisation which consisted of LFTW and the two local NGOs in the programme's sphere of control.

From the LFTW case it was also learned that maintaining clarity about roles, responsibilities and expectations gained through OM and then meeting them, requires a considerable effort during subsequent monitoring cycles. At the time of this research, tensions remained in the LFTW case as to whether the roles and responsibilities were fully met by all stakeholders and if these responsibilities were communicated clearly enough and updated with new partners coming on board.

### 5.1.2 Stimulating conversation and dialogue

The explicit actor focus of OM and more specifically OM's focus on outcomes as changes in the behaviour of the boundary partners makes a lot of sense for people and stimulates conversation and dialogue between programme stakeholders (see graph in Figure 2 above). This was felt by a majority of research participants to help programme stakeholders to express and agree on expectations, roles and responsibilities according to their position in the spheres of influence framework. Furthermore, the OM framework provided programme implementing teams with a 'language' to explain the content and the purpose of a programme to programme stakeholders. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

- *"OM helped to clarify expectations of boundary partners in terms of support needed and contributed to programme staff working in a more participatory way with boundary partners"* (Eco health programme South East Asia)
- *"OM has provided a language to explain the programme to programme stakeholders."* (Teacher Education and Vulnerability Programme, VVOB Zimbabwe)
- *"OM forced everybody to talk about where the programme might go"* (Alberta Rural Development Programme)

**Box 8** illustrates how the OM framework strengthened dialogue in the Global Water Partnership (GWP) network and helped to decentralise P,M&E processes and decision making in a global network setting.

#### **Box 8: Stimulating dialogue within the Global Water Partnership network**

"The Global Water Partnership introduced OM to strengthen the P,M&E approach of its global network of 70 national and 15 regional networks with 2000 members. However, OM could not be imposed in this voluntary network. Instead people were inspired to take up OM by its focus on 'outcomes as changes in social actors whom they were influencing'. This contributed to decentralised decision making in the hands of the regional and national water partnerships who are also closest to the action and who know best about the outcomes that are obtained. OM therefore helped the network to deal with the challenge of different people at different levels in the network with different interests and who want to report on different outcomes. OM was able to address this challenge by providing a language and framework to bring these issues to the table. While this approach required a considerable mind shift among network actors, it also contributed to trust within the network." (M&E consultant, Global Water Partnership)

While the OM terminology was mentioned by two survey respondents as a challenge for deeper conversation, evidence from the cases shows that this vocabulary can be changed, adapted or omitted to suit specific contexts. In the Alberta Rural Development programme, for example, OM provided staff with a language to talk to their boundary partners without having to explicitly communicate the OM framework to them. **Box 9** illustrates how OM terminology was changed to suit the specific context of the Global Water Partnership programme.

### Box 9: Adjusting OM terminology to suit the context

“During the introduction of OM, difficulties arose with OM concepts in South East Asia, where the idea of influencing “my minister or vice minister to change his or her behaviour” was unacceptable. Thus, GWP had to clarify that the “behaviour” it aimed to change was on the level of government policy and practices and not the behaviour of government officials. Similarly the notion of “influencing” change was redefined as something much broader: assisting, facilitating, supporting, providing information about integrated water resource management. Adjusting the terminology did justice to the OM principle of influencing change in the boundary partners.” (M&E consultant, Global Water Partnership)

Conversations between programme actors were also said to be helped by visual programme summaries showing partner relations through the spheres of influence. The actor focused theory of change of the Light for the World programme in Cambodia shown in Figure 3 above illustrates such a visual. Another example is given in Annex 3 which illustrates the actor focused theory of change of the VVOB teacher education programme in Zimbabwe. Explaining the programme proved to be a continuous process in VVOB’s programme because of the high turnover within certain boundary partners.

### 5.1.3 A framework for building trust

During the interviews a majority of the respondents explained that OM, through its potential to stimulate social interaction and dialogue among programme stakeholders, can contribute to building trust. This is illustrated by two cases in **Box 10** where OM helped to build trust among boundary partners. However, OM does not offer a guarantee that trust will be enhanced. The way OM is used and the context in which it is used are determining factors as illustrated in **Box 11**.

From the research we learn that OM’s potential for building trust is mainly mentioned in those cases where the OM framework is used as a basis for social learning. This often takes the form of multiple workshops and / or reflection meetings where different programme stakeholders created a shared vision and shared hypothesis about the programme during the planning stage or about the results during the monitoring cycles. The process of developing a shared understanding among programme stakeholders, which necessarily requires some kind of interaction between people, is seen to contribute towards trust. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

- *“We have utilized OM in discussions with some of CHSRF’s [Canadian Health Services Research Foundation] funded projects [namely a set of funded pilot-projects that aim to encourage patient engagement within health organizations]. OM was a great tool to build trust among these external project teams, as we used it to build a shared set of indicators for the whole program. It proved to be an excellent tool for unpacking the idea of ‘engagement’, and helped both the pilot sites and CHSRF develop a clearer, stronger, M&E plan.”(Canadian Health Services Research Foundation)*
- *The particular way in which we developed OM, very participatory, with a focus on social learning, helped to build relationships of trust. So not OM itself, as a standalone, but the way in which we practically applied both the concepts and the steps, are important for building trust. (Ceja Andina project, Ecuador).*

#### **Box 10: Building trust among programme stakeholders**

At the start of a sustainable agriculture programme in the Pacific Islands and Territories there were tensions between farmers and extension workers, both of which were boundary partners. Farmers would complain to the programme team about the limited field visits and scarce information they received from the extension workers. Extension workers complained about being isolated in their outposts with insufficient working budgets and limited technical capacity. The programme team decided to involve both groups in developing each other's progress markers during an OM intentional design workshop. While emotions would sometimes rise during the discussions, farmers and extension staff were able to express their complaints and expectations in a 'soft' and less confrontational way through the progress markers. OM provided a framework for dialogue to bring these boundary partners closer together resulting in more trustful relationships. (M&E consultant).

In the Ceja Andina project in Ecuador, municipal environmental units and local environmental NGOs, both boundary partners of the project, were able to discuss their respective expectations during facilitated reflection spaces that were part of the monitoring process. These spaces helped them to develop and reflect on each other's progress markers at the beginning of the initiative. It helped them to develop consensus on the respective compromises they could make towards each other's needs. The progress makers were particularly helpful because they enabled them to visualize how the municipality needed to work with the environmental groups and vice versa (M&E Manager, Ceja Andina Project).

#### **Box 11: OM doesn't offer a guarantee for developing trustful relations**

"In the Student affairs programme of Illinois University, OM wasn't felt to have contributed to much change in terms of trustful relationships between programme staff and boundary partners. Contributing factors of this are the fact that the departments are too much institutionalized and people involved in the programme following up the OM process leave and no one follows it up. There is need for a facilitator to sustain and maintain the OM monitoring process in larger institutions and there is need for support at higher director level". (Director of evaluation and assessment of student affairs).

## 5.2 To what extent is OM perceived useful to strengthen learning about a programme's development results?

### Summary of the findings: How useful is OM to facilitate learning about results

- OM opens up a potential result area by focusing P,M&E on changes in behaviour or relationships of boundary partners. As these changes are situated outside the sphere of control of a programme implementing team they represent potential programme effects or outcomes. Such outcomes would often be missed before OM was introduced as they would have been considered intangible and too difficult to measure.
- Getting insight in the expected and unexpected outcomes at the level of the boundary partners was shown to be helpful for programme stakeholders to develop a more sophisticated and shared understanding of a programme and its objectives.
- The increased insight in a programme's effects through OM was found to motivate programme staff to become more involved in P,M&E but was also found useful for informing the adjustment of programme plans.
- OM offers no guarantee that learning will take place. There is a risk that the initial excitement about the OM framework during the planning stage fizzles out over time and more so if the OM framework is experienced as yet another imposed P,M&E approach, or if it is not in tune with donor requirements or if organisational capacity to support implementation is limited.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 show that respondents to the web survey widely agree with the statement that OM was useful in stimulating learning at output level (31 out of 43 respondents) and outcome level (38 out of 43 respondents). This positive response remained high when asked if OM stimulated learning at an early stage within the programme. 24 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement for learning at output level compared to 31 respondents for learning at outcome level (see Figure 5).

OM was perceived less useful for learning at impact level with 18 out of 43 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to this statement. An even smaller number agreed or strongly agreed (only 10 respondents) when asked about learning at impact level at an early stage in the programme, which is unsurprising since impact level results are most often defined as long-term effects. Respondents who gave no answer or who responded 'not applicable' most likely didn't know the answer. In several cases it was explained that the respondent was not long enough with the programme to have insight in the programme's learning process.

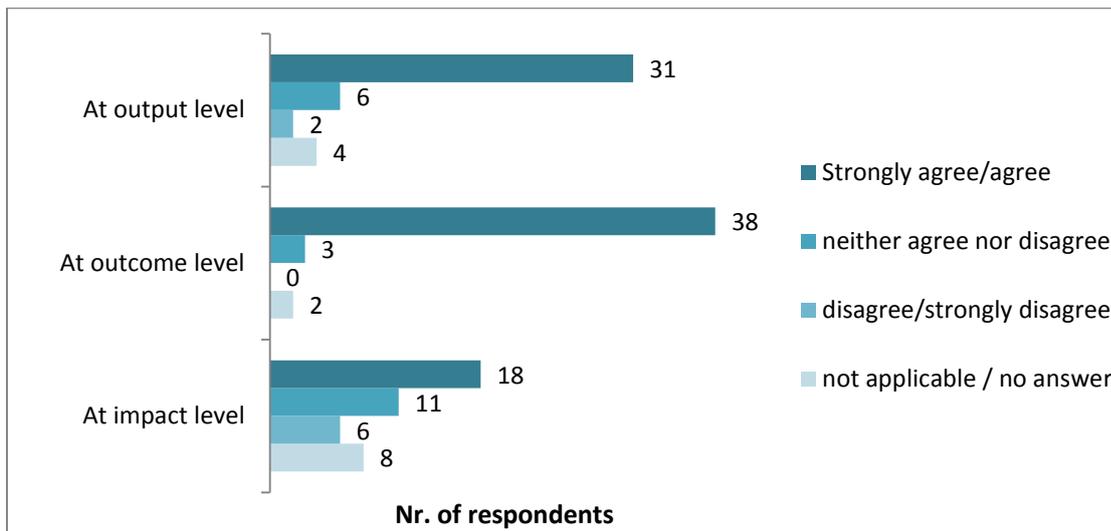


Figure 4: Did OM help stakeholders to learn about the programme's effects (n=43)

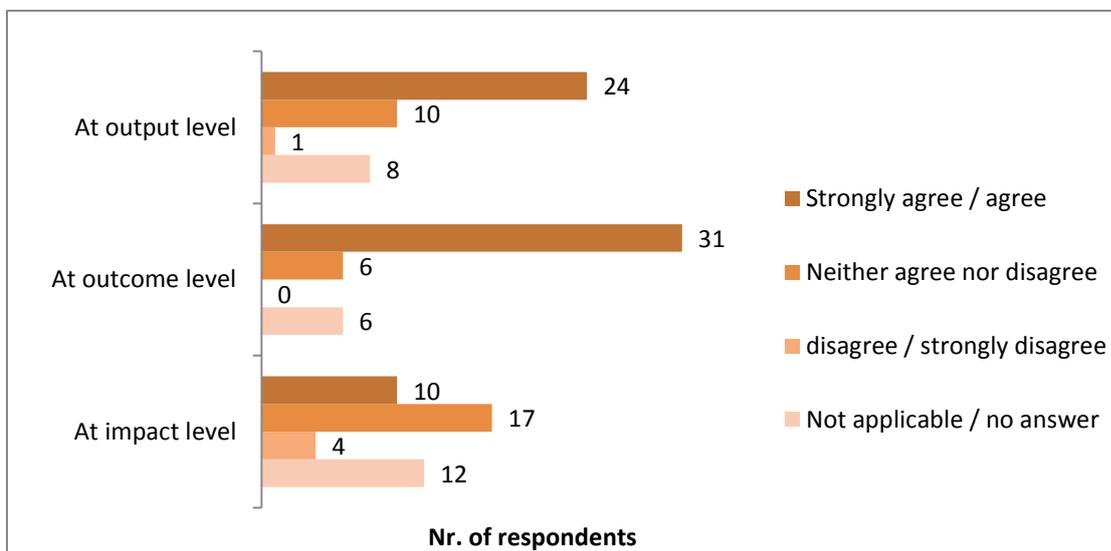


Figure 5: Did OM stimulate learning at an early stage within the programme? (n=43)

The reviewed OM cases, the interviews, and responses to the open survey questions, helped us to identify the following two major reasons that were given by the respondents to explain why OM was perceived helpful for stimulating learning:

- OM was felt to open up a results level where outcomes in the form of changes at the level of the boundary partners can be tracked and learned from, even at an early stage in the programme. This was felt to make P,M&E more realistic and helpful in making strategic choices and motivating programme stakeholders to become involved in P,M&E.
- OM was also seen to provide programmes with a practical approach to monitor and learn from less tangible and unexpected changes at the level of the boundary partners which was often missed before OM was introduced.

We explore these two reasons in the following sections.

### 5.2.1 Towards more realistic P,M&E

Firstly, the tendency of OM to help programmes to focus on change at the level of the boundary partners was felt to be a strong contributing factor towards learning. The following evidence from the cases supports this argument:

- 1) Focusing on changes at the level of the boundary partners opens up a potential result area where small but realistic incremental outcomes such as changes in behaviour or relationships of boundary partners are considered during P,M&E processes. Such outcomes or results would often be missed before OM was introduced (see the examples of EcoZD and the Mongolian management training programme in **Box 12**).

#### **Box 12: Learning from results that remained hidden before the introduction of OM**

An IDRC funded EcoHealth programme (EcoZD) managed by ILRI aims at building capacity in managing zoonotic emerging infectious diseases in Southeast Asia. Monitoring mainly involved tracking cases of livestock diseases and vaccination rates through survey method. After introducing OM, scientists started tracking additional results as changes in practice or behaviour at the level of its boundary partners. In one example in Bali (Indonesia), OM helped the programme to monitor voluntary cadres in the communities who started to organise community awareness programmes about rabies and how to care for life stock. OM helped the team to capture gradual changes of knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of rabies cadres. In addition, through the monitoring process, voluntary cadres were able to express their expectations towards the programme. This in turn helped to align programme activities to these expectations and to build trust between the voluntary cadres and the programme. It needs to be said that the introduction and adoption of OM was a slow process. The P,M&E officer responsible for supporting the OM process had to introduce OM three times to some country teams over a period of one year before implementation started. OM was still at an early stage by the time of the research (M&E officer, *Ecosystem Approaches to the Better Management of Zoonotic Emerging Infectious Diseases in SE Asia* - EcoZD)

In a leadership development programme in Mongolia, objectives of the training programme were initially vague and not specific about the expected change within the managers who were trained. OM helped the programme team to develop what they called 'outcome statements' and 'markers of progress' to clarify and agree on the change they were hoping to see within the managers. While the formal responsibilities of the trainers had already been quite clear before OM was introduced, OM helped to make their 'qualitative' responsibilities (e.g. taking responsibility for the effects of the training) more explicit. This focus on the effects of the trainings became also apparent in the monitoring reports where small, but important, observed changes among the managers got reported. Before the introduction of OM, monitoring reports used to be mainly output oriented (e.g. numbers of trainings and trainees). (M&E consultant, Mongolian Leadership Development Programme)

- 2) Clarifying the small incremental changes that you hope to achieve and tracking these during the P,M&E process can help programme stakeholders to be less vague about the effects they hope

to contribute to. This in turn helps to develop a shared understanding of the programme and its objectives among programme stakeholders. In addition it was shown that this clarity can help programmes to make strategic choices related to the programme's focus and objectives (see the example of AGEH in **Box 13**). In fact, the added value of OM in 'providing programmes with a tool to reflect on what they are achieving' was mentioned by a majority of research participants.

#### **Box 13: Strategic decision making informed by OM based P,M&E**

The Civil Peace Service Programme of AGEH, introduced OM with the aim of addressing two challenges related to P,M&E. Firstly, thematic focus was too wide in the programmes of partner organisations who often worked around a multitude of peace related themes at the same time (e.g. good governance, domestic violence, cattle raids, ....). Secondly, P,M&E was mainly focusing on programme activities and outputs of the partner organisations. These challenges resulted in overambitious plans and low quality monitoring reports where large scale impact pertaining peace in society would be reported as a result of trainings of small numbers of individuals without convincing evidence about this link. The introduction of OM helped partner organisations to become more realistic in their P,M&E. This had two practical implications. Firstly partner organisations of AGEH started to realise that small incremental changes in behaviour of their boundary partners constitute relevant and achievable results towards sustained peace. Boundary partners applying new communication techniques (e.g. nonviolent communication) was mentioned as an example of such incremental change. Secondly it helped partner organisations to take the strategic decision to work with smaller numbers of boundary partners so that they could support them in a more effective way. While this was seen as positive development, AGEH is still facing a challenge to influence its own staff and its back donor to accept small changes as big successes. Discussions about this, internally with AGEH staff and the back donor, were on-going and were said to be slowly moving in the right direction but were not yet concluded. (M&E consultant, AGEH Association for Development Cooperation)

- 3) A third important advantage of OM's focus on small incremental changes in a programme's sphere of direct influence is the fact that such change could actually be observed during the monitoring. Being able to observe these incremental changes or outcomes to which a programme may have contributed was seen to stimulate confidence and participation of programme stakeholders in the P,M&E process and was also felt to contribute towards collaborative learning. This is illustrated by the cases in **Box 14**. In the Global Child Protection Partnership programme a more realistic focus on the programme's influence instead of the 'splashy results', helped the programme to engender ownership. It also strengthened confidence in the P,M&E process as programme stakeholders were able to observe changes in behaviour in the programme's boundary partners. A second case example in **Box 13** shows how ownership for P,M&E was strengthened in the 'Food Systems Change' programme by the fact that boundary partners were able to determine their own capacity development process which was monitored in a participatory way. The changes referred to in both cases represent results at outcome level and illustrate how OM helps a programme's monitoring system to go beyond

output monitoring (i.e. monitoring programme activities) but instead focus on the effects to which a programme contributes.

**Box 14: OM contributing towards strengthened ownership for P,M&E**

“OM resonated well with our existing M&E approach where children and young people play a central role. Building a shared vision and progress markers together with our boundary partners [including young people and youth] and working on a common objective was a good way to build trust. OM provided opportunities to get to know people better and to think more strategically about our influence instead of the big splashy results. OM helped us to understand social change as a dynamic process and made us think more about M&E of the programme. If you can frame your indicators and progress markers in tangible behaviours and people can observe that, then people get more confident. This helps to engender appropriation and ownership in the work we are doing. We are also open to self-criticism and this also helps to strengthen ownership.”  
(Programme Officer, Global Child Protection Partnership Programme).

“Looking through the lens of capacity development of partners to work towards the vision, is a very respectful way to work with the boundary partners. It helps to mobilize the potential of the partners and it is not as much the agenda of the project imposing things. There was no specific predetermined model; therefore they could determine their own change process. The OM framework was developed step by step together and this helped to build respect. There is a tendency though that along the way campus coordinators lose focus on who they are trying to influence. OM then gives a framework to come back to focus, but at the same time allowing to redesign the programme as they bring other opportunities to the table. So there is a structure which also allows flexibility  
(M&E consultant, Food Systems Change Project, Canada).

It needs to be stressed though, that OM by itself does not guarantee ownership for P,M&E among programme stakeholders nor that collaborative learning will take place. In response to the question if there were any factors hampering the OM process, 6 of the 43 survey respondents referred to resistance from colleagues or partners who saw OM as yet another P,M&E system imposed on them. Also the difficulty of reconciling OM with existing donor requirements was seen as a challenge by 11 respondents. Furthermore, limited organisational capacity in terms of time, resources, skills or high turnover of people involved in the programme was mentioned as a limiting factor by 12 respondents. As we will see later, in several cases it was mentioned that initial excitement about the OM framework during the planning stage fizzled out over time leaving the M&E person as the only person being in charge of the learning from the monitoring data. In another case, OM based monitoring was experienced as too heavy, resulting in boundary partners not being very keen to stay involved in the P,M&E process.

### **5.2.2 Learning from less tangible and unexpected changes**

A second reason that respondents gave for OM’s potential to stimulate learning was OM’s focus on changes in behaviour and relationships which gave programmes a practical methodology to monitor and learn from less tangible and unexpected changes at the level of the boundary partners. This was explicitly mentioned as an added value in programmes working around peace building, capacity

development and advocacy. This corresponds with the positive response in the survey to the question if OM had helped to track effects that are difficult to quantify or unexpected (see Figure 6 & Figure 7).

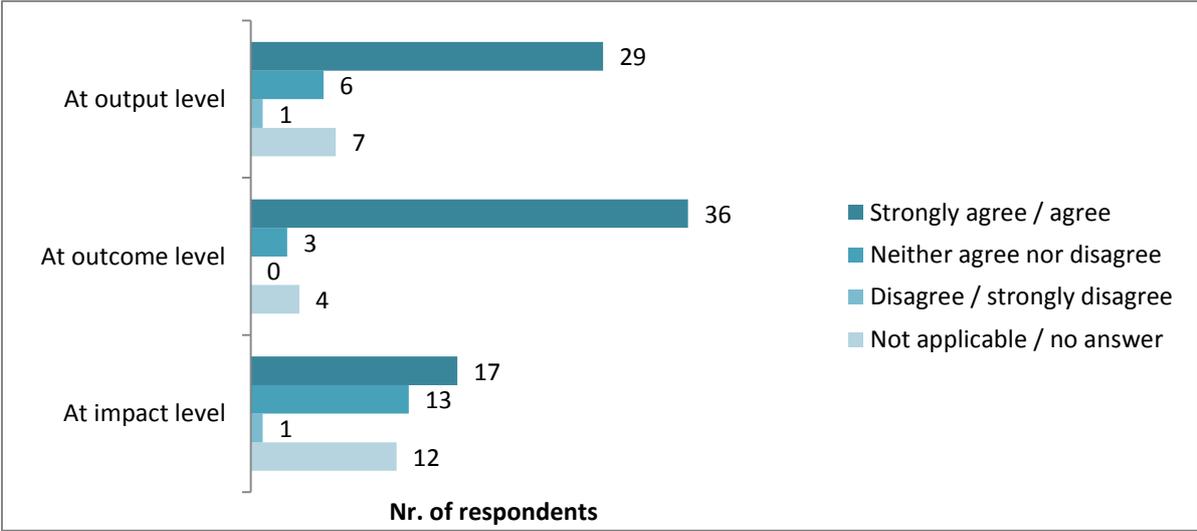


Figure 6: Has OM helped to track effects that are difficult to quantify? (n=43)

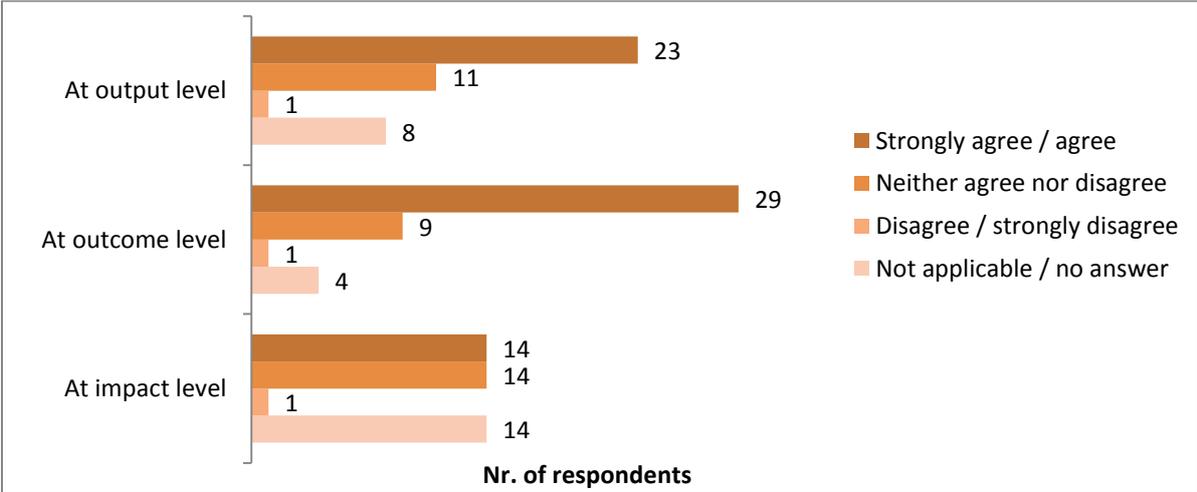


Figure 7: Has OM helped stakeholders to learn about unexpected programme effects? (n=43)

**Box 15** illustrates an example of a change in behaviour of policy makers in the Global Water Partnership network. An example of an unexpected change in the Pacific Food Security programme is given in text **Box 16**.

### **Box 15: Example of observed change in behaviour of policy makers**

The Global Water Partnership uses ‘outcome harvesting’, an evaluation method inspired by outcome mapping that tracks and describes outcomes as changes in the behaviour, practice, policy or relationships of social actors (Wilson-Grau & Britt, 2012). The example below illustrates such an outcome, described in terms of what happened, its relevance and how it relates to the activities of the programme.

- “On 8 September 2009, officials representing key Vietnamese government organizations agreed to adopt a recommendation on strengthening River Basin organisation in Vietnam following an Integrated Water Resource Management approach in basins in order to implement the new Government Decree No. 120/2008/ NĐ-CP on River Basin Management;”
- “The recommendation was adopted by government officials after having discussion in a Dialogue on River Basin Management in Vietnam organized by GWP’s affiliate, the Vietnamese Water Partnership (VNWP) on 8th September 2009 in Nui Coc, Thai Nguyen Province where the results of several analyses and studies conducted by VNWP and other parties had been reported.”

Interestingly, there was a tendency among GWP regional secretariats to look for immediate outcomes that were a direct result of the activities that were carried out in the previous six months. For example, a regional or country water partnership would carry out a water resource management event and then look to see if the event led to changes in policies or practices, as in the above mentioned example from Vietnam. The problem was that outcomes often take many more months or years to materialize and thus outcomes that were not directly related to recent GWP activities (i.e. activities funded by the GWP in the past six months) would be missed and not reported nor learned from. (M&E consultant, Global Water Partnership)

### **Box 16: Learning from unexpected changes**

One of the love to see progress markers for the targeted villages in the Pacific Food Security programme reads as follows: “sharing lessons and experiences with the other villages”. It was an unexpected surprise for the programme team to learn during the monitoring process that it was not the targeted village communities that took the initiative to share experiences but instead the surrounding villages invited them to come and share new technologies for improving their agriculture production. This happened without any support from the programme. (M&E consultant, Sustainable Agriculture Programme - Pacific Islands and Territories)

### 5.3 To what extent is OM perceived useful to satisfy different accountability needs

**Summary of the findings: How useful is OM for helping to satisfy accountability needs?**

- In relation to satisfying upward accountability needs, OM was considered useful in the sense that it helped programmes to enrich their reports to donors. It allowed them to include information about outcomes as changes in the boundary partners. There were also indications that OM was helpful to report better on how outcomes were obtained and how the programme was able to contribute to them. However, monitoring information obtained by OM was not always sufficient to satisfy information needs of donors especially if they required more quantitative information. In such case, OM had to be complemented with other P,M&E approaches.
- The fact that OM gives a framework to help clarify roles and expectations of programme stakeholders as well as stimulate the involvement of the boundary partners in the monitoring process was felt by research respondents to contribute to satisfying the information needs of the boundary partners. At the same time, regular follow up and on-going support for the monitoring process by programme staff is essential for sustaining the involvement of boundary partners.
- There was only limited evidence that OM helped a programme to satisfy downward accountability needs of the final beneficiaries. In those cases where downward accountability was stimulated, other approaches beyond OM were used.

Figure 8 shows that respondents to the web survey perceive OM as a helpful approach to strengthen several dimensions of accountability. A majority of the respondents find OM helpful for satisfying information needs of boundary partners (27 out of 43 respondents) and to a somewhat lesser extent the information needs of donors (25 respondents). When asked about OM’s usefulness to satisfy information needs of the final beneficiaries, there was less agreement. Only 13 respondents strongly agreed or agreed to this statement while 5 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

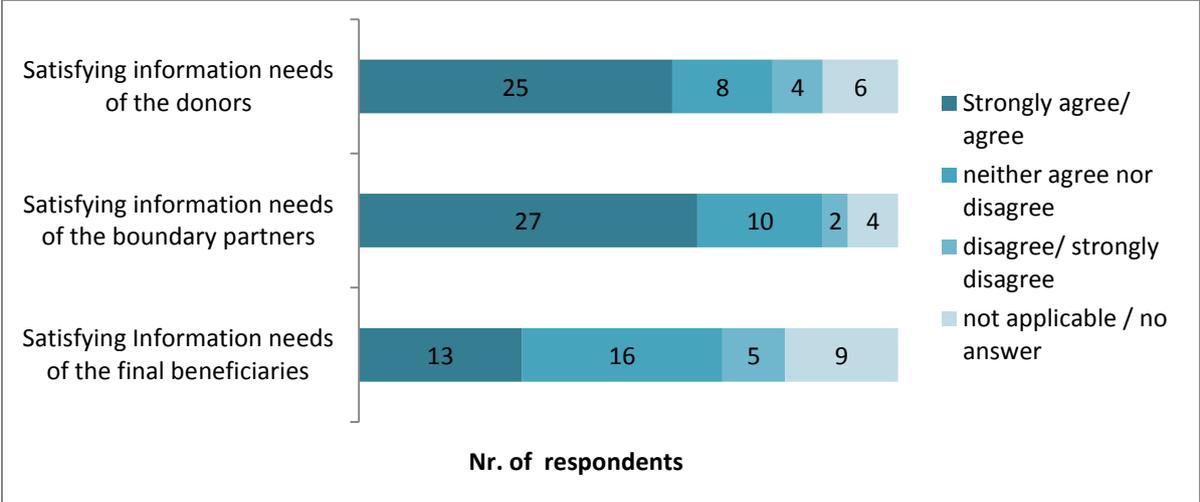


Figure 8: To what extent did OM help strengthen processes of accountability? (n=43)

The answers to the open questions in the web survey and the results from the interviews and case studies help us to explain the trends shown in Figure 8.

### 5.3.1 To what extent does OM help to satisfy information needs of the donors?

Respondents who replied positively to this question, referred to the fact that OM had helped them to improve the quality of their reports to the donors. OM's specific added value in this regards was said to lay in the following three advantages (see also **Box 17**):

- OM allows for a wider variety of results to report on during the monitoring process, including changes in behaviour, practice and relationships. Monitoring reports therefore become more focused on a programme's outcomes instead of its outputs.
- OM was felt to allow programmes to report on how outcomes were obtained and how the programme was able to contribute to them.
- OM can complement other P,M&E approaches that are mandated by the donor. This addresses the issue that OM information is useful but not always sufficient to satisfy information needs of the donors (see the example of Light For The World in **Box 18**).

#### **Box 17: How can OM help to satisfy donors' information needs?**

"By using and discussing markers of progress with the group of Mongolian trainers on a continuous basis, many illustrative examples came out that provided a good narrative 'proof' of results that could be reported to donors and combined with the more quantitative information asked for. " (M&E consultant, Mongolian Leadership Development Programme).

#### **Box 18: Complementing OM with other already existing P,M&E approaches**

"To date LIGHT FOR THE WORLD has been satisfied with the progress being made and the learning taking place [through using OM] in its inclusive education pilot project in Cambodia. For a next phase there is a need to harness the monitoring system more solidly to not only depend on the anecdotal success stories, but combine qualitative and quantitative information to build a better case for inclusive education in Cambodia. While there are already monitoring systems present that are owned by different stakeholders, it is more a matter of matching them and share the available information for the purpose of informed decision-making" (programme officer, Light for the World).

We also learned from the survey responses that OM by itself does not provide a guarantee that donors' information needs will be met. Survey respondents who experienced such situations referred to the fact that donors do not always want information about capacity development. Also donors' appetite for quantitative information left some respondents doubtful about OM's usefulness for upward accountability and points to their need to use OM in combination with other approaches. It was also reported that considerable effort is needed to translate OM monitoring information into information that donors need. The following quotes illustrate these concerns:

- “It is quite a puzzle but yes - it asks creativity from the middle persons to translate OM results into info needs of donors but it is possible” (respondent web survey)
- “Difficult to say. Donors love sentences like ‘150 teachers were trained and use now xy approach’, while we evaluators think that saying that schools have adopted a new approach to teaching and there is a reform debate underway is the key change. I guess the latter is less catchy and thus less sexy than ‘quantifying outputs’.”(respondent web survey)
- “Use of Outcome Mapping as the only method of planning, monitoring and evaluation blocked us to provide donors quantitative information they need” (respondent web survey)

**Box 19** illustrates two examples of programmes that developed innovative ways of visualizing OM monitoring information. This visualization was found useful for communication and reporting in the Global Water Partnership network. In the Violence against Women Prevention programme the visuals were used to support reflection during monitoring meetings.

### 5.3.2 To what extent does OM help to satisfy information needs of the Boundary partners?

As we saw before, OM can help a programme team and their partners to clarify respective roles and expectations. This, and the fact that OM stimulates involvement of the boundary partners in the monitoring process were mentioned as reasons why OM can help to satisfy the information needs of the boundary partners.

- *“Programme is forced to consult boundary partners regularly as a result of using OM” (respondent web survey)*
- *“When roles of stakeholders are clear, you can compare roles and responsibilities of others and this clarity contributes to decision making in transparent ways. E.g. in a peace education project in Rwanda the project team works with students and teachers in schools. It was however not clear who is influencing who and what is the relationship of the implementing team with the target groups. Through the use of OM it became clear that students were only indirectly influenced by the project through the teachers. This insight helped to adjust project activities that correspond better to the needs of the teachers.”(M&E consultant, AGEH)*

However, OM by itself doesn’t guarantee active nor sustained involvement of boundary partners in the monitoring process. There is always the risk that the monitoring commitments, enthusiastically agreed to during an Outcome Mapping planning workshop, move off the radar once the boundary partners and programme staff are submerged again in the day to day activities of their organisations.

A majority of the cases reviewed in the research demonstrated that regular follow up and on-going support for the monitoring process by programme staff is essential for sustaining the involvement of boundary partners. This is illustrated in **Box 20** where boundary partners in a capacity development project supported by World Solidarity Belgium had basically forgotten about their progress markers 6 months after the initial OM workshop. It required the initiative of programme staff from the supporting organization to invite boundary partners to a reflection meeting where progress according to the progress markers was discussed, for the monitoring process to get started.

### Box 19: Innovative ways to visualize OM information

The Global Water Partnership network developed a set of progress markers for each of the four goals of the programme. Observed change according to the progress markers is tracked and scored on an annual basis on a four-point scale (Figure 9). Green refers to significant change, yellow means change is under way and pink refers to the beginning of change. The resulting pie diagrams are then included in the monitoring report along with narrative information. Aggregated scores from different regions are also used to visualize change over time for each goal.



Figure 9: Extract from GWP monitoring report showing observed change during a monitoring cycle

The Violence against Women Prevention Programme in Colombia combines Most Significant Change (Davies & Dart, 2005) and Outcome Mapping in their P,M&E system. They visualize changes in the behaviour of mayors by sharing stories of observed changes. Each observed change in behaviour is visualised on a graph by a sphere as shown in Figure 10 The size of the spheres corresponds to the number of stories that were seen to relate to a specific change. The spheres towards the bottom of the graph correspond with changes that are more short-term and easier to achieve (i.e. expect to see progress markers) whereas the spheres towards the top of the diagram represent deeper change (love to see progress markers). By visualizing the quantity of stories, the women in the networks realised that more needed to be done to influence changes in infrastructure, allocation of financial resources and women’s access to justice. (Cordaid Colombia ‘Violence against Women’ programme case report).

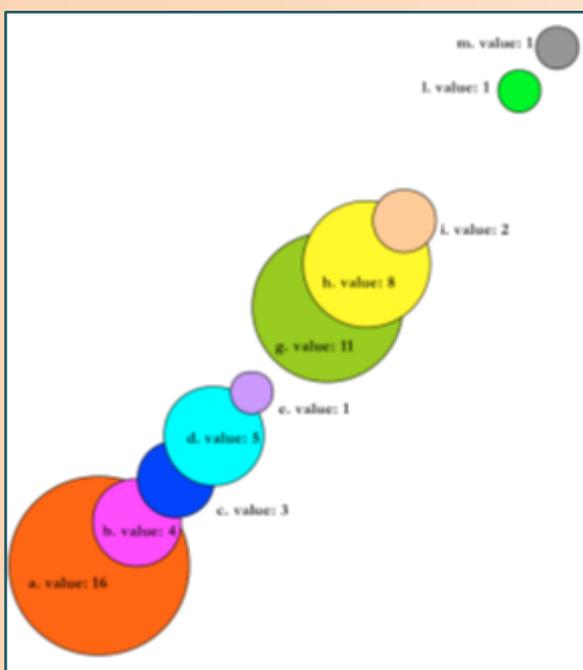


Figure 10: Visualization of reported changes at the level of the city mayors in the Violence against Women Prevention Programme, Colombia.

**Box 20: It takes an effort to sustain the involvement of boundary partners in the P,M&E process**

In a capacity development pilot project supported by World Solidarity Belgium, civil society organisations in Cambodia had developed sets of progress markers to map their own capacity development process. After the initial M&E planning workshop in June 2011 with Cambodian partner organisations, no follow up had been done for more than half a year. This was partly due to changes in staff within World Solidarity during that time. When the World Solidarity coordinator called for a monitoring meeting in April 2012, it became clear that partner organizations had as good as forgotten about the M&E system for capacity development. They couldn't even recall the domains of capacity development they had selected during the M&E workshop in 2011 nor their progress markers and no monitoring had been done. Eventually a first monitoring meeting was organized in June 2012 involving staff from the partner organisations and the World Solidarity coordinator. The progress markers were used as a basis for dialogue and reflection during the meeting. Interestingly, the progress maker monitoring tool helped to provide focus but at the same time, the conversation didn't strictly follow the progress markers only. Participants of the meeting discussed those issues that they found important and relevant in relation to their own capacity development process. Hence information about the progress markers as well as useful information not linked to specific progress markers emerged. Annex 4 shows an extract from the progress markers monitoring tool that was completed during the monitoring meeting with one of the Cambodian partner organisations. (World Solidarity Case report).

Also, sometimes it can be difficult to share certain information with boundary partners especially sensitive internal information. This was given as reason by one of the web survey respondents who disagreed with the question if OM helped to satisfy the information needs of the boundary partners.

In addition, several research participants referred to the fact that OM's contribution to a deeper understanding of expectations, roles and responsibilities of the boundary partners was limited to the implementing team. This is sometimes unavoidable when it is politically difficult to involve boundary partners in the P,M&E process or in situations where boundary partners are the subject of lobby or advocacy. This situation is illustrated in **Box 21** by the Teacher Mobilisation Programme in Indonesia.

### **Box 21: When not to involve boundary partners**

In a teacher mobilization programme in Indonesia, supported by an Indonesian foundation, a two-layered OM system was developed. Layer one consists of the teachers that are sent out by the foundation and who are the boundary partners of the foundation programme staff. Layer two consists of the school teachers, school directors, local governments and local communities who are the boundary partners of the teachers that are sent out. The final beneficiaries are the pupils. Progress Markers developed for the teachers who are sent out helped to clarify what the foundation implementing team is expecting of the teachers as they are placed in their schools. The progress markers for the second level boundary partners are mainly developed by the foundation staff. This however helped to clarify what the foundation, through the sending out of teachers, hopes to achieve within the schools, communities and local government. At this second OM level, it was difficult for the foundation staff to engage with the boundary partners like school directors and local government officials. Also progress markers were not easily discussed because the foundation didn't want to jeopardise their relationships with these second level boundary partners. It was more of an advocacy set up and progress markers at the second level provided an analytic framework for the foundation staff and teachers to learn about potential effects that the programme is contributing to. (Teacher Mobilization Programme, Indonesia)

### **5.3.3 To what extent does OM help to satisfy information needs of the final beneficiaries?**

From the responses to the web survey we learn that OM was not particularly found helpful for satisfying downward accountability in those programmes where there is no direct contact between the programme team and its final beneficiaries. While one respondent saw this as a weakness of OM, several other respondents gave examples of how they went beyond the OM approach to stimulate downward accountability (see **Box 22**). This illustrates the fact that any P,M&E approach should serve a programme's specific purpose. If the purpose is to ensure downward accountability and if OM doesn't contribute to this, then it remains the responsibility of the programme to adapt OM or to utilise other approaches.

### **Box 22: Going beyond the OM tools and methods to strengthen downward accountability**

"The beneficiary community has been involved in program activities, developing the outputs and monitoring the outcomes. Also platform meetings with stakeholders beyond the boundary partners have been organized to share and discuss monitoring information." (Ceja Andina project).

## 5.4 To what extent is OM perceived useful to strengthen the adaptive capacity of programme stakeholders?

### Summary of the findings: How useful is OM to strengthen a programme's adaptive capacity?

- OM was mainly perceived helpful for enhancing a programme's adaptive capacity through its potential to stimulate more reflection meetings, to improve the quality of the reflection process itself and the quality of the collection and analysis of monitoring data.
- The observation that increased dialogue and reflection may occur at an informal level points towards the need to nurture and support such informal learning and reflection processes.
- Limited facilitation skills, resources and time to support dialogue and reflection processes is mentioned by research respondents as an important limiting factor.

Figure 11 shows that a majority of respondents to the web survey perceive OM as useful for strengthening elements of adaptive capacity of programme stakeholders. The reasons for their responses as well as the frequency of particular types of reasons are illustrated in Table 1.

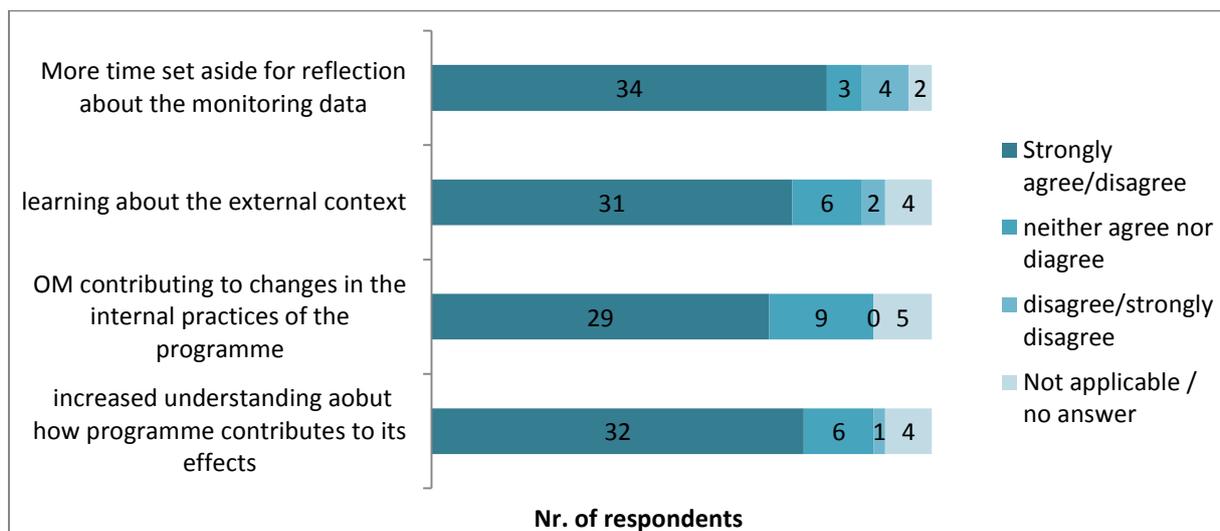


Figure 11: How has OM helped to strengthen elements of adaptive capacity (n=43)

Setting aside time for reflection	Contributing to changes in the internal practices of the programme
<p><b>Strongly agreed/agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. OM inspired the organization of more monitoring and reflection meetings (x7)</li> <li>ii. OM tools (e.g. progress markers &amp; outcome journals) helped reflection and learning (x1)</li> <li>iii. OM stimulating collaborative reflection resulting in concerted action (x2)</li> <li>iv. OM helping to reinforce a learning culture already in place (x2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Disagreed/strongly disagreed/Not applicable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v. Reflection falling off the radar because of too much focusing on service delivery (x1)</li> <li>vi. Too early to tell since OM implementation had only started (x2)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strongly agreed/agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Changes in P,M&amp;E practice through adoption of elements of OM (x5) (e.g. more reflection meeting, more focus on learning, better recording of monitoring information, use of different data collection tools such as field journals, ....)</li> <li>ii. More emphasis on capacity development (x2)</li> <li>iii. Wider participation in the P,M&amp;E process (1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Disagreed/strongly disagreed/Not applicable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Too early to tell (x5)</li> <li>v. We didn't use organizational practices tool adequately (x1)</li> </ul>
Learning about the external context	Increased understanding about how the programme contributed to its effects
<p><b>Strongly agreed/agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Stakeholder analysis process according to the OM method stimulated reflection on external context (x3)</li> <li>ii. Clarification of roles of programme stakeholders through OM helped to gain insight in the external context. (x2)</li> <li>iii. Reflection on the effects of different actors on the behaviour of boundary partners helped to learn about the external context. (x1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Disagreed/strongly disagreed/Not applicable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Not specifically the result of OM as other approaches were used in combination with OM (x1)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strongly agreed/agreed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Better understanding of the project's influence on the use of evidence in boundary partner's policy and decision making processes (x1)</li> <li>ii. Better insight in how the project influences boundary partners recognition and uptake of their roles towards specific service delivery (x3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Disagreed/strongly disagreed/Not applicable</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Too early to tell (x5)</li> <li>iv. Programme team is still struggling with attributing behavioural change (of the boundary partners) to their efforts. (x1)</li> </ul>

*Table 1: Summary of reasons given by survey respondents for their answers related to adaptive capacity*

Judging from Table 1 we see that OM, in a considerable number of cases, was felt to stimulate critical reflection in terms of more frequent reflection meetings and increased quality of the reflection process itself. In addition, OM's contribution to changes in a programme's internal practices was reported by respondents to relate to innovations in P,M&E practice through the adoption of OM principles (e.g. stronger focus on learning & capacity development and wider participation in the P,M&E process) and tools (e.g. outcome journals as instruments for data collection). Furthermore, OM's added value for helping programmes to learn about the external context was explained by OM's particular focus on effects as changes in the behaviour of boundary partners and its usefulness to help programme stakeholders to discuss and clarify their roles and responsibilities. Finally, the perception that OM helped to increase programme stakeholders' understanding about how the programme contributes to its effects was explained by the fact that OM contributed to better insights in how the programme was able to influence behaviour change in the boundary partners.

However, from the survey respondents who responded less positively to the adaptive capacity statements and from the results of the interviews and the cases studies, a more nuanced picture emerges. This shows again that OM by itself will not guarantee that the adaptive capacity of programme stakeholders will increase. It also helps us to understand some of the limiting factors that organisations may face when trying to implement OM. The following challenges that were reported in relation to OM and its potential to strengthen adaptive capacity allow us to explain why this is the case:

1. An unavoidable reality with any actor focused and participatory P,M&E approach is that you somehow need to engage with the actors during the programme. Bringing various actors together and involving them in OM based P,M&E cycles takes time and resources. As a result, a considerable level of commitment and leadership is required to support and facilitate OM based P,M&E processes and reflection moments at regular intervals during a programme. To a certain extent, this leadership and commitment is needed within the different stakeholders involved, including for example supporting organisations as well as their boundary partners. Limited commitment to the OM based P,M&E process was mentioned as a considerable challenge in several cases. It was not uncommon that strong commitment at the planning stage would fiddle out during the course of the programme resulting in the OM process being mainly in the hands of the (“lonely”) M&E officer. This was compounded in cases where there was rapid turnover of staff and where the OM framework and P,M&E system had to be continuously explained during the lifetime of the programme. The perception that OM based M&E processes were too involving in terms of meetings and data collection was also mentioned as a contributing factor to this challenge.
2. Reflection and learning doesn’t always happen in the form of formalized spaces or meetings. In two cases that had been implementing OM for more than one year, there was no specific evidence of formal OM based monitoring and reflection processes taking off after the introduction of OM. Instead, there was evidence that OM had inspired informal reflection and learning processes as programme staff became more sensitive and focused on the changes in the boundary partners they were supporting and started to dialogue more about this in an informal way. This is illustrated in **Box 23** by the Food Security Programme in the Pacific Islands, Countries and Territories.

**Box 23: Strengthening informal learning processes through OM**

Using the full OM monitoring process was seen to be too time consuming and heavy in this programme. Journal keeping was not realistic in view of the short project life cycle at the community level. Therefore agricultural programme staff would use the progress markers as a reference to help them report on the logframe indicators and provide more detailed monitoring information. There was a good team leader who could produce quality reports from field information. At the same time, the M&E consultant and national programme staff being involved in the OM process now talked much more about the changes in behaviour and attitudes that need to happen and how OM helped with this. This happened in an informal way but represented an important shift for the technical staff who normally didn’t think much about issues of changes in behaviour and attitude. (Food Security Programme in the Pacific Islands, Countries and Territories).

3. The lack of capacity to facilitate OM based P,M&E processes was a challenge in various cases. While OM provides a monitoring framework that stimulates dialogue and critical reflection there is need for skilful facilitation of such processes. Capacity is also needed to adapt and contextualise OM jargon and tools (e.g. outcome and strategy journals) to suit specific contexts. A number of research respondents who acted as advisors or consultants expressed their concern about the sustainability of the OM process and more specifically the quality of the critical reflection about the monitoring data if they would no longer be there to support the OM process.

## 6 Conclusions

The main aim of this research was to explore to what extent OM was perceived useful for helping programmes that are supporting complex change processes, to become more effective and to meet the learning and information needs of different programme stakeholders. This exploration was guided by four research questions that allowed us to look at how OM was found useful to help programmes: 1) deal with multiple actors, 2) learn about development results, 3) satisfy different accountability needs and 4) strengthen their adaptive capacity.

Judging from the positive responses to the web-survey and the interviews, OM emerges as an actor focused P,M&E approach that has indeed the potential to help programmes deal more effectively with complex change. However, beyond establishing 'if' OM was helpful, the added value of this research lies particularly in gaining a better understanding of 'why' and 'how' OM has or has not been useful.

The metaphor of the human body, used by Lipson and Hunt (2006) to describe the dimensions of capacity development, helps us to explain some important characteristics of OM and conditions that determine the success and therefore the usefulness of OM for helping organisations to deal with complex change.



**Head:** Agenda and commitment for OM

**Spine:** Values and principles of OM

**Arms:** Concepts, methods, tools of OM

**Legs:** Support and resources for the implementation of OM

**The head** represents the agenda for the OM process and relates to the question 'why' you do P,M&E. Based on the research data we see that a strong learning agenda is an inherent characteristic of those programmes where OM is found useful for dealing with complex change. This learning agenda

was characterised by an explicit aim to learn from change at the level of the boundary partners and a recognition that change at this level represents an important result area to learn from. The mandate for using OM was furthermore strengthened by the fact that OM's focus on the small incremental results at the level of the boundary partners didn't only contribute to more realistic planning and strategizing but also in programme stakeholders becoming more focused on a programme's outcomes instead of a programme's activities (outputs). This in turn contributed to improved upward accountability to donors due to improved reporting on a programme's effects or results and how these effects were obtained. From the study we learn that a strong agenda or mandate for OM is essential as it helps to ensure the necessary resources and time for its implementation. Without such mandate there is a considerable risk that the OM process dies down over time.

**The spine** represents the values and principles that underpin the OM process such as a strong commitment towards participation of programme stakeholders, collaborative learning and social interaction and dialogue. An important added value of OM as evidenced by the majority of research participants is the fact that OM comes with practical tools and concepts (e.g. spheres of influence, boundary partners, progress markers, outcome journals) that allow programmes to translate OM's underlying principles into practice. The actor centred P,M&E framework that OM provides, helps programmes to analyse, discuss and clarify the expectations, roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved in a programme. This clarity was shown to result in 'actor focused theories of change' that made more sense to programme stakeholders than the programme intervention logics that were available before OM was introduced. In addition OM's actor focus was also shown to stimulate dialogue and conversation among stakeholders, which helped to strengthen a shared understanding about the programme and contributed to more trustful relationships and enhanced a programme's accountability to its boundary partners. If OM's underpinning principles and values are not nurtured or supported within a programme, OM implementation will be at risk and might degenerate in a mere administrative reporting system with the M&E person being the only one running behind the process.

**The arms** represent the concepts, methods and tools that come with Outcome Mapping. As we already saw above, a strong added value of OM as mentioned by the research respondents is that it comes with practical tools, methods and concepts that allow programmes to translate the principles and learning agenda of OM into practice. However, limited capacity to customize the OM concepts to suit the particular context and to facilitate the OM process emerged as a considerable challenge in the research. Also the lack of specific skills to facilitate processes of dialogue and reflection were seen as a challenge by various research participants.

**The legs** represent the actual implementation of the OM process and the support and resources that are available for this. If a programme wants to do justice to the social character of the OM approach then there is need to provide programme actors with the space and the means to meet, reflect and enter into dialogue. This requires commitment, time and resources. As we saw in the earlier points, the strength of the legs will be determined by the strength of the spine and the head. Weak 'legs' (i.e. lack of time, resources and internal capacity to implement OM) were mentioned as a considerable challenge by various research participants. Addressing this challenge however may require some critical reflection about the head, spine and arms as they determine the strength of the legs and contribute to an enabling environment for OM implementation.

Finally, drawing upon the results of this research, we have summarised the main benefits and challenges of OM for dealing with complex change and how these relate to OM’s principles and values as pointed out by the research respondents, in Figure 12 below. Judging from OM’s benefits mentioned by the research participants, OM offers a promising practical approach for P,M&E that can help organisations to deal with the implications of complexity. However, reaping the benefits of OM will require shifting perceptions of the meaning and value of regular P,M&E practice. Instead of relying on an eventual evaluation for deeper learning about programme results, dealing with complexity through OM will require more ongoing or ‘real-time’ actor-focused and learning centred P,M&E practice involving programme staff and other programme stakeholders.

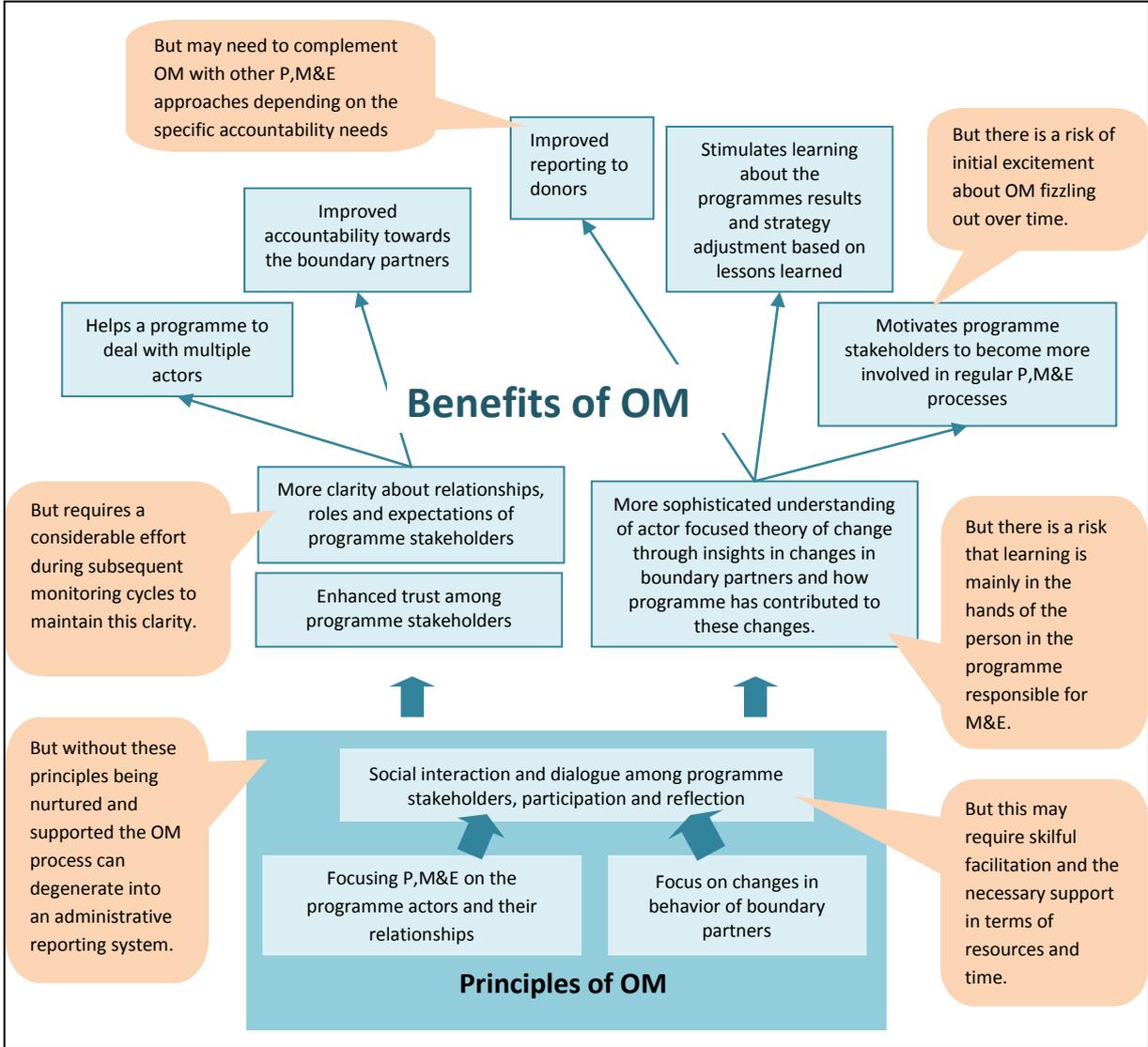


Figure 12: Main principles (lower blue boxes) benefits (upper blue boxes) and challenges (orange boxes) of OM and their relationship with OM’s principles

## 7 Recommendations

In this final chapter, we propose a number of recommendations for practitioners and donors. The recommendations for practitioners are directly based on the research results and are supported by the feedback from the research participants. The recommendations for the donors are informed by the research results but are not directly supported by donor's feedback since few donor representatives responded to the research call. This represents also one of the opportunities for further research, mentioned at the end of this chapter.

### 7.1 Practitioners

- i. **From results based management to results based learning.** This study shows that OM, if implemented well, can provide programmes with a flexible actor- and learning centred P,M&E approach that can help them to learn from results within their spheres of influence and to adapt their strategies and plans accordingly. In addition, the study also shows that OM can help organisations to become accountable and adaptive. OM therefore represents a potential P,M&E approach that organisations can consider to respond to the results agenda through results based learning instead of technocratic results based management. This is especially relevant for programmes that are dealing with processes of complex change.
- ii. **Invest in a learning agenda.** OM provides a framework for regular learning-centred monitoring of programme effects. But OM will not by itself guarantee that this actually happens. A strong learning culture and managerial encouragement to monitor and think critically about results are key. Also, regular monitoring and learning about a programme's results requires a considerable effort in terms of time and financial and logistical resources. Merely training programme staff in Outcome Mapping may be an important step, but by itself will not be enough.
- iii. **Towards methodological diversity.** The existence of planning and reporting formats required by a donor at a strategic level (e.g. logical frameworks) shouldn't stop organisations to experiment with OM at an operational level. A majority of research participants indicated that they used elements of OM to complement their logframe-based P,M&E approach.

### 7.2 Donors

A challenge across a majority of cases reviewed in this research was the fact that the implementation of OM remained a somewhat voluntary affair overseen or pushed by one or a small group of motivated individuals. While we wouldn't want to recommend that policy makers consider making OM a mandatory approach next to the often mandatory logical framework approach, we do see potential in making some of the principles on which OM is based mandatory requirements for receiving subsidies. Programmes can then still have the freedom to use or customize the P,M&E methods and tools that they find most suitable for their context. Making some of OM's principles mandatory could be done in the following ways:

- i. Ask funded programmes that are dealing with complex change processes to demonstrate that they have developed and implement P,M&E systems that are learning-centred and that stimulate formal and informal learning. In addition, ask for specific accounts of how lessons learned were used for programme improvement or for planning.

- ii. Adopt a broader definition of results. This would mean that donors do not only require information about impact (i.e. changes in state or changes at the level of the final beneficiaries) but also recognize changed behaviours or relations among actors directly influenced by a programme, as valuable programme results. The importance of gaining insights in this type of results to strengthen learning among programme stakeholders was an important finding of this research.
- iii. When reviewing funding proposals for programmes that support complex change processes, consider criteria that assess whether the proposals are clear and explicit about the various actors in a programme's sphere of control (i.e. who is responsible for inputs, activities, outputs), spheres of direct influence (direct target groups) and spheres of indirect influence (indirect target groups or/and final beneficiaries). Donors can also show explicit appreciation for programmes that are able to demonstrate a deepened understanding of their theory of change over time, even if this means that the original theory of change has to change. This would mean that donors accept justified shifts in actor focus, based on feedback and learning as a programme progresses. This would help safeguard and promote flexibility in programme planning.
- iv. Allow programmes to use part of the operational budget to facilitate learning centred monitoring activities (e.g. regular reflection meetings with programme stakeholders) and to fine-tune their actor-focused P,M&E design during programme implementation based on the lessons learned during the monitoring process.
- v. Develop the donor staff's knowledge about the basic characteristics of OM, its suitability for specific contexts, and its potential to complement (but not necessary replace) other, more established, approaches.

### 7.3 Opportunities for future research

- i. Representation of donors and boundary partners was limited in this study. Future research could try to get more insight in the perception of these stakeholders about the usefulness of OM.
- ii. More longitudinal case study research about some of the cases participating in this study could provide deeper insight about the added value of using OM for tracking change and learning from it over time.
- iii. A comparative study using the analytic framework employed in this study could provide deeper insights about the added value and suitability of different P,M&E approaches across different contexts.
- iv. Using OM may help organisations to bring the complex story of development to the public. Glennie et al (2012) revealed that there is a considerable appetite among the general public of the United Kingdom for greater understanding of development and for more complex stories of how change and progress happens. "Instead of a simple reassurance that 'aid works', people would like to hear about how and why it works, why it doesn't always work and the reasons aid alone cannot achieve development targets." (ibid, p2). Using OM may help organisations tell this complex story. This is still a hypothesis but offers an interesting opportunity for further research.

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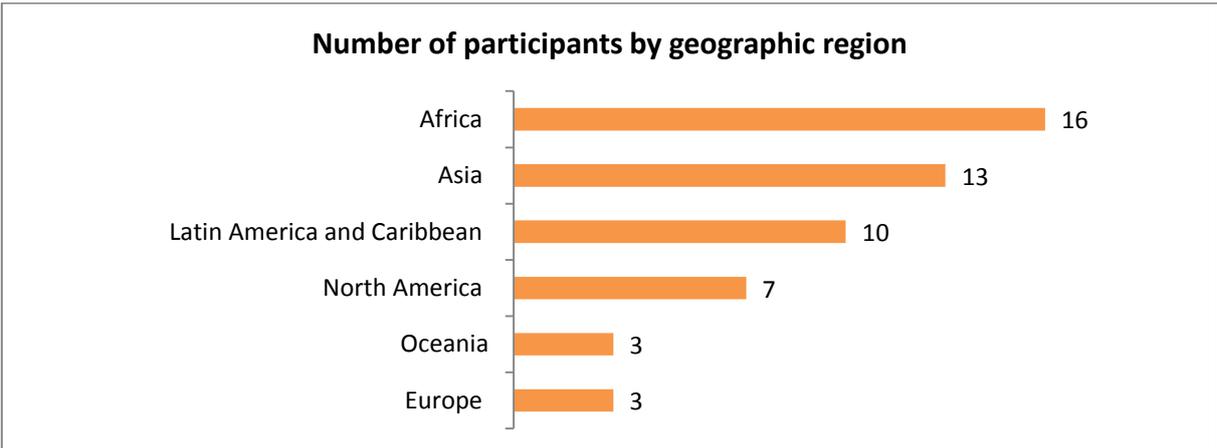
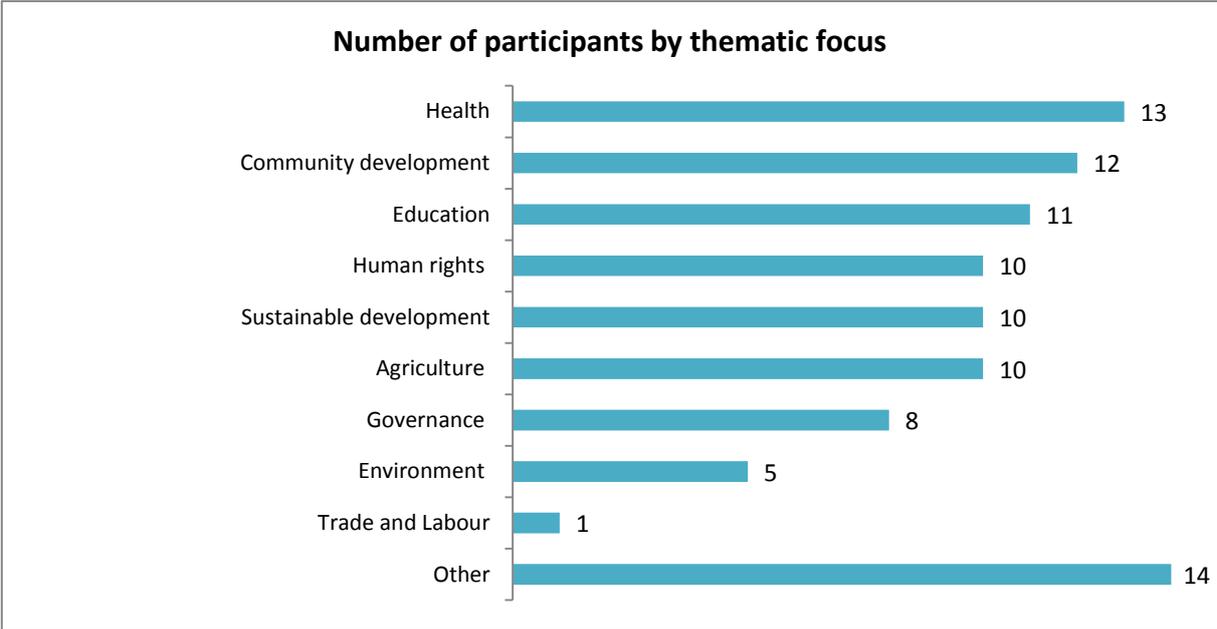
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**Annex 1: General information about the survey respondents**

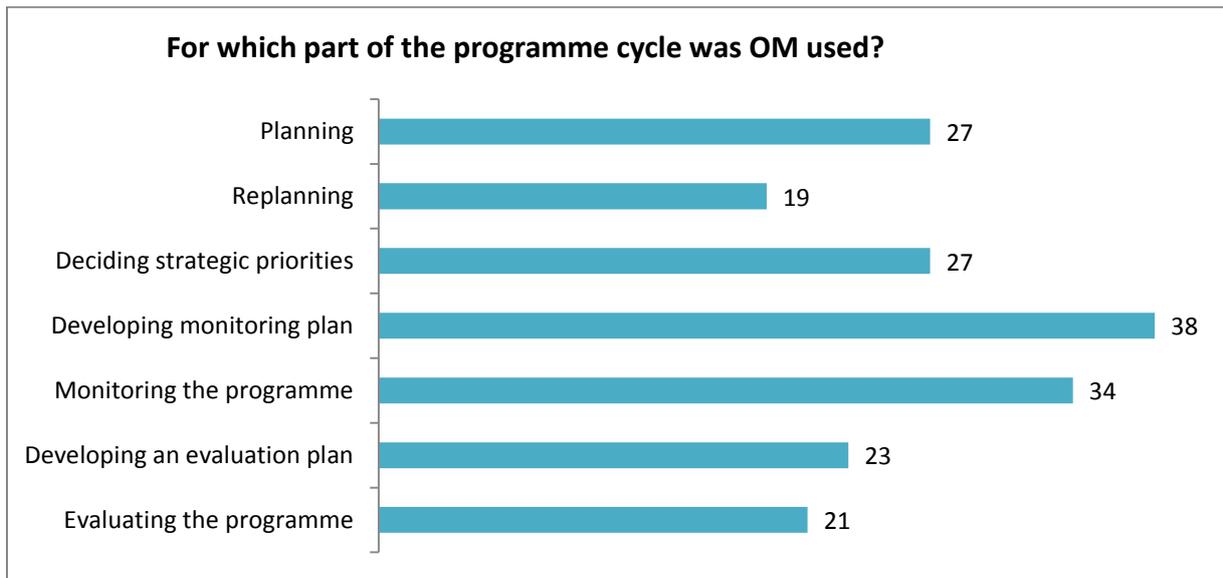
**1. Thematic focus and Geographic location of respondents**



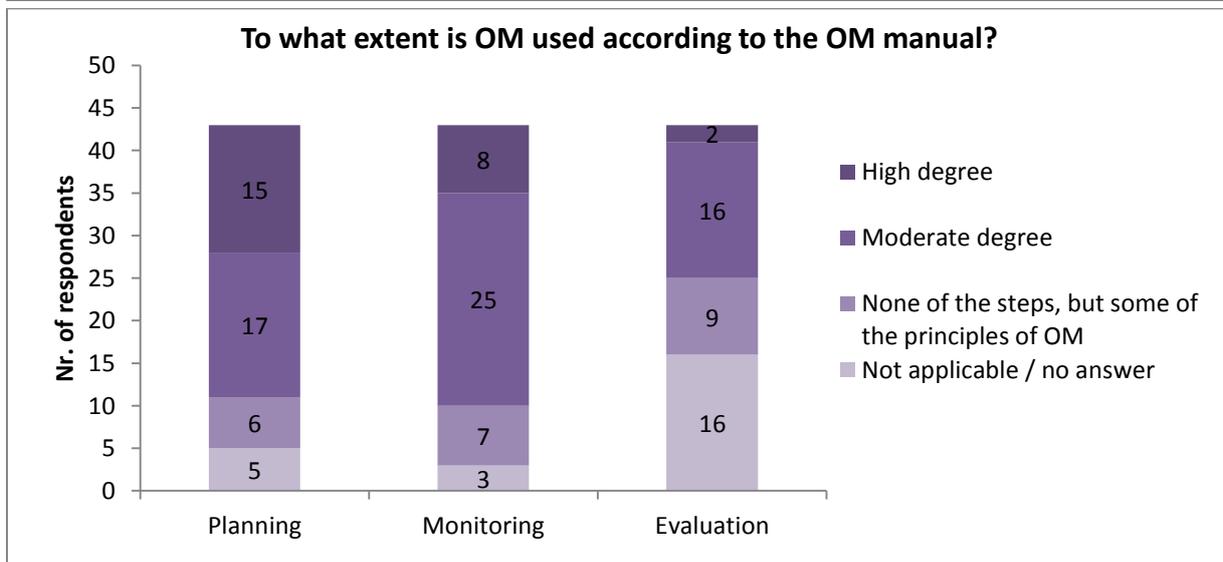
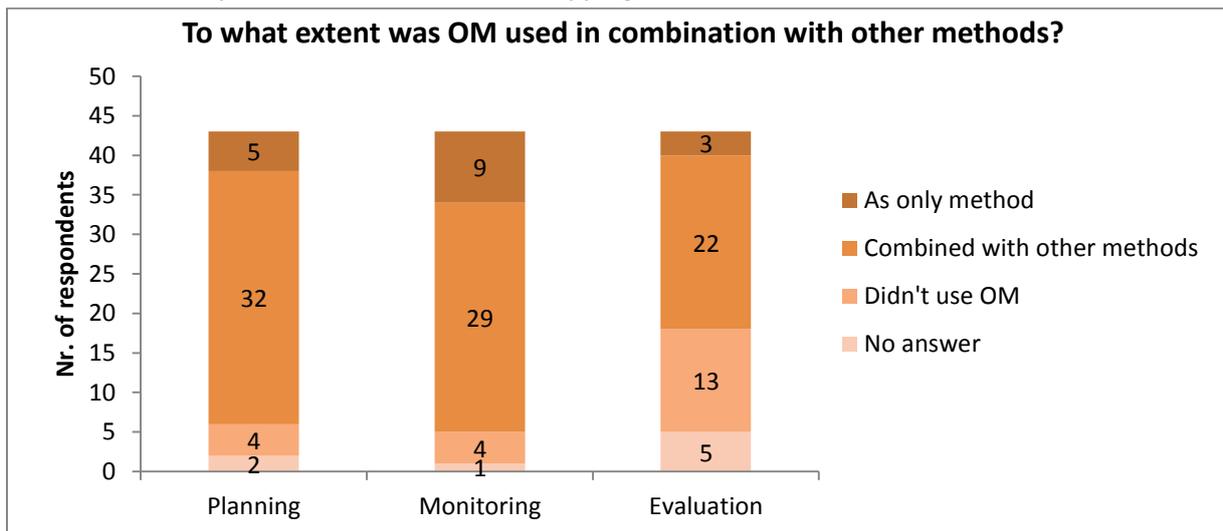
**2. Respondents role in the programme**



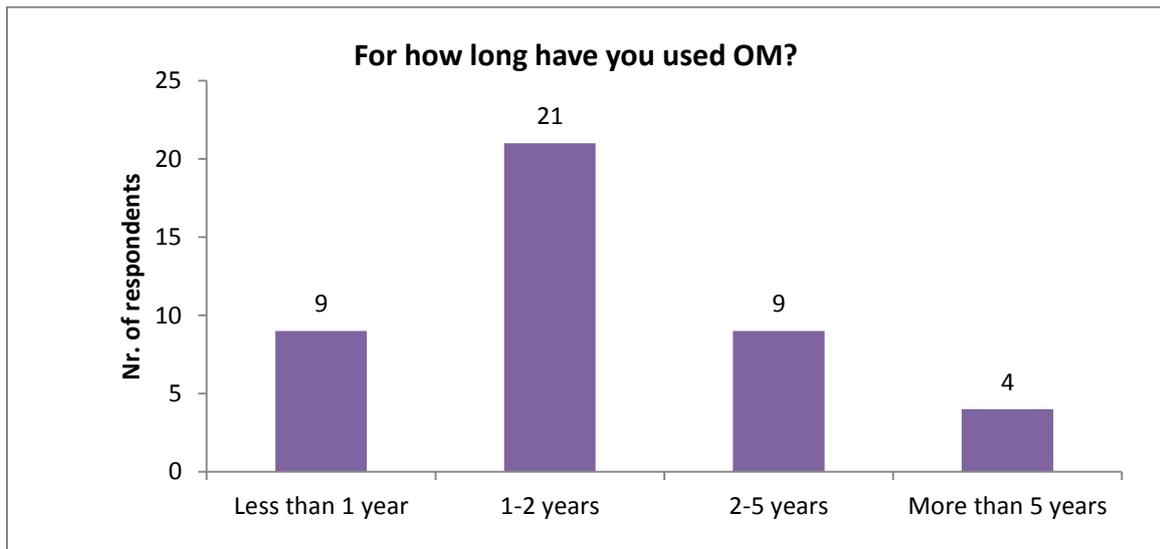
### 3. Use of OM in the programme cycle



### 4. Use of concepts and tools of Outcome Mapping



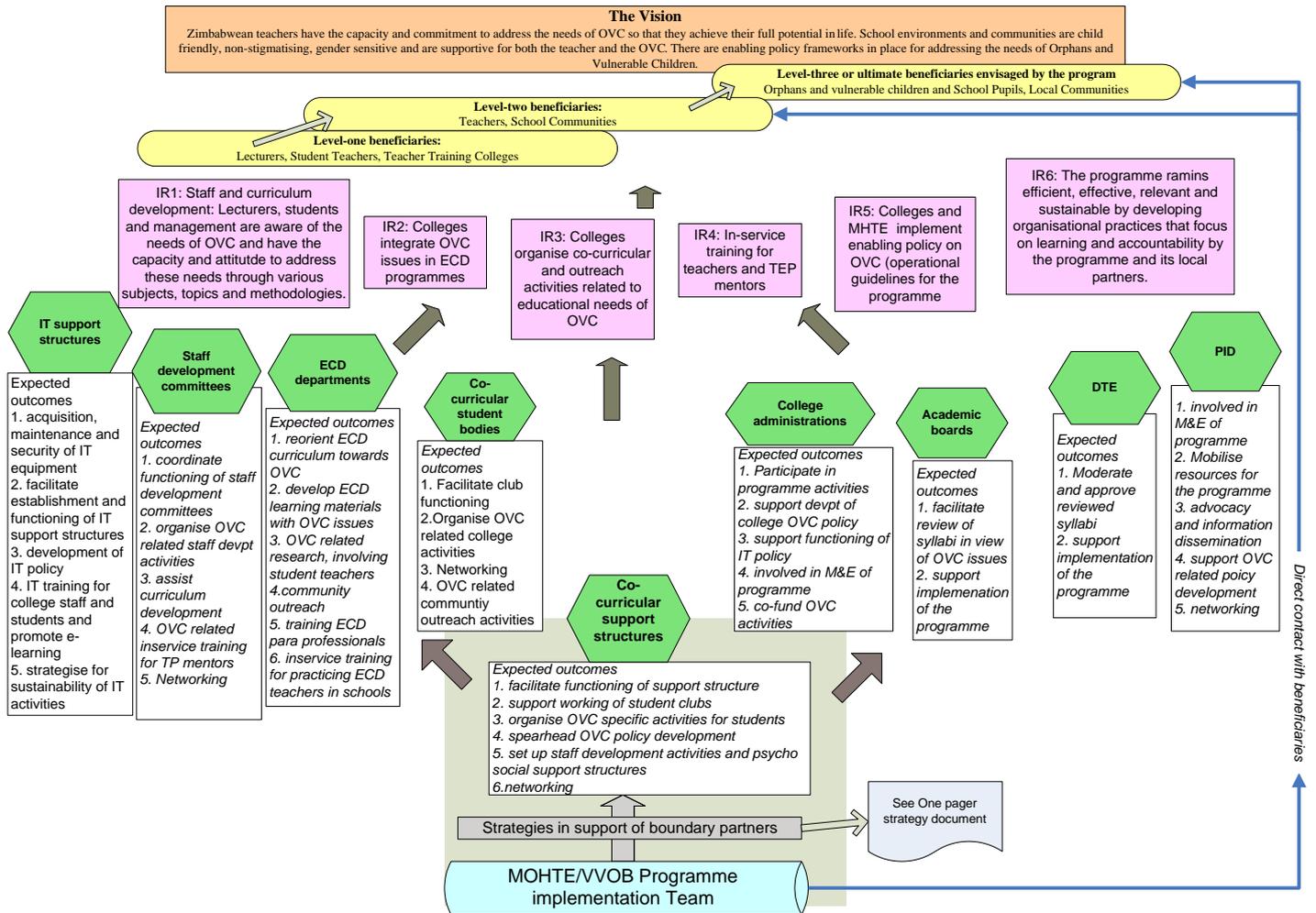
5. Number of years OM was used



## Annex 2: list of interviews

Name of the programme where the usefulness of OM was explored during the interview	Position of the interviewee in the programme
1. Global Water Partnership	M&E consultant
2. Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN)	M&E consultant
3. AGEH Association for Development Cooperation	M&E consultant & representative of the donor supporting the programme
4. AGEH Association for Development Cooperation – Civil peace service	M&E facilitator
5. Sustainable Agriculture Programme - Pacific Islands and Territories	M&E consultant
6. Teacher Education and Vulnerability Programme (VVOB Zimbabwe)	Assistant programme manager
7. Child Protection Partnership Programme (IICRD)	Programs Director
8. Ceja Andina Project	A member of the programme team
9. St <sup>2</sup> eeep project Zimbabwe	National Project Coordinator
10. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF)	Consultant and researchers
11. Ecosystem Approaches to the Better Management of Zoonotic Emerging Infectious Diseases in SE Asia' (EcoZD) – can be in short EcoZD	M&E consultant
12. University of Illinois student programme	M&E advisor
13. Mongolian Leadership Development Programme	M&E consultant
14. University Campus Food System Change programme	M&E consultant
15. Program Pengajar Muda Indonesia	M&E consultant

# Annex 3: Actor focused theory of change of the VVOB Zimbabwe teacher education programme 2008-2013).



**Annex 4: Extract from a completed outcome journal of one of the Cambodian boundary partners of World Solidarity Belgium.**

<b>Date monitoring meeting : 8 June 2012</b>		
<b>Name of the partner : CCAWDU</b>		
<b>Participants in monitoring meeting :</b>		
<b>Domain of capacity development: Gender</b>		
<b>Our dream :</b> At the end of 2013, 30% of the union leaders are women.		
<b>Progress markers</b>	<b>Observed changes</b>	<b>follow up</b>
<b>Expect to see</b>		
1) Identify all problems related to women leadership at trade union level. (e.g. why women don't (or can't) take up leadership roles).		
2) Baseline study on the status of women leadership in trade union committees (% women leaders in union).	Baseline study based on gender carried out (but no specific information on the results of this).	
3) Develop plan/strategy on how to empower women. (Identify the factories with strong union committees in which CCAWDU can start working with on gender issues. Establish the location of those factories)	Allocation to gender mainstreaming is dependent on available project funding.  No gender project under WSM but budget from CNV. This project seeks to develop capacity of women at the plant level. Also gives legal services if women become victim of sexual harassment or violation.	
<b>Like to see</b>		
4) Strengthen the existing women committee in CCAWDU to be more active (e.g. clarify its role and responsibility and become stronger in promoting gender issues at CCAWDU level and local committee level.)	There is policy on gender but content is more about the functioning of the women committee and the right of participation in training. 30% of participants in training are women.	Gender policy needs to be more detailed.
5) ....	....	.....
<b>Summary of lessons learned/recommendations :</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baseline study on gender carried out but no specific info on results or on follow up.</li> <li>- Budget allocation for gender mainstreaming depends on available funding (eg cnv project). Without such funding, limited activity around gender issues.</li> <li>- There is policy on gender but content is more about the functioning of the women committee and the right of participation in training. Gender policy needs to be more detailed.</li> <li>- Gender mainstreaming not yet discussed in congress. Now only discussed in annual planning meetings.</li> <li>- 6 out of 55 local unions are led by women.</li> </ul>		