

Case Study (full length)

Theme: M&E in complex contexts of social change

Perspective: Organisational effort to introduce alternative PME approaches that are learning oriented and suitable for use in complex contexts of social change

Title: ***Promoting Inclusive Education in Cambodia through Outcome Mapping based programming***

Summary

About 95% of the blind and visually impaired children in Cambodia are out-of-school. The few fortunate that are able to enrol in primary education, do so mainly in the four special blind schools. Dark & Light and its local partners Krousar Thmey and Association of the Blind in Cambodia share the vision of education for all children and a society in which all people participate. Starting an inclusive education programme requires the active involvement of a multitude of stakeholders ranging from national to community level, from NGO to government, and from health to education services. In 2010 Dark & Light has started the process of designing an Inclusive Education pilot programme, using the Outcome Mapping methodology. As it is Dark & Light's first Outcome Mapping based programme, the desire is to build skills and expertise in its application. Besides, Dark & Light is also interested in the effectiveness of Outcome Mapping for partners and in how far it stimulates learning and adaptive management. While the results so far are promising, also many lessons have been learned.

1. Background

Foundation Dark & Light was founded in 1982 by a Dutch ophthalmologist, after he had a life-changing visit to Thailand, being touched by the situation in which visually impaired persons lived. In the following decade, the organisation became successful in obtaining public support and raising funds to support blind schools, purchase Braille printers, etc. Dark & Light's role was exclusively one of funder. The PM&E tools focused on tangible results that were to be achieved with the financial contribution of Dark & Light.

In the new millennium, Dark & Light got more attention for the capacity of implementing organisations. It was realised that funding was not always the main need, sometimes the local partners lacked the right human resources, or had no clear strategy of what they wanted to achieve. Dark & Light recruited programme coordinators that did not only oversee the transfer of funding and approval of projects and reports, but also placed emphasis on building the capacity of local partners. Although the PM&E tools were still focusing on quantitative results, the conducted evaluations provided a good basis to facilitate capacity building with the individual local partners.

More recently, Dark & Light is realising that in order to improve the situation of persons with disabilities in society, systemic changes are needed, endorsing the rights that persons with disabilities have. This often requires collaboration with many different stakeholders. While changes may not only depend on what Dark & Light's local partners are doing, yet they may exert some degree of influence to make these changes happen. But what methodology is useful to design complexity-sensitive programmes, and monitor the results?

2. The potential of Outcome Mapping

Outcome Mapping was identified as a PM&E methodology that has a number of characteristics that fits Dark & Light's ambitions to foster social change. It is conducive to engage with multiple stakeholders. It allows for sufficient flexibility to adapt the goals and strategies during the implementation of the programme. In addition, it is less project and output based (on which the current PME tools place a huge emphasis), but rather emphasises a more programmatic and systemic (outcome) approach.

Dark & Light pilots the Outcome Mapping methodology in a multi-stakeholder setting to facilitate the design and implementation of an inclusive education programme in Cambodia. By using Outcome Mapping as a methodology Dark & Light also aims to develop skills and expertise in its application. Not only can it be beneficial for the inclusive education programme in Cambodia, but also for Dark & Light as a whole. Besides, Dark & Light is also interested in the effectiveness of Outcome Mapping for partners and in how far it stimulates learning and adaptive management. To monitor these objectives, an action research plan was formulated as is part of PSO's Thematic Learning Programme on alternative PME methods.

3. Marrying Outcome Mapping to Inclusive Education

The goal of Inclusive Education is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where teachers and learners embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. Within an inclusive education approach, learning environments are fostered where individual needs are met and every student has an opportunity to succeed.

In Cambodia practical experience with Inclusive Education has been very slim so far. Only a number of NGOs (like CRS, VSO and Handicap International – France) are experimenting with it, while the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has mainly developed ideas on inclusive education at policy level. When it comes to children with disabilities only 5% of them attends primary education. Only in a few cases, children may go to a special blind or deaf school. Of the estimated 6,000 visually impaired children in Cambodia, about 400 get education in one of Krousar Thmey's four blind schools. Although Dark & Light has supported Krousar Thmey's blind school in Kampong Cham province for more than 5 years, since 2010 Dark & Light has decided to end this support and give more attention to Inclusive Education so that the vast majority of out-of-school children with a disability are included in the ordinary education system.

Dark & Light has started the capacity building endeavour with Krousar Thmey and ABC in Cambodia to develop/design an inclusive education programme. Krousar Thmey has been a long standing partner of Dark & Light in providing education to blind, deaf, visually and hearing impaired children. They have established a strategy in which they want to move into inclusive education and adopt a new role as resource center. The Association of the Blind in Cambodia (ABC) is the national disability people's organisation for blind and visually impaired persons. ABC has build up expertise in community based rehabilitation activities and has a partnership with Krousar Thmey since mid 2000. Both ABC and Krousar Thmey have tried to facilitate Inclusive Education in 2009, but this has been unsuccessful and led to a dramatic high dropout rate of children with disabilities. Both organisations are interested to

acquire a better insight in how to foster inclusive education. They were natural partners for Dark & Light to start a joint Inclusive Education pilot.

In September 2010 Dark & Light started the programme design phase by facilitating a workshop in Phnom Penh with Krousar Thmey and ABC to decide on the pilot area, develop the main vision and mission of the programme, and identify the boundary partners. This phase takes up to June 2011, and included a study tour to Vietnam with ABC and Krousar Thmey and their boundary partners. It is planned that per October 2011 the actual implementation of the inclusive education programme will start in Kampot province.

4. Practical experience with Outcome Mapping

The initial experience with Outcome Mapping prove that the methodology gives far more scope for building capacity of local partners and promoting a programme that is more connected to other stakeholders, than Dark & Light was used to before. At the other hand using the Outcome Mapping methodology takes much more time than anticipated, and is more about managing the process and facilitation than an introduction of a clear-cut methodology.

During the process we have gained experience on what criteria should be used to select a person to facilitate an Outcome Mapping based programme design. We also noted that it is important to balance the use of the Outcome Mapping methodology with bringing in thematic expertise, to make the programme design worthwhile. Using the Outcome Mapping methodology can have the danger that discussions take place at quite an abstract conceptual level, while not all stakeholders will be able to follow. Due care should be given that the discussion stay practical and rooted in people's own experiences.

In literature not much attention has been given to step 0 of Outcome Mapping, while often Outcome Mapping may need to have some sort of starting point on which Outcome Mapping can embark. Dark & Light used the recommendations of an evaluation that took place in 2009 as the underpinning to design a new programme. A major concern was that the programme should not be a Dark & Light, but a joint programme. Therefore explicit attention was given in the first workshop to ensure buy-in and local ownership by the local partners.

We found that the study tour to Vietnam was elementary to enrich people's array of strategies that can be applied to foster inclusive education. But it was not only instrumental to transfer knowledge on Inclusive Education, it also worked as a catalyst in strengthening relationships between boundary partners, Krousar Thmey and ABC.

In the next phase we aim to get more insight in how far Outcome Mapping has strengthened the adaptive capacity of the local partners and their boundary partners. We then also will look at how the monitoring of such an Outcome Mapping based Inclusive Education programme can be integrated in Dark & Light's current PM&E system.

5. Five important lessons learned

First, having a prior understanding of the context is crucial to head an Outcome Mapping based programme in the right direction. The Outcome Mapping methodology merely assumes that all involved actors already have a good idea of the context and potential strategies, but with the Inclusive Education programme this was not the case. Therefore we found it of utmost important to broaden the horizon of stakeholders in Inclusive Education and given them more insight in the array of possible strategies they could use, by organising a study tour to Vietnam.

Secondly, the Outcome Mapping methodology and jargon should be used more flexibly than is generally accepted. Depending on the conceptual capability of people that are part of the design process, the terms should be adjusted to avoid mystification, for example key stakeholders (instead of boundary partners), desirable outcomes (instead of outcome challenge statement), indicators (instead of progress markers) and activities (instead of strategies). Also, it may sometimes be helpful to adjust the sequence of the Outcome Mapping steps in relation to the audience. Dark & Light started with the Outcome Challenge statements (step 4) before a more generic vision (step 1) was phrased.

Third, although a mapping exercise during the identification of boundary partners enables discovery with most of the participants, it excludes blind and visually impaired people unintentionally. We have not yet come up with a useful alternative, but are thinking of a tactile materials.

Fourth, space for learning needs to be created that also focuses on the technical knowledge and skills of the involved people, before or alongside the intentional design phase. Dark & Light organised a study tour to Vietnam, which generated a lot of enthusiasm and raised people's awareness and knowledge on what could be possible and what roles and activities are needed to stimulate Inclusive Education.

Fifth, Dark & Light's involvement should not only limit itself to a joint intentional design phase but really needs to be followed up by the monitoring phase to make Outcome Mapping really effective. As real learning and adaptive management is only started after the first monitoring cycle.

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