



The Outcome Mapping Learning Community

is an informal group of over three thousand members from around the world. It acts largely as a dynamic platform for sharing knowledge and experiences relating to Outcome Mapping; a methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes, developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Members come together to solve problems, to showcase and trade their discoveries and good practices, and to support one another in applying Outcome Mapping.

www.outcomemapping.ca

Welcome!

Welcome to the latest edition of the OMLC newsletter, keeping you up to date with innovation, debates and life in the OM community. In this special edition, we introduce you to the range of activities that are going on in the community and some new ventures that are planned for the coming months. The first article provides an overview of the plan for the next two years and introduces the main activities, presented in graphic form on pages two and three. We then hear about three of our flagship initiatives, with articles by Terry Smutylo, Jan Van Ongevalle and Kaia Ambrose.

It wouldn't be an OM newsletter without a story of OM practice; in this issue we hear from Adam Steventon, a PhD candidate in the UK, who is experimenting with OM in UK local government. Finally, we provide a summary of events and resources relevant to OM.

If you have a story to tell about OM, please write to s.hearn@odi.org.uk. There will be a prize for all articles we publish!

A round up of community activities

The general objective of the OMLC is to support and promote the use of OM globally, and to push the boundaries of OM theory and practice. The strategy we are taking to support these objectives involves three interconnected strands: core facilitation activities, a set of flagship initiatives and the development of a network governance model.

The core facilitation activities are primarily aimed at supporting the engagement and learning of community members and maintaining 'business as usual'. The core facilitation tasks are the primary responsibility of the secretariat whose job it is to plan, coordinate and monitor these tasks. The four main tasks are: email discussions, webinars, newsletters and face-face gatherings, along with technical support.

As well as the core facilitation tasks, the community intends to fund a number of flagship initiatives aimed at producing specific outputs. There are four initiatives planned: a research study of the effectiveness of OM; an OM practitioner's guide as an accompaniment to the existing manual; a mapping and needs assessment exercise to identify users, trainers and consultants of OM and their capacity needs; and an OM Lab which will combine coaching and mentoring with sharing and developing new ideas.

The final strand involves developing the network governance model. The aim is to move the community from a position where it is predominantly treated as a project to become a community-governed network. This strand will be led by the community stewards, through consultation with members, and will involve restructuring along four functional areas: governance, project management, communication and funding. More on this to come.

We've launched a twitter account. You can join the conversation at [@outcomemapping](https://twitter.com/outcomemapping) →

Outcome Mapping
outcomemapping

When is #outcomemapping not helpful? How do you decide whether or not to adopt OM? Interesting responses in the forum. <http://t.co/hKW0lff>

Another great post from @aidontheedge. Giving space to multiple #results approaches. <http://t.co/bM2tMqj>

Moving beyond evaluation to learning and doing - Highlights from the Mind the Gap Conference <http://ow.ly/5x8vw>

twitter Join the conversation

Also in this newsletter...

Details of the soon-to-be-launched OM Lab 2012
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Making OM work for you: Building a new guide to OM
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Applying OM to information management
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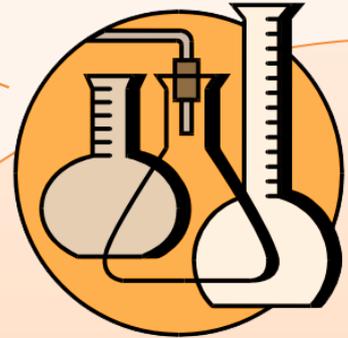
FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES



Growing in members

The graph above shows how the number of members in the community has been growing year-on-year. With greater numbers comes greater challenges as we seek to support a more diverse membership base with a larger variety of needs. Our flagship initiatives will help us understand our members better as well as provide greater avenues of support.

OM LAB



PRACTITIONER
GUIDE



STUDY OF
EFFECTIVENESS
OF OM

OM MAPPING AND
NEEDS ASSESSMENT



CORE ACTIVITIES



DISCUSSIONS



NEWSLETTERS



WEBINARS

FACE-TO-FACE GATHERINGS



Variety of topics

The graph above shows the range of discussion topics over the past twelve months and the number of posts in each discussion. Our members represent a broad range of interests, which we aim to support through each of our core activities.

Outcome Mapping Lab 2012



By Terry Smutlylo

The OMLC is excited to be sponsoring the OM Lab 2012, a three and a half day learning event that will go beyond the basics of OM to tackle

some of the deeper questions about how to apply and adapt OM in different contexts for different purposes. The event will offer participants the opportunity to receive peer and expert coaching for their particular OM challenges, learning from experienced OM practitioners, sharing and documenting innovations and the chance to contribute to new ideas and tools that will advance both the theory and practice of OM.

We are especially pleased to be supporting this event because it fills a real need for support beyond the basic training that has become readily available in many parts of the world. The basic workshops are ideal for an overview of OM and a chance to learn the concepts, but they are often not enough to equip participants to overcome the challenges of adapting OM in real situations with the variety of opportunities and constraints we all work with. The OM Lab will provide support to practitioners and managers that complements and extends what is available from existing training events, the online forums, the resource library and other community initiatives.

One of the aims of the OM Lab is to expand and add value to the OM community, capturing the ideas, discussions and energy of those who participate and amplifying through development practitioner networks and the OMLC. The event promises to result in a range of outputs that will benefit the wider community, which will likely include publishable case studies featuring innovative applications of OM, challenges and successes with OM, new ideas about adapting OM to different contexts, as well as guidance on different aspects of OM applications. Since the OMLC is predominantly a virtual community, participation will not be limited to those in the room; you will also be able to follow the course of the event online through Twitter, blogs, dedicated email discussions, and live or recorded streaming of presentations.

The OM Lab will be ideal for you if:

- you've taken part in OM training previously and you now want to know more so you can apply it yourself;
- you're applying OM and would like more tailored support for the challenges you are facing;
- you've been using OM for a while and would value the opportunity to explore the recent innovations and experiences of others;
- you have an understanding of OM but your main experience lies in a similar or compatible approach and you are interested to learn more about OM;
- you are a trainer or consultant who incorporates OM, or elements of OM, and would like a deeper understanding of OM principles and practice;
- you have an understanding of OM and would like to learn more about the many different ways it is applied, particularly how it fits with other approaches; and
- you subscribe to the thinking unlying OM and would like to apply it with organizations committed to using other methods or frameworks.

The OM Lab will take place in February 2012 and will be formally launched in September 2011. Full details of the event and how to register will be published shortly. Any questions should be directed to omlab.2012@gmail.com.

How effective is Outcome Mapping?



By Jan Van Ongevalle

Interest in Outcome Mapping is increasing all the time, if the consistent growth of the Outcome Mapping Learning Community is anything to go by. With this increased interest is coming more

demand for evidence of OM's effectiveness. Most of us who practice Outcome Mapping understand the benefits it brings to our work and can talk quite comfortably about how it helps us contribute to social change, but there has been little concerted effort so far to go beyond anecdotal accounts and study the effectiveness of OM in a more methodical way. A new study, commissioned by the OMLC, aims to fill this gap and generate evidence to inform decisions about where and how to apply OM.

Why do we need this study?



More and more organizations are looking at outcome mapping as a Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) approach that will help them to address a number of challenges: Firstly there is an increasing demand by donor agencies and policymakers to reveal the concrete results of the funds they have invested in development programmes. Similarly, beneficiaries increasingly expect those that

implement aid programmes to be held accountable for the results they set out to achieve. Furthermore, development organizations in the field are looking for more effective ways to handle complex programmes with unpredictable outcomes and a multitude of actors and factors that contribute to the results.

While there is a lot of anecdotal evidence about the advantages and disadvantages associated with outcome mapping there is still a lack of knowledge on the difference it is making towards better programming and enhanced outcomes. As a result, donors, managers and field staff continue to have many questions about the possible benefits that outcome mapping may bring to the programmes they support or implement.

Taking advantage of the growing critical mass of organizations and programmes implementing outcome mapping, we are now in a better position to study its effectiveness. Hence this research on OM effectiveness commissioned by the Outcome Mapping Learning Community.

Which questions do we seek to answer?

Studying the effectiveness of outcome mapping in itself is a complex process. Firstly, implementing outcome mapping is by its very nature a human and social activity that is given shape by the actors involved and by the context in which it takes place. The outcome mapping implementation process can easily change over time in one single programme and

will likely differ across different programmes. Secondly, 'effectiveness' can mean different things to different people and can be affected by many contextual factors and a multitude of actors who may be directly or indirectly involved in a programme.

We have formulated a number of hypotheses that will help us to explore outcome mapping implementation and its effectiveness within the context of specific cases. The hypotheses provide us with an analytic framework for drawing lessons across the different cases. The analytic framework draws from the work that was done in the PSO thematic learning programme on PME and complexity (PSO-HIVA, 2010-2012, see working paper 'Dealing with complex reality in PME' in resources on page 8).

The study seeks to explore the following hypotheses

1. Outcome mapping strengthens relationships and clarifies roles and expectations
2. Outcome mapping helps programme stakeholders to learn more collaboratively and continuously about the progress towards development objectives
3. Outcome mapping helps to satisfy downward and upward accountability needs
4. Outcome mapping helps to strengthen the adaptive internal capacity of the boundary partners and the organization that supports the boundary partners

Research design

Running on a shoestring budget, the study will invite interested organizations to participate in a facilitated self assessment process. These organizations will receive coaching support and reflection tools to help them explore the effectiveness of outcome mapping in their programmes. A web survey will also be sent out to the outcome mapping learning community to collect information about a wider sample of outcome mapping experiences. As research outputs we foresee to publish a cross case analysis research paper and a learning brief on outcome mapping effectiveness. A webinar on the outcomes of the research will also be organised.

If your organization would be interested to participate in this research or if you have any questions and comments please contact: jan.vanongevalle@hiva.kuleuven.be.

How can you be involved?

- participate in the self assessment process
- contribute your evaluation data
- complete the survey
- join the advisory group

OM practitioner's guide: Making OM work for you



By Kaia Ambrose

There have been a wide array of OM innovations and adaptations over the years, as different projects, programs and organisations

contextualize OM for their needs. There is also much broader experience of using OM for monitoring and evaluation, with many lessons around data collection and sense-making.

While many of these experiences are shared through the community discussions and some as written documents posted in the community library, the OM stewards group intends to work with two experienced OM practitioners to facilitate the compilation of this information in order to create new material related to OM innovations and adaptations and develop it into a new OM publication. There will also be a chapter on exploring other contributing frameworks and methodologies to OM, as well as some reflection on when OM is not useful.

This publication will not replace the current OM manual but complement it. While the current OM manual provides a step-by-step outline of OM application, especially focused on the design stage, this complementary guide will incorporate new tools and experiences, and focus on practical examples. It will be designed and written for OM practitioners and facilitators who already have some familiarity with OM and who want to deepen their exploration in its use and innovation.



An initial idea of chapters / content (to be further developed, considering the views and needs of community members) includes:

- Lessons and practical guidance for integrating OM with other tools (for example, log-frame, Most Significant Change, network mapping, etc.).
- Considerations and direction for customising OM for use in a particular sector or intervention.
- Considerations and direction for using OM as a viable alternative to the prevailing and growing 'audit culture', to emphasize both accountability and learning around complex social transformation.
- Reflections and examples of using OM for monitoring and for evaluation.
- Key principles updated.
- Case studies and practical exercises.
- Updated references / additional resources.

Over the next year, we will develop the outline for this guide and gather its content, interacting with the OMLC as we go to ensure the relevance and usefulness of this resource. The forthcoming 'OM Lab' will also complement and feed into the publication.

If you would like to become more closely involved with this initiative, please do not hesitate to contact Simon at S.Hearn@odi.org.uk; we would like to ensure that we get fair and important Southern practitioner experience and input in particular, as well as broad feedback on a draft product. Otherwise, stay tuned, because we will definitely be contacting you!

[Photo credit: Book, by Florin Gorgan:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/floringorgan/>]

Understanding the outcomes of information management



By Adam Steventon

Loughborough University and Leicestershire County Council (LCC) in the UK are collaborating to develop an outcomes-based approach to monitoring the delivery of the information management (IM) function for partnering agencies, and are exploring the

use of OM for this.

The context of this study is the increased pressure of local governments across the country to measure and demonstrate their outcomes and better understand the nature of their impacts, which is punctuated by a recent government report outlining the need for better methods for measuring the outcomes of information management in local governments. Traditionally, success in this area has been measured through quantitative performance indicators: service delivery costs; percentage crimes rates and so forth. One of the main aims of this research is to move away from a quantitative mindset and adopt a results/outcomes orientated approach, concentrating on the things that should be important to public service providers, utilising IM capabilities and practices to do so. Outcomes' reporting is also becoming more important to funders and governments as the demand for accountability continues to rise. The challenge for the team is to develop a method that can dynamically measure the outcomes of IM and the impacts they might have on wider entities.

In an orientation study, interviews with twenty senior managers in LCC highlighted the important IM issues linking to corporate outcomes, for example, through maintaining high quality, trusted, and governed information and knowledge resources, LCC's outcomes can be achieved. IM is beginning to move to the forefront of employees minds as shown in the interview analysis, where 85% of senior managers considered IM to be "critical" in the achievement of organisational outcomes. The task now is to take this shared understanding of required changes and create a PM&E approach that can measure and demonstrate outcomes.

Literature from the development sector has been critical in building a case for the development of an outcomes based approach. In particular, Outcome Mapping stands out as a tool with a lot of untapped potential in this context and has been selected as one

of the methods to trial. OM will be piloted in a very low level IM based project within a borough council of Leicestershire, and evidence will be gathered to judge its application in a number of complex cultural environments (UK, local government, information management) before introducing it into the mainstream.

The project chosen for the pilot is the Melton Borough Council Co-location project, a transformative piece of work that is aimed at creating a co-located environment, where partner organisations feel confident and able in collaborating with each other for the benefit of public service delivery and in the interest of efficiency savings. There is a shared vision for improving the lives of vulnerable families/individuals within the Melton area.

The danger of the co-location project is that focus was placed on the logistics of co-locating, i.e. the move-in date, seating plans and so forth, not on what we were REALLY trying to achieve through this co-location: changing working practices and strengthened relationships.

The value that OM brings to this project is the ability to demonstrate the contribution of information management efforts on employees, agencies, service users and savings in service delivery as well as help identify the necessary organisation specific changes that need to take place within a collocated environment if the vision for improved service user outcomes is to be achieved. If this pilot is successful then the investment in time and energy will be justified through its demonstration of the added value of the information management function. Furthermore, if proven, OM will provide a transferable/re-scalable tool for the organisation and indeed the public sector more widely. Criteria for success will mainly involve the indication of progress markers but will include changes in attitudes, understanding and behaviour around the use of information within local government.

The main progress so far has been the articulation of a vision for this project (see box). The next steps will involve a workshop, with representatives from all boundary partners, to develop outcome challenges and progress markers. Following the workshop, strategies and organisational practices will be devised, within the strategic planning group, along with an adaptation of the monitoring journals, which will be context specific and built in to local government procedures.

Community News

OM training and other events

Outcome Mapping training

Date: 01 – 02 Nov 2011
Location: London, UK
Summary: A two day introduction to OM hosted by Bond and facilitated by the Overseas Development Institute.
Contact: <http://bond.org.uk>

Introduction to Theory of Change

Date: 09 Sept 2011
Location: London, UK
Summary: Training and discussion on the Theory of Change technique, provided by AcTKnowledge.
Contact: hclark@actknowledge.org

Social Return on Investment

Date: 24 – 28 Oct 2011
Location: Nairobi, Kenya
Summary: A training course for development practitioners and social entrepreneurs for applying SRoI, by Context and ICS Africa
Contact: peter.mbiyu@icsafrica.org

South African M&E Association Conference

Date: 05 – 09 Sept 2011
Location: Johannesburg, South Africa
Summary: The second SAMEA conference on the theme of M&E 4 Outcomes: Answering the 'So What?' Question
Contact: <http://www.samea.org.za>

New resources in the community library

A complimentary approach to developing progress markers

A research report investigating progress makers in OM

<http://bit.ly/qn4Pry>



Policy coherence for development: Building a policy advocacy evaluation tool

A report of an application of OM

<http://bit.ly/p8HChf>



Dealing with complex reality in planning, monitoring and evaluation

A research report about choosing PME approaches

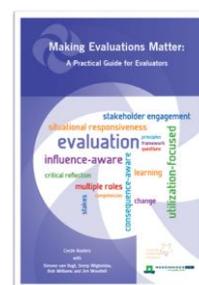
<http://bit.ly/rrUxju>



Making Evaluations Matter: A Practical Guide for Evaluators

A guide to designing and facilitating evaluations in development

<http://bit.ly/plvUPI>



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