WorldFish
C E N T E R

Outcome Mapping

Outcome Mapping (OM) was developed by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) to deal with the complex changes resulting from development projects.

WHAT IS IT?

- A methodology that monitors change in complex, non-linear development projects, where change may not take the form anticipated, and may not take place within the time frame of the project

- Used for evaluating development initiatives that aim to bring about social change and for tracking behavioral changes in development programs

- An approach that looks at outcomes of development programs as a result of changes in behavior of the people involved in a project, which may lead to more sustainable project outcomes
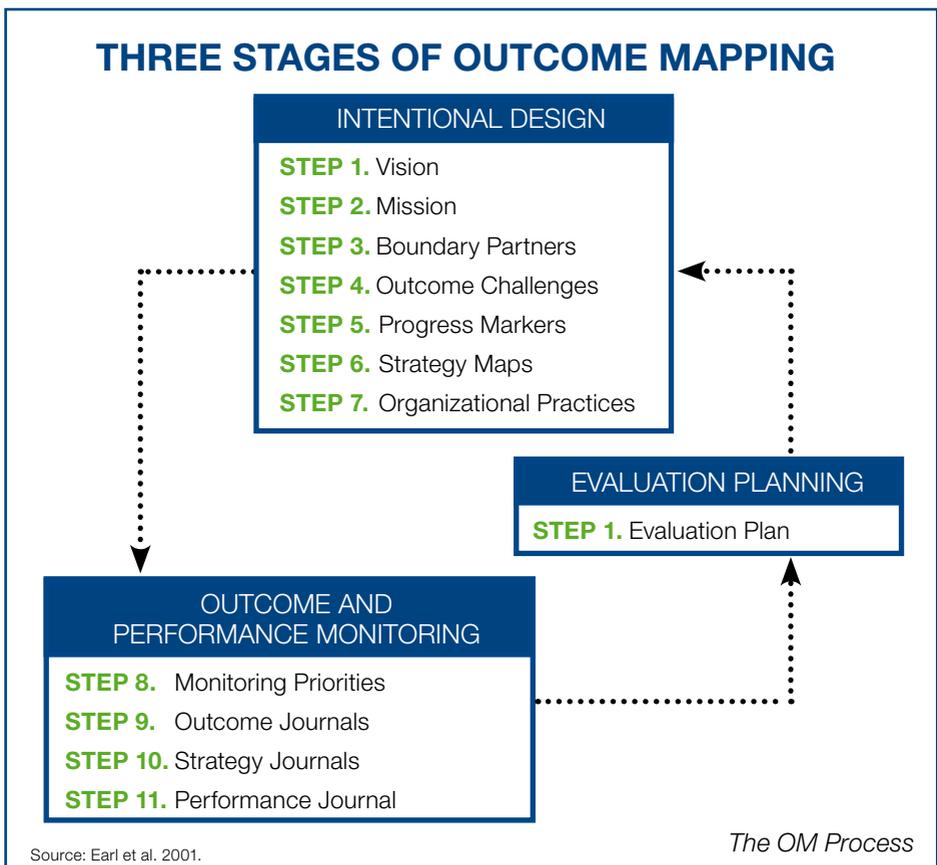
ADVANTAGES

- Beneficiaries can see the linkages between their own activities and the achievement of their hopes and expectations from the project

- Indicators, or 'Progress Markers', are developed according to likelihood of achievement (easy, medium and difficult) which can be connected to a time frame (short-, medium-, and long-term)

- Brings together different stakeholders and allows all groups to communicate their expectations and define shared objectives

- Can support communication between stakeholders, leading to mutually agreed action

> Outcomes are defined as changes in the behavior, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with which a program works directly.[1]

HOW CAN IT BE USED FOR M&E?

- Monitors progress towards project objectives and visions defined by all partners, including both researchers and beneficiaries

- Focuses on development outcomes without implying a linear cause and effect

- Monitoring progress with interviews and journals encourages self-assessment and involvement of beneficiaries

- The Outcome Mapping process can be abridged according to the purpose of the monitoring program

THREE STAGES OF OUTCOME MAPPING

INTENTIONAL DESIGN

STEP 1. Vision

STEP 2. Mission

STEP 3. Boundary Partners

STEP 4. Outcome Challenges

STEP 5. Progress Markers

STEP 6. Strategy Maps

STEP 7. Organizational Practices

EVALUATION PLANNING

STEP 1. Evaluation Plan

OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

STEP 8. Monitoring Priorities

STEP 9. Outcome Journals

STEP 10. Strategy Journals

STEP 11. Performance Journal

Source: Earl et al. 2001.

The OM Process

[1]   Earl et al. (2001)

RISKS AND CONTRAINTS

- Outcome Mapping is strongly participatory in its application

- It can be a relatively complex and time intensive process

- Translation introduces the risk of misinterpretation and miscommunication of OM concepts

- In countries where participation is new and top-down approaches are common, it may be difficult to capture opinions of stakeholders

- Caution is needed to ensure that more powerful individuals do not use the OM concept of 'behavioural change' to exert their influence on weaker group members

- The monitoring journals are based on written documentation requiring someone literate to complete them

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD:

"When we first began to use Outcome Mapping in the community-based fish culture project, I was concerned about the time investment to complete the full process, particularly if community participants are involved. We found that an abridged version still captured the most important aspects of the methodology. Steps four and five are completed at the community level.

Step 1. Identification of Boundary Partners by the re-search team

Each boundary partner will produce an individual vision statement, to clarify the motivations and expectations of each stakeholder group

Step 2. The research teams create their Vision statements

Step 3. Research teams prepare Outcome Challenges based on their Vision statements

Step 4. Boundary partners at the community level create vision statements

Step 5. In small groups, boundary partners define the steps they need to take, and the support they need, to achieve their vision of the future

Step 6. The research teams develop indicators for each boundary partner based on the steps and responsibilities defined by each group. Monitoring journals include indicators and key questions for each boundary partner.

Step 7. Interviews conducted regularly with boundary partners. Problem areas are identified and support offered as necessary."

(Natasja Sheriff, WorldFish Center)

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Sufficient time should be allocated at the start of the project to develop the OM strategy with stakeholders, including project beneficiaries, to train field staff and establish a monitoring program

- Skilled facilitation of the OM process is needed to guide the project participants through the visioning process and the selection of progress markers, without influencing their decisions

- Resources are needed for regular monitoring, although completion of the monitoring journals can be incorporated into existing field activities

REFERENCES

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Outcome Mapping Learning Community http://www.outcomemapping.ca

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