OUTCOME MAPPING

Outcome Mapping is a planning, monitoring and evaluation methodology. Its main focus is on changes in the behaviour of the people, groups and organisations influenced by a programme. Outcome Mapping is designed to deal with complexity, and is not based around linear models of change. Some organisations use the complete Outcome Mapping methodology, whilst others only apply some elements and principles.

Outcome Mapping was originally developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. Outcome Mapping primarily focuses on changes in the behaviour of people, groups and organisations with which a programme works directly. It is not designed to enable programmes to prove causality or attribution for those changes. Instead, it is designed to set out (or map) the logical linkages between the changes and a programme's activities, thereby enabling contribution to change to be understood (Earl, Carden and Smutylo, 2001).

Outcome Mapping is a planning methodology, which has implications for how monitoring and evaluation is conducted. It is based on the principle of participation, and purposefully includes those implementing a programme in the selection, collection and analysis of data, in order to encourage ownership and the use of findings. It was designed to be a *"consciousness-raising, consensus-building, and empowerment tool for those working within a development programme"* (ibid, p4).

Some organisations use the complete Outcome Mapping methodology, whilst others only apply some elements and principles. Outcome Mapping is one of a range of tools and methodologies designed to address complexity. These are increasingly being seen as alternatives to more linear models of change, characterised by the logical framework approach and results-based management.

How it works

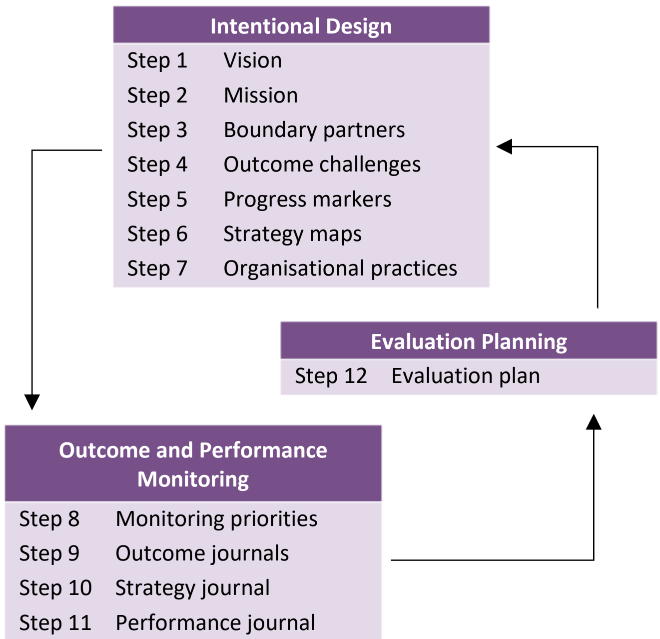
Outcome Mapping is designed to be used at the beginning of a programme, after the main focus of that programme has been decided. There are three key stages to planning an Outcome Map.

1. **Intentional design:** The first stage helps a programme establish consensus on the changes it aims to help bring about, and plan the strategies it will use. It helps answer four questions.
    - What is the vision to which the programme wants to contribute?
    - Who are its boundary partners?
    - What are the changes that are being sought?
    - How will the programme contribute to the change process?
2. **Outcome and performance monitoring:** The second stage provides a framework for the ongoing monitoring of the programme's actions and progress toward the achievement of the 'outcomes'. Monitoring is largely based on internal self-assessment.
3. **Evaluation planning:** The third stage helps the programme identify evaluation priorities and develop an evaluation plan.

These three stages, and the steps within them, are summarised in the following diagram. Each of the steps is designed to be addressed at the planning stage, using a participatory process, and wherever possible involving a full range of stakeholders. A brief explanation of the individual steps of Outcome Mapping is contained in the section below.

(These explanations are taken directly from a comprehensive Outcome Mapping manual produced by Earl et. al. in 2001, and referenced at the end of this paper. Interested readers should access that manual for a more complete explanation of each stage, and a set of workshop exercises that can be used to facilitate and plan Outcome Mapping.)

Figure 1: Steps in Outcome Mapping Design



Although the steps are all designed to be implemented at the planning stage of a programme, they also set the scene for how monitoring and evaluation will be conducted later on. For example, journals are developed that will later be used for ongoing monitoring of the programme.

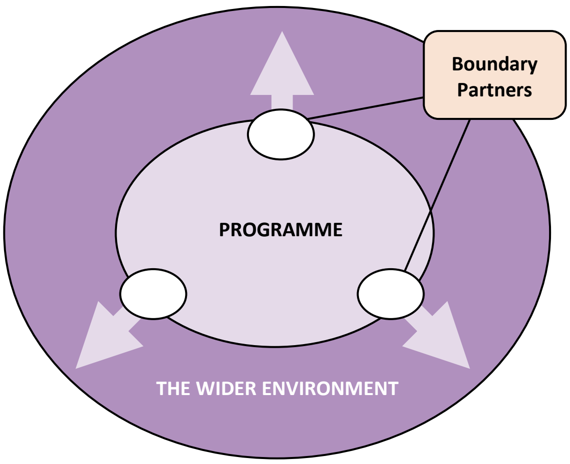
Stage 1: Intentional Design

First, a vision is developed for a programme (**STEP 1**) that reflects large-scale, development-related changes. The vision should describe economic, political, social, or environmental changes that the programme hopes to help bring about. The programme's activities should contribute to the vision, but should not be solely responsible for achieving it.

Next, a mission statement is developed (**STEP 2**) that describes how the programme intends to support the vision. The mission statement details the areas in which the programme will work towards the vision, but does not list all the activities which the programme will carry out.

Then boundary partners are identified (**STEP 3**). These are the individuals, groups, or organisations with which the programme will interact directly, and where there will be opportunities for influence (see diagram below). Boundary partners may be individual organisations, but might also include multiple individuals, groups or organisations if a similar change is being sought across many different groups (for example, research centres or community groups).

Figure 2: Boundary partners in Outcome Mapping



In **STEP 4** an outcome challenge statement is developed for each boundary partner. It describes how the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of the individual, group or institution will change if the programme is extremely successful. Outcome challenges should be phrased in a way that emphasises behavioural change.

A set of progress markers are then identified (**STEP 5**) for each boundary partner. These are desired, visible, behavioural changes ranging from the minimum a programme would *expect to see* the boundary partners doing as an early response, to what it would *like to see*, and finally to what it would *love to see* them doing if the programme were to have a profound influence.

The progress markers should represent changes that are easily visible or verifiable by the programme team, and will show if progress is being made towards the desired outcomes of the programme. They are designed to show progress as a group of markers rather than as individual indicators, which are more common when working with the logical framework approach.

An example of a set of progress markers is shown in figure 3, based on a capacity building intervention with a partner organisation.

Figure 3: Examples of progress markers

Expect to see partner organisation ...	• organising staff training to interact with communities better • inviting communities to contribute opinions • visiting communities in the field on a regular basis
Like to see partner organisation ...	• developing policies and protocols for engaging with communities • receiving and discussing comments from community groups • regularly meeting to consider communities' opinions and comments • making amendments to projects based on community feedback
Love to see partner organisation ...	• developing projects alongside communities • inviting community representatives onto decision-making bodies • regularly reporting to communities on progress and lessons learned

In **STEP 6** a strategy map is developed to help identify the strategies that will be used by the programme to contribute to the achievement of each outcome challenge. For most outcome challenges, multiple strategies are encouraged because it is believed this has a greater potential for success.

The purpose of **STEP 7** is to identify the organisational (internal) practices that the programme will adopt to be effective. These organisational practices describe a well-performing organisation that has the potential to support the boundary partners, and sustain change interventions over time.

Stage 2: Outcome and performance monitoring

Monitoring priorities are then identified (**STEP 8**) to focus time and resources on where they are most needed. Monitoring priorities are divided into three areas:

- organisational practices;
- progress toward the outcomes being achieved by boundary partners; and

- the strategies that the programme is employing to encourage change in its boundary partners.

STEPS 9-11 involve the establishment of journals to monitor progress over time in the three areas described in the previous step. First, an outcome journal is established to record changes for each boundary partner. It includes the progress markers set out in step 5; a description of the level of change as low, medium, or high; and a place to record who among the boundary partners exhibited the change.

Journals may simply be sheets of paper, divided into columns to capture the relevant information. Or they might be electronic files designed to be used on computers, tablets or mobile phones. Or (increasingly) they could be simple databases.

Then, in order to provide the programme with a systematic way to monitor its actions in support of its boundary partners, a strategy journal is developed. This journal records data on the strategies being employed, and is filled in during regular monitoring meetings.

Finally, a performance journal is created for the programme. This records data on how the programme is operating in order to fulfil its mission. The performance journal is also filled in during regular monitoring meetings.

Stage 3: Evaluation plan

The final step (**STEP 12**) is to develop a descriptive plan of a proposed evaluation for the programme. This outlines the main evaluation issues; the way findings will be used; the questions, sources and methods to be used; the nature of the evaluation team; proposed dates and the likely cost. This information is intended to guide evaluation design.

Strengths and weaknesses

Outcome Mapping is rarely imposed on organisations as a condition of funding. This means debates surrounding Outcome Mapping are less intense than those surrounding the logical framework. But there are still differing opinions. Some of the strengths and weaknesses are shown in the table below.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS
❑ Outcome Mapping introduces monitoring and evaluation (M&E) at an early stage of a programme, and ensures that they are built into programme design.	❑ Because Outcome Mapping focuses on contribution rather than attribution, it cannot easily be used for processes that require hard measurement of results, such as cost-benefit analysis or value for money assessment.
❑ It is a participatory methodology, which encourages multi-stakeholder dialogue and learning amongst different participants. It is therefore designed to contribute to the development process, as well as being an M&E methodology.	❑ As with any participatory methodology, it requires a great deal of time, effort and patience to do well. Significant resources are required, both in terms of programme staff and the people, groups and organisations being supported.
❑ Because it is based on outcomes of observable behaviour change, Outcome Mapping can be more intuitive for field workers to grasp than the sometimes more abstract language of objectives and indicators.	❑ Outcome Mapping may be best used at the level of small programmes or larger projects. It is not necessarily appropriate for handling large, complex programmes where it is sometimes difficult to identify who needs to change their behaviours and how. Equally, it may not be appropriate for small projects, because the investment of time needed to properly plan Outcome Mapping may not be proportional to the desired benefits (Earl et. al., 2001).
❑ It encourages programmes to assess both the outcomes of programmes – therefore focusing clearly on change – and the processes through which those outcomes were generated.	❑ The journaling approach to tracking progress means a lot of qualitative data is generated, creating challenges for data analysis.
❑ Outcome Mapping is better than linear planning tools at dealing with complexity. It does not seek to demonstrate direct attribution for change resulting from a single initiative. This means it may be more appropriate for M&E in programmes with multiple components.	❑ Outcome Mapping is good at identifying changes within supported groups who are part of the process, partly because it encourages self-reflection and self-assessment. It may not be so useful for identifying change for people, organisations or groups that lie outside a programme, such as the targets of policy influencing work.
❑ Because Outcome Mapping involves the identification of a spread of progress markers ranging from those stakeholders expect to see to those they would like or love to see, it avoids the need for precise predictions about the pace of change at the beginning of a programme. This means it is particularly useful when the pace or direction of change is uncertain.	❑ Outcome Mapping recognises the need to look at long-term changes in people's lives brought about by development interventions, but regards this as the responsibility of a programme's boundary partners. If donors require in-depth impact assessment then Outcome Mapping needs to be supplemented by other tools and methodologies.

Adaptations

Although Outcome Mapping is frequently used as a methodology in its entirety, it is often adapted, and can be used in conjunction with other methodologies such as the logical framework. Indeed, it is perfectly possible to embed an Outcome Map within a logical framework, or set logical framework indicators that can be generated through Outcome Mapping processes.

Individual features of Outcome Mapping – such as the setting of progress markers at *expect to see*, *like to see* and *love to see* levels – are often used, even when the entire methodology is not. In addition, many civil society organisations carry out work that is based on the principles of Outcome Mapping – such as participatory planning, addressing complexity, valuing contribution rather than attribution – without necessarily adopting the methodology in its entirety.

Further reading and resources

The M&E Universe contains other papers dealing with subjects that address complexity within planning, monitoring and evaluation. These include papers on theory of change, scenario planning and the most significant change technique.

The logical framework

Scenario planning

Theory of change

Most significant change

The most comprehensive guide to Outcome Mapping is a guide written by Earl et. al. in 2001 (see reference below). This is available at www.outcomemapping.ca/download/OM_English_final.pdf. There is also an Outcome Mapping community website at www.outcomemapping.ca which is regularly updated and contains much information on how Outcome Mapping is being used and applied. Further information, and a more comprehensive reading list for Outcome Mapping, can be found at the Better Evaluation website at http://betterevaluation.org/.

References

- Earl, S.; F. Carden and T. Smutylo (2001). *Outcome Mapping: Building learning and reflection into development programmes*. Evaluation Unit, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa, Canada.

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INTRAC is a values-based, not-for-profit organisation with a mission to strengthen civil society organisations. Since 1991, INTRAC has contributed significantly to the body of knowledge on monitoring and evaluation. Our approach to M&E is practical and founded on core principles. We encourage appropriate M&E, based on understanding what works in different contexts, and we work with people to develop their own M&E approaches and tools, based on their needs.