



Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

CASE STUDY IN OUTCOMES EVALUATION: MONGOLIA

Showing the value of mapping outcomes to learn from complex programs

SUMMARY

From 2010–2013, the World Bank Governance Partnership Facility (GPF) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) helped build the capacity of Mongolian civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote good governance and an effective civil society engagement in procurement and service delivery monitoring. An assessment of results from the interventions was needed to satisfy accountability and learning needs and to inform decisions on future programs and funding. However, the short-term, complex nature of the interventions, numerous CSOs involved, and scarce documentation meant that knowledge of results was largely limited to activities and impact would be difficult to measure.

In fall 2013, the World Bank and Mongolia office of SDC decided to use an outcome mapping approach to evaluate the effectiveness, sustainability, and relevance of these interventions. Outcome mapping is a participatory methodology useful for evaluating complex programs that involve capacity and coalition building, multiple actors, and tacit knowledge. It looks beyond outputs and delivery efficiency to institutional behavioral changes that occur in and among social actors influenced by interventions.

A total of 190 outcomes were collected through document analysis, interviews and surveys with pertinent social actors, with nine elaborated as outcome stories. The outcome stories identified what changes took place, by whom, when and where, why they were



significant, and how the interventions contributed. Then, independent persons substantiated the outcome stories to provide further evidence and credibility on whether the World Bank and SDC support advanced development objectives.

The evaluation provided benefits to the stakeholders in several ways: results were packaged into an accessible, narrative format for various communication purposes; lessons were identified on what worked and did not work to inform the design of future CSO support, particularly concerning social actors and their roles, innovative solutions, and how to adapt or scale up a program; and the participatory process promoted stakeholder learning and ownership of results achieved to date.

Thus, the evaluation generated robust, locally validated data that demonstrated the value of the interventions to stakeholders and donors and revealed ways to improve implementation and management for future efforts. Other teams that need to assess similarly complex programs might consider the merits of using the outcome mapping approach as well.

CONTEXT

Over the last decade the Mongolian economy has grown at a rapid pace based on the strength of its extractive industries sector. Good governance and an effective civil society are key to ensure that the wealth produced is used in a way that benefits all citizens. Government must develop policies and systems that are responsive to citizens and open to public scrutiny. Wider civil society can contribute to improved accountability, transparency, and openness by monitoring government tenders and public fund expenditures.

To this end, the World Bank and SDC supported Mongolian civil society in three interventions:

(1) SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building (2011–2013) to improve internal governance, oversight, financial and operational management of Mongolia’s most active local CSOs. Implementing partner: Mongolian Center for Development Studies.

(2) World Bank—Social Accountability (2010–2011) to strengthen the skills of CSOs to work with and monitor public sector organizations and service delivery and willingness of public sector organizations to work with CSOs. Implementing partners: Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific,

Democracy Education Center, and Open Society Foundation.

(3) World Bank—Public Procurement (2012–ongoing) to support the development of an effective, self-governing network of CSOs committed to monitoring public procurement and supporting government in creating a framework for CSO participation in public procurement monitoring. Implementing partner: Partnership for Public Procurement.

To evaluate the interventions, the team needed to answer three questions:

- What is the **effectiveness of the interventions** in contributing to the intended objectives?
- What is the **sustainability of changes influenced by the interventions** after donor funding ceases?
- What is the **relevance of the interventions’ outcomes** to the SDC and Bank programs in Mongolia, the Bank’s GPF objectives, and the needs of target CSOs?

However, the nature of the interventions presented difficulties for assessment. First, they were short in timeframe. For instance, the social accountability project consisted of one workshop and small grants for pilot projects with mentoring, and it ended in 2011. Second, little data existed, and tacit knowledge had to be collected to provide evidence of results. Third, and most important, changes in behaviors and relationships within and among the CSOs and government needed to be captured to show the richness of the change process. These were the intermediate changes that could lead to longer-term results.

OUTCOME MAPPING

Outcome mapping is an innovative assessment methodology to learn from complex development processes that involve behavioral changes, multiple social actors, and profound development challenges. Although more commonly used at the design stage of an intervention, here it was used retrospectively in the evaluation.

Outcome harvesting is one of the tools from the Outcome Mapping Learning Community.¹ In this approach, an outcome is defined as a change in the behavior, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a program works directly. For interventions promoting learning, this approach implies that participant learning outcomes are demonstrated when they apply the concepts and tools from their learning in their work.

Through collecting—or harvesting—bites of detailed outcome information from colleagues, partners, and stakeholders, one can identify, monitor, and learn from changes in social actors. The collected information describes what changed, for whom, when and where, why it matters to the development objective and particular development challenge(s)—the significance of the change—and how the program contributed to the change.

The harvesting process is stakeholder-centered and captures qualitative, tacit knowledge. It includes tools to substantiate and analyze this knowledge collaboratively and communicate progress toward impact to clients, management, and partners. The method is flexible to adapt to a program's design and complement other monitoring and evaluation and knowledge management tools.

Outcome mapping approaches follow the principle that evaluations should be focused on use and users. Use-focused evaluations seek to engage users of the evaluation from the outset in defining the scope and questions, and agreeing on information and substantiation sources. In addition, the evaluation process itself engages users in generating or verifying data. Such engagement may help users have more confidence in evaluation findings.

DECISION TO USE OUTCOME MAPPING

The World Bank GPF and SDC commissioned a joint evaluation using the outcome mapping approach. The team decided outcome mapping was well suited because the objectives of the interventions being evaluated involved areas—capacity development, network building, and accountability—that meshed with the methodology.

The effectiveness of network building and networking is demonstrated by behavior changes that can be found through collected outcome information. For example, outcome information on the voluntary association of organizations or individuals and their changes represent new ways of working collectively, such as cooperating to plan work, sharing knowledge, strategizing, and securing resources. The realization of social accountability is also demonstrated by behavior changes, in this case of government, business, citizens, and CSOs.

The effectiveness of the Bank and SDC interventions depended on the extent to which they were able to influence others. The outcome mapping concept

that interventions influence and/or contribute to but cannot lay sole claim to results was therefore valuable. Further, the approach fitted with the evaluation's purpose—that it was as much about learning with the local implementers of the project and informing future work as it was about accountability.

PROCESS

Specifically, this was an outcomes evaluation of the World Bank GPF and SDC CSO/NGO capacity building interventions that took place in Mongolia, August 2010–September 2013. Richard D Smith (team leader), Jeremy Gross, and Amarbayasgalan Dorj conducted the evaluation from September–November 2013.

Using the outcome harvesting tool, the evaluators identified outcomes with the social actors the interventions had been seeking to influence directly. They collected outcomes by means of one-on-one and group interviews, focus groups, and surveys (see annex for sample questions). The evaluators looked for observable evidence that participants had applied concepts and tools introduced by the interventions.

Each outcome was precisely described so it is clear and verifiable who changed in what way, when and where, and how the intervention contributed (see figure 1 on the next page for examples of outcome descriptions). Outcome harvesting includes a specification for optional contribution descriptions for each outcome; these were vital for understanding how the interventions had contributed to outcomes, directly or indirectly.

The outcome definition used² set a high bar for assessing the effectiveness and sustainability of Bank and SDC contributions to capacity and coalition-building changes. Informants were given the opportunity to verify outcome descriptions.

The evaluators entered the outcomes in a database and coded them by type of change to provide for a program-level reflection of the outcomes to date. The resulting findings were then interpreted to address the evaluation questions as follows:

- **Effectiveness** was assessed against the pre-defined objectives and theory of change to identify whether intended outcomes were met, and any unintended outcomes outside the intended scope.
- **Sustainability** was assessed by whether institutional changes had been realized.
- **Relevance** was assessed by whether the outcomes aligned to local needs and program priorities.

In addition, the evaluators highlighted key outcomes in outcome stories to communicate specific achievements or lessons in a narrative format (see annex for a sample story). They produced nine outcome stories, each with sufficient detail to allow independent sources to substantiate the outcome, the contribution of the intervention, and the claimed significance of the outcome.³

CHALLENGES

The evaluators faced several challenges during the harvesting process, which included:

Limited documentation of outcomes—Lack of existing monitoring data caused a high dependence on collecting data during the evaluation. For two interventions, there was limited knowledge of outcomes from serving staff of the Bank, SDC, and their contracting implementing partners due to high staff turnover and lack of a strong monitoring framework for outcomes.

Lack of experience in methodology—Local consultants were not well versed in outcome mapping, but this was looked at as an opportunity to build up their capacity in outcome mapping and evaluations for future work. The lead evaluator coached co-evaluators on the necessary concepts and provided guiding questions for interviews. The co-evaluators were willing and able to learn and also brought complementary experience and skills to the team.

Perceptions of methodology—Initially there was some hesitation from Bank and SDC staff about using outcome mapping given that it can be a time-consuming process. The evaluators overcame this notion by using key concepts of outcome mapping rather than all of the steps. The Bank also voiced concern about having clear evaluation criteria. The evaluators addressed this by using outcome mapping to answer questions solely on effectiveness, sustainability, and relevance. Efficiency could be assessed with a more appropriate evaluation tool.

Shortened timeframe—The short timeframe limited travel time to engage with actors influenced by the interventions. This restricted the ability to engage with those most knowledgeable when describing and substantiating outcomes. However, the local consultant was able to stay and conduct these interviews at later and more suitable times.

Figure 1. Sample Outcome Descriptions

SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building

Outcome 11: Between 2012 and 2013, after the project training, six organizations developed a written charter defining, for example, the organization's purpose; beneficiaries; activities; role of the board; elections; how meetings are run.

Contribution: The lead implementor of the SDC project appointed the team of trainers, contributed to the development of the modules and organized and facilitated the trainings.

World Bank—Social Accountability

Outcome 86: In March 2013, the Democracy Education Center (DEMO) was able to expand its Check My Service program when the Asia Foundation awarded it a grant for the Check My School and Check My Clinic projects.

Contribution: DEMO's leading role in implementing the Social Accountability Learning-in-Action (SAcLAP) program enhanced its reputation and expertise in the area so it could develop a convincing proposal for the Asia Foundation.

World Bank—Public Procurement

Outcome 11: In April 2013, the Public-Private Partnerships Board and review committee adopted its first five-year strategic plan with an initial focus on shaping new procurement law implementation.

Contribution: The World Bank Institute and the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) designed and facilitated the strategic planning working with the board, and WBI provided feedback on drafts of the plan.

FINDINGS

The 190 outcomes collected demonstrate that each intervention met or exceeded its pre-defined objectives (see table 1). This represents impressive results for short-term interventions, two of which were ongoing, leading to the conclusion that the interventions have been effective and relevant.

SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building

69 outcomes in total

Against the central objective of building the capacity of CSOs, outcomes show improved organizational

performance of CSOs even over a limited time. The greatest effect came when, beyond improving internal organizational abilities, CSOs were empowered to be active in their community and involved in activities that supported such endeavors, including local government monitoring, providing data for community needs, or acting as service provider.

World Bank—Social Accountability

93 outcomes from all 13 pilot project grantees and some from those who only participated in one training workshop

Against the objective to strengthen monitoring capacity of CSOs on the mining value chain and related economy outcomes, the intervention was successful at introducing or significantly enhancing social accountability knowledge and skills in several organizations.

Judged strictly against the mining (or extractive industry) value chain, however, the intervention has not been fully effective since it has almost without exception only strengthened CSO capacity at the end of the value chain farthest from the extractive industry.

A further benefit of assessing the program two years after it concluded is that it has been possible to interpret the extent to which the results are sustainable. After the intervention, 71 of the outcomes materialized, many of which demonstrate organizational ownership of concepts and tools introduced.

World Bank—Public Procurement

28 outcomes total

Against the objectives of support to the Ministry of Finance and CSOs, the intervention was successful at supporting the ministry and the development of a self-

Table 1. At a Glance: 190 Outcomes Collected from the Three Interventions

SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building

69 Outcomes in total, each relevant to or exceed SDC's pre-defined objectives

- 51 Outcomes demonstrate the application of knowledge from the intervention
- 7 Outcomes suggest a sustained influence of the intervention
- 5 Outcomes cite engagement between CSOs and their community

World Bank—Social Accountability

93 Outcomes in total, each relevant to or exceed the Bank's pre-defined objectives

- 71 Outcomes suggest a sustained influence of the intervention
- 59 Outcomes demonstrate the application of social accountability knowledge gained through the intervention
- 29 Outcomes show dissemination of social accountability
- 24 Outcomes cite constructive engagement, demonstrating a deepening awareness of social accountability
- 14 Outcomes show successful fundraising for implementation of social accountability activities after the intervention
- 11 Outcomes show demand for support in using social accountability concepts and tools
- 11 Outcomes show networking of practitioners
- 9 Outcomes directly relevant to the mining value chain
- 7 Outcomes describe working with the private sector
- 7 Outcomes demonstrate advocacy of social accountability
- 5 Outcomes involve engaging the media

World Bank—Public Procurement

28 Outcomes in total, each relevant to or exceed the Bank's pre-defined objectives

- 25 Outcomes suggest the potential sustainability of the Partnership for Public Procurement
- 14 Outcomes are at the aimag (provincial) level
- 12 Outcomes are at the national level
- 11 Outcomes demonstrate strengthened capacity of CSOs in procurement monitoring
- 8 Outcomes show influence on road maintenance, specifications and planning
- 7 Outcomes show support for self-governing CSO networks
- 5 Outcomes show support for Ministry of Finance in its development of implementing rules and guidelines on CSO participation and oversight
- 2 Outcomes at the Ulaanbaatar level

governing CSO network. But it had not yet succeeded in developing monitoring tools for the network, and the extent of capacity strengthening of CSOs has been limited to the few participants in two pilots. The intervention was still young and continued for months more. While some objectives remain unachieved, the outcomes indicate progress in influencing rules and guidelines and formal establishment of the partnership.

BENEFITS

Several benefits for the evaluators, Bank, and SDC came about from using outcome mapping as an evaluative methodology in this particular case. Teams might want to consider these benefits when deciding on a methodology for assessing similarly complex programs.

Examine multiple actors

Traditional evaluations tend to give credit to a single contributor, when in complex development programs multiple actors drive change. It is important to discover how and which actors worked together or built on each other's actions over time to create results so future programs can maximize their potential and use the "right" mix of actors.

For example, in the findings from the Bank—Social Accountability pilot in community monitoring of a family hospital's services and conditions, outcomes showed how multiple social actors brought about change: patients, doctors, and hospital management. Based on the engagement of patients, the hospital changed its policy so all patients can use toilets that were previously "staff only"; the hospital appointed a guide nurse to help patients arriving for treatment; and the chief doctor appointed two additional doctors.

Learn from the complete picture

Harvesting outcomes allows the exploration of significant outcomes—whether intended or unintended, negative, or tacit/unrecorded—to get a complete picture of what went right or wrong and how to learn from the change process to inform future thematic areas. Taking a narrow approach that considers only those outcomes that had immediate or direct contributions from the interventions could miss stories of change connecting related outcomes.

For example, in the findings from the SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building intervention, an unintended

outcome is the impact that empowered newly trained CSOs can have in their community. Six outcomes prove this occurred because of the intervention. A local trainer, motivated by what she learned, took it upon herself to find resources and train a further 22 organizations. This unintended outcome that normally would not have been discovered adds to an appreciation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention.

Engage stakeholders

Outcome mapping encourages reflection and dialogue—it is a truly participatory method in which counterparts are engaged, thereby giving them ownership over the process and ensuing results. It offers an opportunity to get at the collaborative theory of change.

In this particular case, the SDC and World Bank worked together as a team to design the evaluation questions and in the process built a stronger relationship. Once data collection was completed, the evaluators sent key informants their individual findings and asked them to confirm whether the information was correct. This step enabled informants to play a main role and express their views, and added credibility as well.

Inform next steps

Outcome mapping enabled the evaluators to identify links between multiple outcomes to uncover latent/emerging knowledge, innovative solutions, and how to scale up the program. All of this helps to detect pieces for prospective program design or further phases.

For example, in the area of NGO capacity building, the outcome data provides a rich source for identifying organizations that could fulfill particular roles in a new phase of funding support. Based on this data, the recommendation is that the SDC and the Bank, with selected stakeholders with firsthand knowledge of relevant institutions in Mongolia, may review the outcome data and other sources and, according to the focus of any new intervention, identify potential actors for particular roles.

Communicate results

Outcome mapping allows evaluators to go deeper into what, why, and how changes happened than using more traditional methods, which can often rely on hard numbers and indicators. Harvesting detailed outcome information led to the writing of nine outcome stories that describe changes in people—how the roles

of actors affect results—to capture the flavor of what occurred.

SDC wanted to have evidence of results presented in a storytelling format, and the outcome stories ended up being shared the most. The outcome mapping methodology proved useful for reconstructing the storyline of change for the three interventions. ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The case study is a collaborative effort based on documentation from the evaluation and interviews and feedback with:

- Evaluation team—Richard D. Smith (leader), Jeremy Gross and Amarbayasgalan Dorj
- World Bank—Marcela Rozo and Kathrin Frauscher from the Open Contracting team, and Governance Partnership Facility team members
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation team members

Jenny Gold and Sharon Fisher, World Bank, led the case study team. Dawn Roberts provided input.

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FOOTNOTES

¹ See www.outcomemapping.ca

² This outcomes evaluation followed the definition of “outcome” used in the outcome mapping methodology: a change in the behavior, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a program works directly.

³ It is up to the principal evaluation user to decide what substantiation is needed to make the results credible. In this case, outcome data was provided nearly exclusively by those the interventions were seeking to influence and not by the World Bank or SDC staff. Thus, the outcomes were assumed to be credible, which substantiation of the nine outcome stories confirmed.

ANNEX

Example of an Outcome Story: World Bank—Public Procurement Intervention

The evaluators highlighted key outcomes in outcome stories to communicate specific achievements or lessons in a narrative format. They produced nine outcome stories.

OUTCOME STORY 6—The Ministry of Finance adopted Implementing Rules and Regulations for the monitoring of public procurement that reflected suggestions from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Outcome

In late 2012, the Ministry of Finance adopted new Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for CSO participation in bid evaluation committees that included several requests of the Partnership for Public Procurement (PPP), such as the use of specific reporting templates and creation of a web portal for CSOs to use when reporting on the performance of bid evaluation committees.

Significance

The IRR are significant for being a necessary implementation instrument for the 2011 amendment to the Public Procurement Law, which mandated the involvement of civil society in public procurement for the first time. This was the first time that CSOs working on procurement in Mongolia successfully collaborated to advocate for regulatory changes as a partnership network.

Contribution

Financial and technical support for the creation and strategic development of the PPP has been provided by the World Bank since 2012 through the Governance Partnership Facility it administers.

The PPP provided coordinated inputs during the policy dialogue with the Ministry of Finance over the summer and autumn of 2012. N. Otgonjargal, chair of the PPP, led and coordinated the contributions of PPP members to the drafting of the rules and regulations. The Bank supported the Governance Partnership Facility in developing a united message to engage constructively with the government. Bank support included coaching, network building and technical advice on procurement monitoring.

ANNEX

Interview Guide: World Bank—Social Accountability Intervention Informants

Purpose of Interview

- We are conducting an evaluation of the work the World Bank and SDC have supported since 2009 on civil society/NGO strengthening and CSO engagement in procurement.
- Specifically, we are assessing the Social Accountability Learning-in-Action (SAcLAP) and PPP projects of the Bank and the NGO Effectiveness Project of SDC.
- The main focus of the evaluation is to learn what did and didn't work. We are not looking at how the money was used.

Key Facts

Name:

Position now:

Position during SAcLAP:

Participated in SAcLAP training/pilot?

Others from your organization who participated in SAcLAP ?

How many workshops/events were there? What were they on? Who hosted, participated?

SAcLAP

1. What did you/your organization gain from the SAcLAP project ideas/tools?
2. Were the tools/ideas appropriate and tailored for the Mongolian context?
3. Have there been any effects/benefits because of the work you did during the pilot project? Any changes in policies, practices, relationships, or activities of those you have been trying to influence?
4. If yes, who changed, what, when and where? How, exactly, did the SAcLAP ideas/tools contribute?

Before SAcLAP

1. Before your involvement in SAcLAP, had you heard of social accountability?
2. If yes, had you done any social accountability work/used social accountability tools?
3. If yes, what was the project and who funded it?
4. If yes, from where/which organizations did you receive materials/tools/trainings to understand the subject?

After SAcLAP

1. Have you used the ideas/tools from SAcLAP in any other work?
2. Have there been any effects/benefits because of the work you did during the pilot project? Any changes in policies, practices, relationships, or activities of those you have been trying to influence?
3. If yes, who changed, what, when and where? How, exactly, did the SAcLAP ideas/tools contribute? Who funded it?

ANNEX

Survey Questions: SDC—Local NGO Capacity Building Intervention

1. A clear mission statements that reflects your organization’s purpose? Y/N
2. A written charter defining, for example, the organization’s purpose, beneficiaries, activities, role of the board, elections, how meetings are run? Y/N
3. An active board that meets regularly in accordance with the organization’s rules? Y/N
4. A mechanism to review and update your organization’s strategic plan and annual work plan regularly? Y/N
5. An annual workplan? Y/N
6. A human resource policy for staff development? Y/N
7. Clear roles and responsibilities for staff members and/or volunteers? Y/N
8. A staff member capable of submitting a financial report to the tax office? Y/N
9. Capacity to raise funds from members, donations or government funds? Y/N
10. The capacity to write a funding proposal? Y/N
11. Mechanisms for beneficiary, partner and stakeholder feedback? Y/N
12. Sustainable activities to achieve your mission and vision statement? Y/N
13. The ability to partner with other NGO’s to benefit from pooled resources? Y/N
14. What have been the specific benefits of each internal management change your organization has made following your participation in the SDC funded training on Capacity Building and Training for Local NGOs.
15. As a result of changes to your organization’s internal management, has your organization carried out new types of actions or activities? Please describe.