

AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVENESS FRAMEWORK

– A toolkit for small and medium sized NGOs

Developed by ACFID's Development Practice Committee and Maya Cordeiro, independent consultant, 2015



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1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty. Our vision is of a world where gross inequality within societies and between nations is reversed and extreme poverty is eradicated.

ACFID's purpose is to provide leadership to the not-for-profit aid and development sector in Australia in achieving this vision and to fairly represent and promote the collective views and interests of our membership.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 135 members and 13 affiliates operating in more than 100 developing countries.

ACFID's Development Practice Committee (DPC) is a standing sub-committee of the ACFID Executive that provides advice and guidance to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the aid and development sector through leadership of good practice; applied research and development of tools and processes; and engagement with the Australian aid program.

In 2014, the DPC produced a draft Effectiveness Framework Toolkit to assist ACFID member agencies to develop their own development effectiveness frameworks. The Toolkit was piloted with three small ACFID member agencies and the lessons and experiences of those agencies have been used to refine and prepare this revised version.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

ACFID's Code of Conduct, established in 1997 and revised in 2010, provides standards of good practice for Australian NGOs and includes principles and requirements around development effectiveness and efficiency. ACFID members define development effectiveness as:

'Promoting sustainable change which addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty and marginalisation – i.e. reduces poverty and builds capacity within communities, civil society and government to address their own development priorities.'

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide small and medium sized Australian NGOs with some guiding principles and practical assistance to develop their own effectiveness frameworks, whether at the program or organisational level. There are various approaches to developing an effectiveness framework, so rather than suggesting one particular approach or model, this Toolkit provides a few different resources including:

- A process guide: covering a series of steps to develop an effectiveness framework. This may be used to guide a series of staff workshops or as a resource for a senior manager, tasked with the responsibility of drafting a framework including an outline of various approaches or models
- Tools and practical resources: to assist with the practicalities of developing or drafting the actual framework
- A reading list: with suggestions and links to additional resources

1.3 INTRODUCTION: how does an effectiveness framework work?

Most organisations collect a great deal of data and information on their projects. This can be through regular reporting, research, field visits and evaluations. The idea of an effectiveness framework is to ensure the data that is collected is a useful part of a process of reflection, learning and ongoing improvement. To this end, an effectiveness framework assists NGOs to articulate ‘why’ and ‘how’ their operations are impacting on poverty and social change.

Fundamentally, the purpose of any effectiveness framework is to bring about better outcomes for people living in poverty, through better projects, programs and development approaches. Just like a strategic plan, an effectiveness framework can take different approaches and formats.

In the Australian NGO context, effectiveness frameworks are used to encourage reflection and learning on development effectiveness in different ways. Some existing effectiveness frameworks focus on the organisational level with the intent of strengthening effectiveness of the NGO as a whole. Others focus on effectiveness at the program level, with linkages to a broader organisational ‘theory of change’ or linkages to organisational goals and performance measures.

The approaches which underpin these effectiveness frameworks range from sets of learning questions, to more complex models that build on significant data gathering processes. Some frameworks are more conceptual, demonstrating how a NGO’s approach to assessing effectiveness is linked to the agency’s values or mission, or theory of change. The important commonality in all of these frameworks is that there is a feedback loop, back into project or program reflection and learning (see Tools and Resources: a diagrammatic view of development effectiveness reporting).

Three examples of effectiveness frameworks which can be accessed from ACFID or the agencies themselves include:

- Childfund Australia’s Development Effectiveness Framework
- Mary McKillop International’s Development Effectiveness and Learning Framework
- TEAR Australia’s Development Effectiveness Framework

1.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND LESSONS LEARNT TO DATE

The pilot of the draft Effectiveness Framework Toolkit covered a period of three months. During this time, three small¹ ACFID member agencies participated in an initial workshop and then received one-on-one mentoring support from an external consultant to develop their own development effectiveness framework. At a final workshop, the participants shared and recommended the following key principles for other small agencies interested in undertaking similar work.

Keep it simple: An effectiveness framework is a way to articulate ‘why’ and ‘how’ NGOs know their operations are impacting on poverty and social change. Small agencies do not need to develop complex, lengthy effectiveness frameworks. Often, a simple diagram or two page summary of key effectiveness reporting processes may suffice.

Define the scope: If embarking on developing an effectiveness framework with limited resources or mid-way through a strategic planning cycle, it is preferable for smaller NGOs to focus on the development effectiveness of one aspect of their programs rather than their effectiveness as an organisation.

Build on existing data and information: Often, work on developing an effectiveness framework will highlight data and information gaps or the kind of information that needs to be collected in the future. For smaller NGOs, it is better to concentrate on existing monitoring and evaluation processes, making modifications to outputs and data utilisation processes, rather than creating many new data collection processes.

Encourage consultation through the process: It is important for CEOs or senior managers to develop the framework in consultation with head office staff and country staff or partner organisations. Gaining understanding and ownership of the framework across the NGO is much easier if stakeholders are involved from the beginning of the process.

Think through resourcing: The work doesn’t stop at the first draft! As part of the process of developing and drafting an effectiveness framework, it is important to think through the resourcing required to roll out, implement and revise the framework going forward. For smaller NGOs especially, it may be worth considering utilising the expertise of an external consultant to help guide the process.

¹ small members are those who disburse less than \$1 million to development programs

2 PROCESS GUIDE

The following section provides a series of steps and questions to develop an effectiveness framework. The questions may be used as discussion starters for a series of staff workshops - or simply as a guide for a senior manager, tasked with the responsibility of drafting a development effectiveness framework (see Tools and Resources: Format for development effectiveness staff workshop).

Step 1 Why does my organisation need an effectiveness framework?

At the onset, it is important to have clarity and a shared understanding (at a management level) around the rationale for developing an effectiveness framework. Being clear about the purpose of the exercise will enable senior managers to communicate the process to other stakeholders (e.g. Board, partners, country offices, etc.) clearly and coherently. It will also enable senior managers to take sensible decisions about the parameters of the framework at later stages of the process.

How? A recommended approach to thinking through the purpose behind developing an effectiveness framework is to map the 'external' as well as 'internal' drivers for formalising your organisations' thinking on development effectiveness. A discussion on the internal and external drivers for effectiveness leads nicely into a discussion on the audience for your development effectiveness framework. Being clear about your audience will enable you to focus on the right information in your framework and develop the appropriate content at later stages in the process.

Examples of internal drivers:

- Suggestion/input from a Board member
- Desire to demonstrate good practice
- Desire to assess change at a project/program or sector level
- Development of an organisation level theory of change
- Desire to develop more case studies, stories and evidence of effectiveness
- Desire to use program evidence in staff learning and capacity building

Examples of external drivers:

- Requests/feedback received from donors
- Requirement for external funding
- Sector level events, dialogue (e.g. with ACFID)
- Partner organisation practices
- Participation in an international network (where others have effectiveness frameworks)

Outcome: At the end of this first stage, the purpose and audience of the development effectiveness framework should be documented.

Step 2 What are the strengths and limitations of our existing data and information?

2

All organisations have processes and methods in place to monitor, evaluate or learn from significant areas of the organisation's work. These can be built into an effectiveness framework.

How? A good way to do this is for senior managers to list what data and information is currently collected and pool together ideas around the strengths and weakness of each aspect. This would include the data generated through project and program monitoring and evaluation as well as performance data collected for the organisation as a whole. If time permits, it might also be useful to undertake this exercise at a field office or partner level – examining the strengths and weakness of data and information collected for accountability or other purposes, and considering the appropriateness of the timeframes for data collection.

Examples of strengths:

- The organisation generates considerable case material, good practice stories, etc.
- The organisational strategy is clear and has well defined measures on the organisation's contribution to poverty and social change
- Monitoring and evaluation reports are rich and detailed
- A 'theory of change' development process has been trialed in X area and some good ideas about development effectiveness are emerging

Examples weaknesses:

- The organisation generates a lot of micro-level data not all of which is comparable and quantifiable
- Partners are not clear about the purposes of monitoring and evaluation
- Program officers visit field contexts infrequently
- Field offices have too much work, collecting different sorts of data to fit diverse donor requirements
- The organisation has just switched to a new software for storing program information, which is quite complicated

The aim of this second stage is to begin to list and address the strengths as well as the gaps in the way that your organisation produces and uses data and information to demonstrate your development effectiveness. In constructing this overview you might find that the data and information collected is too 'micro-level' to enable judgment on development effectiveness. Conversely, you might find that the organisation generates a considerable amount of information but that a fairly small amount of information generated actually informs learning or program development or that the processes for analysing, storing or processing information require attention.

Outcome: At the end of this second stage, document valuable sources of information and key monitoring and evaluation processes as well as the gaps in the data and information your organisation currently generates. Which processes and methods are a priority in the context of the effectiveness framework purpose and audience outlined as part of Step 1?

Step 3 What approaches are other agencies using?

An informal survey of NGOs with representatives on the ACFID Development Practice Committee showed that the frameworks were often put together by program and monitoring and evaluation staff, through reflection and review processes with partners overseas and their global networks. In some cases, Australian NGOs have contributed to, and then adopted, the framework of their international network, linking it to their own agency's monitoring and evaluation tools and processes.

As you work through your own framework, you may like to consider the following three approaches currently being used by different NGOs. You could also choose to take aspects of the following approaches and combine these to develop a framework that best works for your program and organisation. These approaches are not mutually exclusive and a hybrid approach may suit your purpose and audience best (see Tools and Resources – MMI and INF case studies on developing an effectiveness framework).

Approach 1 Project Management/Strategic Framework

Linked with the project management cycle, or even an organisational-wide strategic framework, this approach assesses effectiveness based on the project's or the organisation's output and outcome indicators. Outputs are tracked quarterly as part of regular monitoring, and a quantitative measurement of results and outcomes is carried out periodically against the initial baseline. Case studies provide a qualitative assessment. Organisational frameworks involve indicators and monitoring at an organisational as well as project level and must include strong support and ownership at senior management as well as program staff. If this approach is done organisation-wide, then one of the other approaches listed below may be adopted at a program level to provide additional detail on development effectiveness.

Approach 2 Theory of change

A Theory of Change explains how change happens in any given situation and identifies the key drivers of that change. These drivers of change become the project outcomes. A theory of change is represented in a diagram that shows a simple model of the expected cause-and-effect relationships between immediate changes, intermediate outcomes and final outcomes. The organisation's or the project's effectiveness (how well it has achieved the outcomes) can then be assessed or tested against evidence gathered at a field level through monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

Approach 3 Core questions

The Core Questions approach identifies the critical areas of an organisation's effectiveness and then frames several questions around each of those areas. Answering the questions involves data gathering from the field using qualitative methods (case studies, Most Significant Change, etc.), quantitative analysis, feedback from communities and internal reflection on experience. The questions themselves are quite general in nature. e.g. What significant changes have occurred? How effectively have the communities participating in our activities been involved in the different stages of the process?

How? The resources list at the end of this Toolkit provides additional reading on all of these approaches. During this third stage, it is also valuable to take stock of other effectiveness frameworks that are in circulation. For example, at a senior management team meeting, read through a couple of different effectiveness frameworks and discuss their purpose, audience, size and content. Are there content elements in those frameworks that would suit your organisation? Are there presentation elements in those frameworks that are effective and valuable?

Outcome: This goal of this third stage is to begin to develop the parameters for your effectiveness framework – identifying the kind of approach and content that will be meaningful to your organisation.

Step 4 What sub-themes should our framework focus on?

This next step in the process is about beginning to put together the content of the framework. This involves determining the focus and sub-themes for your effectiveness framework. Sub-themes should reflect areas that are particularly important to your organisation, for example, partnerships with other actors, accountability to primary stakeholders, or gender equality. Factors such as the sequencing of this work alongside your strategic planning cycle, the scope of existing monitoring and evaluation processes or internal capacity and understanding around development effectiveness, may also determine the focus of your framework.

In terms of overall focus, your framework can address organisational effectiveness, which means that the content of the framework would be about organisational systems, processes and capacity. Alternatively, it can emphasise program effectiveness and focus in on the program activities you run. In terms of sub-themes, the framework also needs to address what you perceive as priorities for data collection – the data and information which is vital to provide evidence of your effectiveness.

How? The experience of the pilot process suggests that it is preferable for smaller agencies to start off with a narrower focus (e.g. one thematic area or country program) and adopt sub-themes or priorities for data collection that are consistent with current programming approaches, monitoring and evaluation. Then, as part of the effectiveness framework building exercise, a few additional data collection processes or methods may be explored. Consistency with other major organisational-level planning frameworks or tools is also vital to progress this work.

After identifying the kind of approach and content to be covered in your effectiveness framework, it is worth spending a little time establishing how this framework will relate and/or align with your other organisational or program level strategy or policy documents.

Key questions to aid in establishing priorities for the framework:

- Does our organisation have an organisational strategy?
- Is there a sector or department specific strategy as well?
- Is there an existing monitoring and evaluation framework?
- Has our organisation signed onto any external standards or measures of development effectiveness?
- Do our partners or country offices operate in the context of other development effectiveness reporting requirements?

If the focus of the framework is not clear or the priorities for data collections are just too overwhelming, return to the discussion on the purpose and audience for your framework. If you need to communicate your development effectiveness to X, what data and information will be most valuable?

Outcome: The aim of this fourth stage is not to load-up this process. Remember – keep it simple, build on what you have and identify a focus and a few priorities for data collection for the framework.

Step 5 What else should our framework include?

Once you have agreed on the focus of your framework, you are ready to finalise an outline for the actual document. If you have written notes for each step in the process so far, you should have a tentative outline for a development effectiveness framework. The next step is to share these initial ideas with at least a few other stakeholders.

How? A simple way to do this is to circulate a one-page summary with notes from the framework development process, clearly articulating the rationale for developing an effectiveness framework and with an invitation to feedback additional views on Steps 2, 3, and 4.

Example of development effectiveness framework outline (organisational level):

- Approach to and definition of development effectiveness
- How the framework was designed and how it will be reviewed
- How the organisation measures effectiveness at an organisational level (including data and information on activity as well as outcome-level change)
- Key monitoring and evaluation processes that support the framework (including head office as well as partner or field office level processes)
- Priorities for data collection and analysis (can be linked to organisational strategy)
- Mechanisms for learning from effectiveness reporting and analysis
- Key priorities for implementation
- Resourcing and calendar of effectiveness reporting outputs and activities (will align with organisational planning cycle)

Example of development effectiveness framework outline (program or thematic level):

- Approach to and definition of development effectiveness
- Focus of the framework and rationale for this
- Background information on the program or thematic area
- How the framework was designed and how it will be reviewed
- How the organisation will measure the effectiveness or the focus program or thematic area level (including data and information on activity as well as outcome-level change)
- Key monitoring and evaluation processes that support the framework
- Mechanisms for learning from effectiveness reporting and analysis
- Resourcing and calendar of effectiveness reporting outputs and activities (will align with program planning cycle)

Outcome: The aim of this fifth stage is for the senior management team to consult and agree on what will be included in the organisation's effectiveness framework.

Step 6 How should we draft the framework?

As you work through the actual writing up of your framework, you may like to consider the following three options for drafting your effectiveness framework. You could also choose to combine these options depending on what suits your organisational context and the resourcing available.

How? The experience of the ACFID pilot suggests that it is preferable to treat the writing up of the framework as a time bound activity with four to six weeks of periodic writing and discussion to produce an initial draft framework.

Option 1

In-house facilitator and editor

One staff member is appointed to draft the framework, facilitate further discussion and incorporate feedback.

Option 2

Peer agency support

The appointed person, or the senior management team, seeks guidance from other ACFID member agencies that have experience with developing their own framework. An existing relationship of trust and collaboration is usually required and the peer agency may need to comment on drafts as well as sharing their own experiences.

Option 3

External consultant/mentor

A senior management team member works with an external consultant. The choice and expertise of the consultant will depend on what is required for the process i.e. a consultant might provide the conceptual know-how on development effectiveness to match the staff member's expertise and understanding of the organisational context.

Outcome: The aim of this sixth stage is to appoint a lead for the actual drafting of the framework and ensure that person is supported.

Step 7 What should we plan for in terms of implementation and roll-out?

An effectiveness framework is likely to be developed and implemented over a period of time. There is no need to wait till the framework is perfect before you start to use it. In fact, the framework is best treated as a living document that will be amended over time, in line with changing priorities and approaches. A culture of learning, which encourages sharing, feedback and reflection, will enable the organisation to learn, adapt and continuously improve the quality of what they do.

How? In addition to drafting a roll-out and implementation plan as part of the effectiveness framework document, it is important to have a discussion on these issues with frontline staff responsible for data collection and analysis. It may also be essential to have a head-office level discussion on the learning processes which need to be built or strengthened as a tool for strengthening development effectiveness. One way to do this is to pilot the framework with one project or program before the framework is finalised.

Further suggestions for implementation and roll-out:

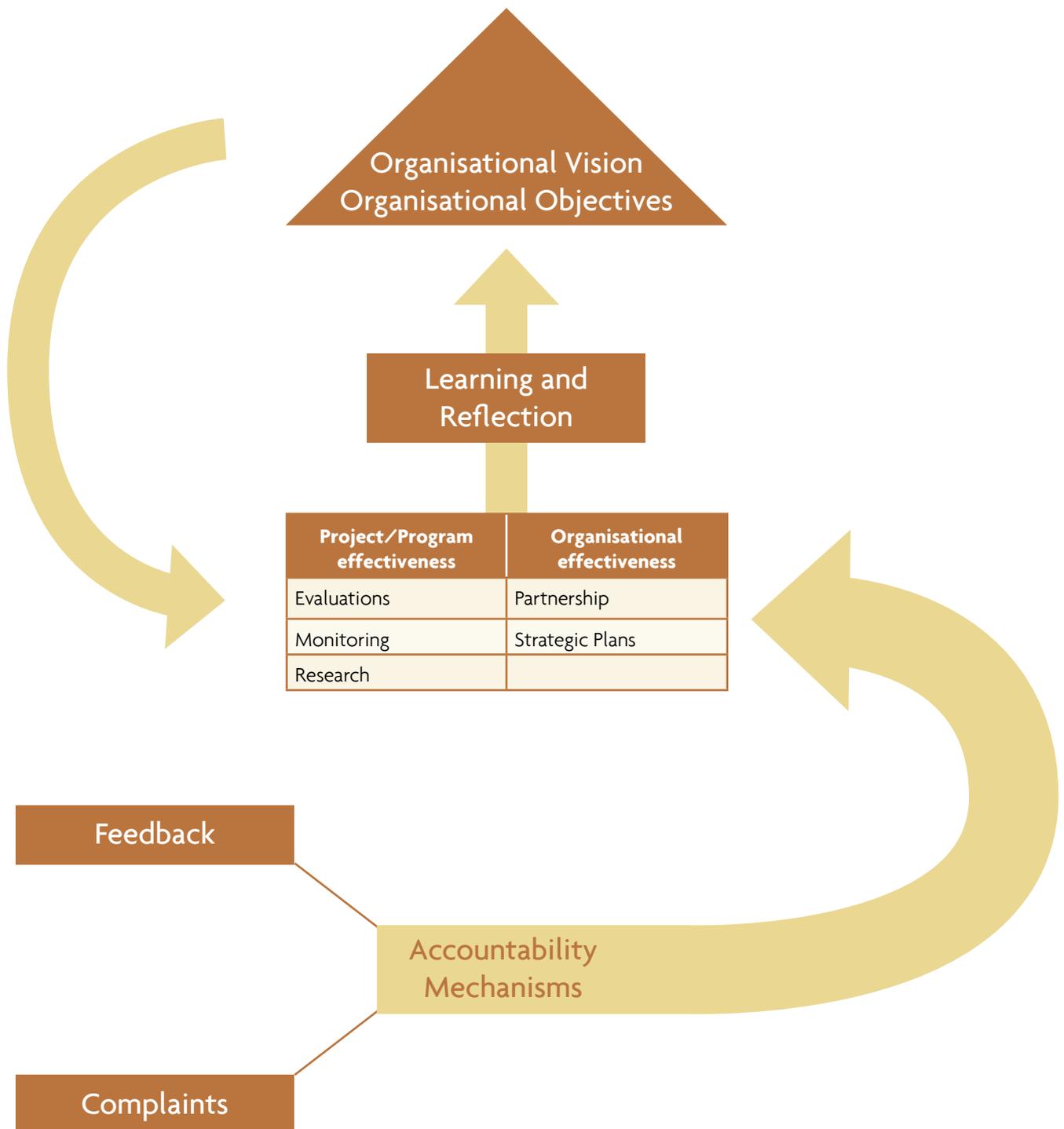
- Identify key monitoring and evaluation outputs, particularly in year 1 of implementation
- Aim for a good balance in terms of quantitative and qualitative outputs
- Review the frequency of all monitoring, evaluation and learning processes and outputs – is it doable? Monitoring reports are ongoing; impact studies should only be done after several years of operation
- Take time out of the day-to-day implementation of activities to reflect on issues of effectiveness
- Ensure that timelines align with existing program/organisational planning cycles
- Think through the resourcing implications of the framework – human, technical and financial. Often technical and systems changes are required to enable sharing and learning of effectiveness data
- Think through the communication strategy – how will it be communicated to key stakeholders?
- Plan for the review of the framework possibly at the end of the first year

Outcome: The final stage is about preparing to operationalise the framework. The operational detail may be stored in a separate document but the issues described should be thought through at this stage.

3 TOOLS AND RESOURCES

1

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: A diagrammatic view of development effectiveness reporting



2

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: Agenda for internal kick-off workshop

TIME	TOPIC/ACTIVITY	DISCUSSION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
9:00 – 9:30	Introductions and expectations – examination of contemporary trends shaping development effectiveness thinking	Why does my organisation need an effectiveness framework? How does this fit in with broader national/international drivers for development effectiveness?
9:30 – 10:30	Existing data and information – examination of existing data and information collected by the organisation and the strengths and weaknesses of each source	What are the valuable sources of information and key monitoring and evaluation processes? Where are the gaps?
10:30 – 11:30	Different approaches to developing an effectiveness framework – overview of different approaches; examination of examples from other agencies that have used these frameworks; practical work applying these framework to a fictitious project scenario	What are the major components, strengths and limitations of the approaches to developing an effectiveness framework?
11.30-12.00	Stretch break / tea and coffee	
12:00 – 13:00	Identification of agency goals and focus areas	Which approach/components are most relevant to my agency? What can we achieve in three months? What can we achieve in the medium to long term?
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch / additional reading / group time	
14:00 – 15:15	Initial steps in developing an effectiveness framework – discussion on steps suggested in toolkit; small group work; Q&A with facilitator	How do we start? Who should be involved? How may this work related to other agency/program level planning? What implications might this work have for partners?
15:15 – 16:00	Next steps for the framework development process	Which approach/components are most relevant to my agency?
16:00	Workshop ends	

3 TOOLS AND RESOURCES: MMI case study on developing an effectiveness framework

Mary MacKillop International (MMI) is the overseas aid and development organisation of the Sisters of St Joseph. MMI was formed through the amalgamation of three separate entities of the Sisters of St Joseph (SOSJ). These entities were Mary MacKillop East Timor Mission, Peru Mission and Ethica Free Trade Organisation. Inspired by the work of Mary MacKillop and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, MMI works in partnership with local communities in Timor-Leste and Peru in the areas of education, health and livelihoods, to promote and uphold the rights and dignity of all people and to strengthen people's capacity to be self-determining. MMI operates to the highest ethical and business practices to deliver sustainable programs which facilitate long-term change in the communities where we work.

MMI is governed by a board of directors and has an office in North Sydney made up of approximately 30 FTE staff across three countries. MMI has a local office and training centre in Dili, Timor-Leste, with 17 local staff. In Peru, MMI has a Program Coordinator who works with various Sisters who are living and working in the local communities to deliver our projects.

Motivation for thinking about development effectiveness:

As a relatively new organisation formed by three diverse entities, MMI is currently going through a period of change as we strive to ensure that all of our work effectively contributes to sustainable development in the communities where we work. During late 2014, MMI embarked on a reflective process to develop a 5 year Strategic Plan (2015-2019), which was seen as vital in an organisation that has experienced significant change. As part of this process we attempted to describe what effectiveness means for our organisation and in particular for our international programs. The timing for this coincided perfectly with the opportunity to take part in the ACFID Effectiveness Framework pilot, as we were in a unique position as a relatively new and small agency going through a period of change to really engage in the pilot program and utilise the expertise that could be provided by an experienced consultant to develop a comprehensive Development Effectiveness and Learning Framework (DELFF).

Through the creation of a DELFF for our organisation, it is our expectation that we will be able to better assess the effectiveness of our international programs, so we can continually improve our projects and become an active learning organisation. We hope to learn from the evidence gathered under this framework to plan and implement our projects so they can more closely meet the needs and goals of the communities we work in and better embody our core principles and program aspirations. It is our expectation that a DELFF will also allow us to demonstrate increased accountability to donors and the communities we serve.

Developing an effectiveness framework:

We decided to keep the scope of our effectiveness framework fairly narrow and focus only on our international development programs. MMI's DELFF is shaped by the idea that change in communities is not only as a result of program activities but also of the principles that are embedded in our projects. The DELFF will describe to what extent the MMI core principles are embedded in our program activities and assess the change that has arisen within the scope of our program aspirations. Therefore MMI's DELFF focuses on two components: measuring and describing our performance against our four core development principles, as well as measuring and describing our performance against our three program aspirations.

The data and analysis collected from this will be used to provide material for ongoing learning. This will assist in our learning in our long-term ability to improve our work. Our DELF has been made for program staff, both in Australia, as well as local staff in Peru and Timor-Leste.

The DELF was developed primarily by our CEO and our International Programs Coordinator (IPC) with input from the Sisters of St Joseph, MMI Staff in Australia, Timor-Leste and Peru and ACFID in a process that took three months. It was important for us that ownership and understanding of the DELF was felt across the whole organisation. As this process coincided with our strategic planning, we were in a unique position to utilise several strategic planning meetings to help us inform the content of our DELF. These strategic workshops followed a participatory process, including interactive activities and open debate and discussion. These workshops explored key questions such as where does MMI see itself in 5 years? What are the internal/external challenges and opportunities of MMI's programs? What projects are our strongest, and what are our weakest? How well do our projects embody MMI's 5 core principles? How do our projects embody our Mission and Vision? Information obtained from these strategic meetings helped to inform the content of the DELF. The following participatory strategic meetings took place over the past 4 months:

- A Strategic Planning meeting with all MMI staff in Australia
- A Strategic Planning meeting with SOSJ members, including several Sisters who have done extensive work in Peru and East Timor.
- Two strategic planning workshops with all MMI staff in Timor-Leste
- A Strategic Planning meeting with all MMI staff and the Board of Directors

In addition to these workshops, we also engaged in broader country-level analysis with those in Timor-Leste and Peru via surveys and meetings. Several meetings were held internally between the IPC and the CEO to discuss the information obtained in the meetings and further explore our development programs and how they can best be assessed for effectiveness. The IPC and CEO also had continual feedback from the ACFID consultant, Maya Cordeiro, via periodic Skype meetings and written feedback to DELF drafts and templates, to help strengthen our DELF framework and provide much-needed guidance and objective input.

Lessons learnt, ideas and suggestions:

To develop Effectiveness Framework within a three-month period requires strong dedication and commitment. We were helped by the fact that this coincided with the development of our 5 year Strategic Plan.

4

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: INF Australia case study on developing an effectiveness framework

International Nepal Fellowship (INF) Australia is a Christian organisation serving the physical and spiritual needs of Nepali people. Our goal is for Nepali people, particularly the poor and marginalised, to experience ‘fullness of life’, and we consider improved health, peace, justice and harmony as indicators of this. We work through partnerships to build the capacity of individuals and organisations who share our values, aiming to achieve our vision through supporting them to achieve their vision.

INF Australia is an autonomous member of a family of INF organisations. INF Nepal is our main, though not the only, implementing partner in Nepal. INF Australia contributes through the raising of funds, recruitment of Australian volunteers who can build capacity and provide advice, support and encouragement to Nepali counterparts, and through a close monitoring, evaluation and sharing of learning relationship.

INF Nepal implements health and development activities in many districts of the western half of Nepal. INF Australia supports the community health and development activities in some of these districts. It also supports the building of capacity among some smaller local development organisations in the Banke district.

INF Australia’s Relief Fund Committee manages and monitors the relationship with its partners.

Motivation for thinking about development effectiveness:

Our initial expectations for a Development Effectiveness Framework (DEF) were much more ambitious than the final product. We recognised that there were many layers of relationships in international development (both horizontal and vertical) and that there can be a lack of alignment in each organisation’s purposes, approach and expectations. The original intention for our DEF was to provide early identification of such mismatches. For example, our main overseas partner is INF Nepal which also works with ACFID members TEAR Australia and Transform Aid. Although we collaborate well and share information, there is a risk that differences in our approaches (expectations of M&E, theory of change) can lead to confusion and ineffectiveness. INF Nepal also works with local partner organisations. By aligning our approach and expectations, a DEF was intended to ensure consistency of outcomes.

Therefore, our main drivers for developing a DEF were to become a better, more effective partner, but also to see the wider family of organisations, funding bodies, and other stakeholders, all working together towards the same goals and sharing information in a more organised manner to achieve these goals.

Developing an effectiveness framework:

We realised early on in the process that our goals were too ambitious and decided to concentrate on making INF Australia a more effective partner. We could still hold longer term goals for the wider organisation but it was not within our capacity to address them all at this time. The preparation of our DEF went through a number of draft stages. Drafts were written by the CEO and Project Officer, with each draft circulated to the Relief Fund Committee for input. We currently have a Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor based with INF Nepal, and this person also provided input. The INF Australia AGM also presented an opportunity to gain member input.

Of particular value was the input gained from the allotted time with the ACFID-employed consultant and we are particularly thankful for that provision.

Our DEF now addresses the following areas: Focus, Clarity and Transparency; Understanding the context; Evaluation; Monitoring and Reporting; and, Relationship, Socialisation and Accountability. Each area contains details as to manner of implementation (supporting policies/documents, required understanding), corresponding timeline and templates, and responsibility for implementation.

Our next steps are socialising the DEF across the organisation and refining it over the next three years before a review and possible update.

Lessons learnt, ideas and suggestions:

While we were much more ambitious in the beginning, we have completed the process (for now) with a DEF that is going to be immensely useful to us. The framework does not have to address all areas of an organisation, and it is good to think of its development as a dynamic process. The capacity of the organisation at any given time should determine the extent of the influence of the framework.

For a small organisation, it can be difficult to gain the range of input required and it is therefore recommended that a consultant be engaged. One day of time spread over a number of meetings would be adequate to ensure that the bigger picture is not lost.

Finally, while our final DEF was not the same as the template frameworks we reviewed at the beginning of the process, it was still of great help to review other examples. In particular, this process helped us to identify what was needed in ours, and what was not necessary to include.

5

TOOLS AND RESOURCES: An outline for an effectiveness framework

Example of development effectiveness framework outline (organisational level):

- Approach to and definition of development effectiveness
- How the framework was designed and how it will be reviewed
- How the organisation measures effectiveness at an organisational level (including data and information on activity as well as outcome-level change)
- Key monitoring and evaluation processes that support the framework (including head office as well as partner or field office level processes)
- Priorities for data collection and analysis (can be linked to organisational strategy)
- Mechanisms for learning from effectiveness reporting and analysis
- Key priorities for implementation
- Resourcing and calendar of effectiveness reporting outputs and activities (will align with organisational planning cycle)

Example of development effectiveness framework outline (program or thematic level):

- Approach to and definition of development effectiveness
- Focus of the framework and rationale for this
- Background information on the program or thematic area
- How the framework was designed and how it will be reviewed
- How the organisation will measure the effectiveness or the focus program or thematic area level (including data and information on activity as well as outcome-level change)
- Key monitoring and evaluation processes that support the framework
- Mechanisms for learning from effectiveness reporting and analysis
- Resourcing and calendar of effectiveness reporting outputs and activities (will align with program planning cycle)

4 READING LIST

Australian aid and NGO development effectiveness approaches and standards

- ACFID, 2011. ACFID Code of Conduct. ACFID, Canberra.
<http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/code-of-conduct>
- Roche, C, 2009. Promoting Voice and Choice Exploring innovations in Australian NGO accountability for development effectiveness.
<http://www.acfid.asn.au/resources-publications/publications/acfid-research-in-development-series/promoting-voice-and-choice/view>
- DFAT, 2014. Making Performance Count: enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of Australian aid. Canberra. June, 2014.
<http://aid.dfat.gov.au/Publications/Pages/framework-making-performance-count.aspx>

Australian NGO development effectiveness frameworks

- Childfund Australia
- International Women's Development Agency
- Transform Aid International
- TEAR Australia
- Mary McKillop International
- World Vision Australia

International aid and NGO development effectiveness approaches, standards and frameworks

- BOND (the UK ACFID equivalent) is developing an effectiveness framework that links to organisational improvement in a variety of areas. The initial thinking about this and some draft papers on improving organisational effectiveness can be found here. <http://www.bond.org.uk/effectiveness>
- Oxfam GB's Global Performance Framework Assessment 2011. The analysis looked also at relationship between CSOs and effectiveness, questions if global outcome indicators can be developed in a meaningful way, and provides two case studies from the Oxfam portfolio. Available at: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/our-work/methods-approaches/monitoring-evaluation>
- Plan CCCD Framework– This document outlines Plan's Child Centred Community Development Program Framework and M&E plan. It also details the impact and outcome areas of the program.
- The Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness compiled a number of initiatives for development

- Big Push Forward <http://bigpushforward.net/>
- The African Platform for Development Effectiveness provides case studies and good practices of development effectiveness <http://www.africa-platform.org/>
- Independent Sector offers a variety of free resources to help non-profit organizations to become more reliable and effective (e.g. strengthening accountability, transparency and responsible practices) <https://www.independentsector.org/>
- Workshop on development effectiveness in practice: Applying the Paris Declaration, outcome document, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/30/20/38933324.pdf OECD, 2007
- HAP (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership) has a number of tools and publications available for free on their website, and links to other resources, all about beneficiary accountability. Whilst much of the site references the humanitarian realm, some of the tools and concepts are applicable to development situations and organisational approaches to triple loop accountability, feedback mechanisms, how to track and measure the depth of beneficiary engagement etc. <http://www.hapinternational.org>

Other useful links

Monitoring and evaluation

- BOND, 2014. Investing in monitoring, evaluation and learning – issues for NGOs to consider. BOND, London. <http://www.bond.org.uk/investing-in-mel>
- Simister, N. 2009. Developing M&E systems for Complex Organisations: A Methodology. INTRAC, Oxford <http://www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=663>

Theory of Change

- James, C. 2013, Theory of Change – a guide for small and diaspora NGOs, The Peer Learning Programme for Small and Diaspora Organisations, London <http://www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=782>
- A guide to developing a theory of change as a framework for inclusive dialogue, learning and accountability for social impact <http://www.keystoneaccountability.org/sites/default/files/2%20Developing%20a%20theory%20of%20change.pdf>
- A Theory of Change case study on how one organisation (Oxfam GB) developed and then applied a theory of change to improve their effectiveness <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09614520801898996>

Value for Money (VfM)

- ACFID, 2012. ACFID and Value for Money: Discussion Paper
<http://www.acfid.asn.au/resources-publications/files/acfid-and-value-for-money>
- Value for Money: Current Approaches and Evolving Debates
<http://bigpushforward.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/vfm-current-approaches-and-evolving-debates.pdf>

Reflection and learning

- Britton B, 2005. Organisational Learning in NGOs: Creating the motive, the means and the opportunity. INTRAC
<http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/398/Praxis-Paper-3-Organisational-Learning-in-NGOs.pdf>
- Annual Effectiveness Review, PLAN
<http://www.plan.org.au/About-Us/Accountability/Annual-Effectiveness-Review.aspx>