The Fundamentals of Program Evaluation for Human Rights

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Purpose for Today

- Challenges in evaluating Human Rights progress
- Techniques that work (or help)
- Current dilemmas in human rights evaluation
- Using a theory-driven approach

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The ‘results’ debate

Is Measuring Results Good or Bad?

WHY MANY NGOs are “down” on “RESULTS”:

- Can lead to strategies chosen because they are fundable and have a measurable impact, not those truly needed
- Can lead to withheld funding when not clear that result can be determined or attributed to group funded
- Most important result desired is too long term to measure
- Hard to apply measurement techniques to complex processes (1)

(1) Source: Assessing the Impact of Human Rights Work, 2011 by the International Council on Human Rights Policy

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Is Measuring Results Good or Bad?

WHY "RESULTS" CAN AND SHOULD BE MEASURED:

- Despite pitfalls, it is CRUCIAL we know which strategies help move towards human rights and why
- Without evidence and data, we're in the dark and can't repeat success or make human rights failures and violations known
- As we demand transparency from governments, etc., we must have transparency in our work.

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EVALUATION CHALLENGES IN HUMAN RIGHTS

The Challenges

- Very long time frame
- Many actors required
- Attribution for major societal change impossible
- Data unavailable: either uncollected or dangerous to get

- More? Let's discuss them

Particularities of Human Rights work

Similar to development but:

- Human rights grounded in an international legal framework with legal mechanisms (1)
- Balancing co-operation with Governments and holding them to account
- Attribution and Contribution even more difficult (2)
- Changes or developments not always visible
- Focus on developed as well as developing countries

Source: *International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), 2012. 'No Perfect Measure: Rethinking Evaluation and Assessment of Human Rights Work'.*

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Issues and Implications

- Matching need for broad, long term action with short-term, micro-focused, funding cycles (1)
- Demonstrating (especially to funders) robust indicators of progress towards broad or long-term goals (greater use of a Theory of Change approach?)
- Widening the feedback pool – engaging with those you are seeking to influence (2)
- Identifying proxies for unobtainable data
- Developing common standards and quality control for evaluation and evaluators (3)

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A THEORY OF CHANGE APPROACH

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Why use ToC

- Identify pathway needed to achieve long-term goal and so have logically compelling short-term outcomes to measure
- Portray actions and outcomes of many players
- Model complex change processes
- Identify indicators (qualitative or quantitative)

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Key Evaluation Goals

- On-going organizational learning
  1. What works and why
  2. What doesn’t work – was implementation flawed? Theory flawed? Or circumstances changed?
- Identification of complexity and context
- Transparency of work
- Making the case, motivate people

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Measurement

- Include views of people outside the movement
- Measure important “pre-conditions”
- Connect internal processes and activities to outward goals.
- Advocacy, incremental policy change and capacity can be measured
- Test “theoretical” belief against the evidence

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Problems with Getting Evidence

- Not available
- Governments not wanting to reveal
- Dangerous
- Need proxies for non-visible changes

No easy answers, but:

✓ Make the need for transparency and data part of the Theory of Change for a necessary pre-condition of the work

CONSENSUS: LEARNING APPROACHES

Ongoing Learning

- Many NGOs have set up M&E methods based on learning and reflection
- A Theory of Change provides a framework for reflection, and for making changes to the hypotheses about what works
- These approaches begin with understanding program design and intent (ToC) and connecting inputs, outputs and expected outcomes

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