

# ELMT TECHNICAL BRIEF

## EVIDENCE OF CHANGE APPROACH TO MONITORING

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The ELMT program is a two year multi-country, multi-sector program that aims to increase pastoralists' self-reliance and resiliency to drought in the cross border area of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. It has six intermediate results relating to livelihoods protection, livestock health, natural resource management, livelihood diversification, peace-building and advocacy. The ELMT/ELSE Consortium, consists of CARE Somalia (the lead agency), Save the Children Federation, Inc. (SC/US), Save the Children (SC/UK), CARE Ethiopia, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse (VSF-S) and CARE Kenya together with around 20 sub-grantees and partner organizations who carry out 'on the ground' activities in one of the most drought prone, insecure and marginalized areas in the Horn of Africa. The consortium is overseen by a Regional Co-ordination Unit with a total of five staff including a Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation (L,M&E) Advisor who is responsible for developing an M&E framework and promoting L,M&E among the consortium members.

In order to accommodate the wide range of organizations with over 65 different activities and a range of different Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems and capacities, it was decided to develop a broad monitoring framework that would track the program impact in the very short program period, promote consistent reporting and a common language and approach.

The framework was called the 'evidence of change' framework as the main focus is to identify and verify concrete examples of the changes that the program is contributing to. Initially for each activity the anticipated changes were identified and then monitoring tools were defined to track those and other unanticipated changes, both positive and negative, that were influenced by the program. A range of tools were proposed to gather evidence of change, depending on the consortium member, but at the very least program teams were encouraged to meet on a quarterly basis to carry out an evidence of change review to discuss the changes they were observing in the course of their work, identify areas for in depth monitoring and to agree any resultant adjustments in program implementation. Evidence of change was also a key focus of the quarterly narrative reporting formats and all partners were required to fill in the evidence of change table as in the example below.

### Example of an evidence of change review, SC/US Ethiopia, Negelle, May 2009

Intermediate result 3: Natural resource management strengthened			
Activity: Encourage elders councils to hold regular rangeland management for a to reassert more mobile livestock production systems			
Change indicator	Evidence of positive change	Evidence of no/negative change	Action point (AP)
Customary institutions and local government initiate meetings	Increasing community contribution to the meetings e.g. in Wato PA the community gave 1 bull, 3 cows and 5000Birr contribution.		AP: Consider gradual phasing out of SCUS contribution at next NRM sector meeting

Indigenous NRM knowledge informs decision-makers	Government bodies are supporting elders decisions e.g. according to elders' 2 people from Nura Umba and Adadi PAs were imprisoned for 2 years after they refused to dismantle their illegal private enclosures.		AP: Facilitators to ask community and government about other ways in which they are collaborating before next meeting
Pastoralists move to seasonal grazing lands peacefully	Last meetings reported: 400 private enclosures dismantled  based on the elders decision at meeting; 60,000 animals moved to seasonal grazing areas peacefully from 10 Pas following the <i>hagaya</i> rain; 3,000 animals (50 <i>kara</i> ) moved from Algae and Dublak to Arero	Large investors and elite are not dismantling enclosures; farm encroachment continuing	AP: Program Manager to interview key informants to verify and ask how much of this was due to elders meetings and decisions;  AP: Raise diplomatically with government offices.
Other changes	Siminto meeting in June reported: opening of access routes to water, grazing sites and salt and mineral licks e.g. to licks in Beadle, Siminto and Koba		AP: Project Coordinator to carry out interviews with local people in Beadle, Siminto and Koba

Initially a series of discussions were held with Addis and Nairobi based staff to understand existing monitoring systems and to introduce the idea of the framework. It was found that it took some time for the consortium members to understand and accept the approach. This was due to a number of reasons including: a bias towards quantitative monitoring, a lack of M&E capacity within some of the agencies and the lack of functioning monitoring systems within the organizations to feed into the new framework. Workshops and meetings were then held with field teams to introduce the general principles of M&E and the evidence of change approach and define change indicators and monitoring plans. While some progress was made, not all the partners developed the tools they had identified and therefore the initial quality of the monitoring was mixed. More in-depth workshops were thus carried out with some field teams to develop and test the tools in the field. As a result, simplified tools were suggested, particularly semi-structured questionnaires, the collection of stories of change/case studies and keeping change diaries.

#### **Example of evidence of change monitoring plan, VSF Suisse Somalia, November 2008**

<b>Intermediate Result 4: Livelihoods enhanced by strengthened alternative, complementary and enhanced income sources</b>			
<i>Change indicator</i>	<i>Monitoring tool</i>	<i>How often</i>	<i>Who</i>
Increased knowledge and practice on meat and milk hygiene practices.	Training evaluation form and follow up What they learnt from the training Use of what they learnt	After training and 3 months after the training	Trainer and community facilitator
Reduced spoilage of milk and meat	Story of change interview: Average daily volume of meat and milk spoilage compared to previous Causes of the increase/decrease.	3 months and 6 months after the training	Livestock technician
Increased income for selected individuals and groups	Story of change interview: Average daily income compared to previous Causes of the increase/decrease.	3 months and 6 months after the training	Livestock technician

The approach was not given as much attention as hoped due to: a high turnover of key staff (well over 50% of the agency staff associated with the project in the 2 year period), diffused M&E responsibilities (not all agencies had a full-time M&E staff members who were in a position to influence what L,M&E was done in the field), lack of organizational commitment and lack of time by the L,M&E Advisor due to reporting and communications responsibilities. However, feedback was received from the initial workshops that the approach helped teams

articulate and communicate what they were trying to do. Although the three monthly reflection meetings were only occasionally done without the L,M&E Advisor present, when they were, they enabled useful in-depth review and identification of opportunities to improve programming.

The idea of identifying and documenting change filtered through into what monitoring was done and led to more focused monitoring tools for example, in the case of VSF Suisse Kenya fodder monitoring formats were reduced from 21 to 7 pages. Other partners produced some informative in-depth case stories including stories of change which identified specific changes in individuals' livelihoods as well as documenting the realities of life in the project area.<sup>1</sup>

In all cases partners reported evidence of change in their reports, which led to more analytical and less activity-focused information, and although the evidence of change was not as specific or concrete as was hoped and negative changes were rarely cited, these elements of the report were the most appreciated by the readers and formed the basis of later synthesis and learning documents.

### **Example of evidence of change reporting: August 2009**

#### **Intermediate result 1: Livestock based livelihoods protected in the event of an emergency**

##### Evidence of positive change:

- *Following CARE Ethiopia's training of women and customary leaders on early warning and response, communities were observed to have increased hay making, diversified livestock species, buying and storing food grains when the market is good, and diversification of livelihood assets.*
- *Following the LINKS training on EW/ER in Borana CIFA is collecting market information more regularly and in a more standardised form. Government offices are now using to plan interventions e.g. when grain prices increased DPPC used to lobby to increase the number of safety net beneficiaries.*
- *In Negelle SC/US staff observed that as a result of supplementary feeding interventions and mobilisation communities are no longer burning crop residues but are feeding them to cattle (Mieso) as well as cutting grass (Korati) and buying teff stalks (Adeo).*
- *Following the Mandera early response planning workshop, three concept notes were developed for Somalia, two of which were funded (1 for VSF-S and 1 for SADO).*

##### Evidence of no change/negative change:

- *The Laisamis contingency plans are still not fully developed with assistance from CARE Kenya/CIFA due to lack of capacity and government officials stationed far from new districts.*

The evidence of change approach was used alongside more traditional tools such as the log-frame, which was developed at the beginning of the program. The log-frame included both USAID's predetermined quantitative indicators as well as evidence of change indicators which were later revised as the program evolved and the teams were able to be more specific and realistic about what changes could be influenced. Despite initial concerns, the donor was open to the approach and interested in the information it helped generate.

The evidence of change technique has generated considerable interest by other NGOs and has been used in a sister program (RREAD) and the story of change guidance has been adapted by Mercy Corps Ethiopia. CARE Kenya's RREAD program manager produced a rich and analytical final report following an evidence of change review, although much of the information produced was not provided to the donor due to ECHO's quantitative focus in reporting. The approach is quite similar to the outcome mapping approach developed by IDRC<sup>2</sup> and so presentations on evidence of change were made at outcome mapping meetings in London and Nairobi. Compared to outcome mapping it was found that the evidence of change has a number of advantages:

1. It is simpler and easier to understand and use as it is more intuitive and has minimal jargon;
2. It can incorporate different types of change not just those related to behavior and can draw on different types of monitoring tools;
3. It is open to different manifestations of change (outcome mapping can be overly prescriptive in its outcome challenges and progress markers);

<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.elmt-relpa.org/aesito/elmt?&id\\_cms\\_doc=50](http://www.elmt-relpa.org/aesito/elmt?&id_cms_doc=50)

<sup>2</sup> Tilstone, V. (2009) Evidence of change and outcome mapping [www.elmt-relpa.org](http://www.elmt-relpa.org) and Earl, S et al. (2001) Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs, IDRC, Canada, [www.outcomemapping.ca](http://www.outcomemapping.ca)

4. It explicitly prompts discussion about negative/no change and other unintended changes;
5. Is a monitoring tool as well as a planning tool/means of clarifying intent;
6. The analysis and link to implementation is built into the approach.

The approach was also presented to a regional FAO training of M&E staff in Nairobi, and information has been distributed to a number of organizations including the outcome mapping e-list, CAFOD and African Initiatives, ILRI and CARE offices.

### **Challenges and recommendations**

The major challenge encountered when implementing the approach was getting staff to create the space and time to reflect analytically together with HQ decision makers about what they were trying to do and what they were influencing. Although staff did try to take on some elements of the approach, often the changes that they presented were broad generalizations as opposed to being evidence-based, which was the purpose of introducing the approach. 'Evidence' needs to be concrete and specific and give solid grounds for belief. It needs to recognize where other factors may have also influenced the change and if only limited changes are identified then how the change will contribute to the overall objective or theory of change should be articulated – i.e. not leave the reader constantly asking 'so *what?*'. This should have been emphasized much more clearly when introducing the approach. Also the approach should have been built into the design of the program and responsibilities for implementing it included in plans, contracts and roles of key staff.<sup>3</sup>

With greater commitment, communities could have been involved in defining change indicators as a way of agreeing program intent and defining realistic indicators that were in line with community visions. The approach could have also been used more to analyze how the wider context was influencing the change, and as a basis for participatory impact assessments and evaluations.

The steps involved in the evidence of change approach are essential for solid program management and ensuring program quality and learning. Unfortunately these steps are not consistently and widely taken by NGOs, limiting the clarity of programming and its potential to make and show impact. The evidence of change approach provides a simple and intuitive way of ensuring this happens, even in short term programs and within organizations that are not particularly reflective in their culture. However, even then space still needs to be created and necessary evaluative skills need to be built, which ultimately requires a strong organizational commitment to monitoring and learning.

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholson, N. and Desta, S. (2009), Final Evaluation of ELMT/ELSE and Fowler, A. and MacMahon, J. (2009), Working as a Consortium – benefits and challenges, insights from the Enhanced Livelihoods in the Manderu Triangle Program, [www.elmt-relpa.org](http://www.elmt-relpa.org)