IDS PRACTICE PAPER IN BRIEF

ILT BRIEF 16
MARCH 2013

Learning about How to Role Play Outcome Mapping in an Hour

This paper outlines a role play game that illustrates the Outcome Mapping processes as detailed in the IDRC toolkit (see Section 1). Here we share how to set up the game, and how to relate its outcomes to a pre-prepared Outcome Mapping presentation. We hope that the game will be used and adapted by those interested in Outcome Mapping.

Introduction

The role play game illustrated in the IDRC toolkit was first devised for the I-K-Mediary Workshop at Dhaka, Bangladesh, in January 2011. As the conference was about the role of Knowledge Intermediaries as contributors to the flow of information from researchers into the policy environment (the Research Policy Praxis), the creative part of the role play game was thought to be a metaphor of the flow of information to policymakers for policy use. However, the role play game element of the whole could be revised to be a metaphor for work in whatever sector the participants work in. We would encourage adaptation to other sectors.

Setting the Scene

As stated above, the role play works in the context of a wider discussion of Outcome Mapping. Outcome Mapping was introduced by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) just over ten years ago. According to Smith et al. (2012), 'In that time the use of OM has been growing exponentially, due in part to IDRC's open source policies but also the flexibility of the methodology and the support available through the OM Learning Community (OMLC).'

Among many other items, what we have appreciated about the language of Outcome Mapping is:

- Its emphasis on outcomes (helping us move away from a focus on outputs);
- Its use of the term mapping (rather than 'pathways', because it implies multiple pathways through a complex landscape);
- Its emphasis on behaviour change (making real observations on changes in attitude and behaviour in defined groups).

It is also said to be good for participation and social mobilisation, although we have found these aspects less so.

In each Practice Paper published, we share our experience and learning. We are presenting ideas that we are exploring and that others in the intermediary sector might like to explore.

Our experiences contribute to the body of knowledge, but rarely if ever contain incontestable insights. This paper should not be read in isolation, however, and should be seen as complementary to other work conducted on related issues of capacity development, knowledge management, and policy influence.

The knowledge and information intermediary sector comprises those who seek to improve flows of knowledge between actors in decision-making and change processes in order to generate better development outcomes. Intermediaries act in a range of ways: enabling access to information; helping people to make sense of it; and facilitating connections that enable knowledge to be shared between stakeholders. It is a practice sector which cuts across other sectors.

The OM manual published in 2001 introduced a toolkit intended to be drawn on in the execution of Outcome Mapping. This toolkit has often been interpreted as a 12-step programme of work. Within the toolkit the steps are organised in three stages – 'intentional design'; 'outcome and performance monitoring'; 'evaluation planning'. Having introduced these tools or steps, the role play seeks to bring them together into an hour's activities. It is often difficult for people who are used to thinking Logical Frameworks, linear logic, and the focus on completion of tasks, to grasp how a focus on behaviour change can help navigate through a complex programme. While the role play is not that complex, it does have several elements of the unknown and can take different directions whilst being acted out. The role play works through the 12 steps, introduces a 13th tool (a brief 'Theory of Change') and illustrates how the intentional design can lead to M&E – orientated around outcomes and behavioural change.

Resources and setup

The game as described below was played with 38 people. If a different number of people are present the balance between those involved in the distribution of resources and those using the resources will need to be adapted. The resources required were: one pack of sticky notes of four different colours and at least 38 pieces of white A4 paper. The distribution of resources represents 'the project'. For 38 people we had two 'project staff', four 'project volunteers', and the rest became the audience or in our case, 'policymakers'. We asked two participants to volunteer to play the role of project staff. We then asked for 'project volunteers'.

Starting the game

The audience are told that the game will take 20 minutes, that it will be 'slow starting up' and a request is made for patience – 'bear with us'.

> The audience represents policymaking decision-makers who will 'use' the resources.

Project staff

Two volunteers from the audience are asked to sit at a table.

> These people represent staff of the project. The key feature of these people is that they are under the control of the facilitator and represent a part of the 'project' that is under control.

The staff are given the task of assembling packages of coloured paper for distribution to the whole group, but asked not to start yet. On the table is a pile of white A4 sheets of paper and a pack of (at least) four colours of sticky notes (enough for one for every member of the audience).

The instructions given to the staff should be set down in large writing on A4 sheets of paper and placed on the table in front of them. There are four instructions and these are best kept simple:

- Put one of each colour of the sticky notes onto a white sheet of paper.
- Write on the paper 'Use these papers to create a piece of art'.
- Give the paper to the volunteers standing around to give to the audience.

> Note, in illustrating this to the staff, the sticky note was folded by about one third before being stuck onto the white sheet. This is for two reasons: (a) it slows the creation process down – the idea is that since there are only two creators, and since they have to fold, it is a slow process. The people standing around (see below) will more likely get frustrated with the process and help it along; (b) the folding of t he paper is meaningless and is inserted into the game to give opportunity for someone to challenge, 'Why are we doing this?'.

There is a fourth command which is written in a different colour, the instruction:

- 'If those standing around offer to help you may accept'.

Project volunteers

Once the project staff are sat at the table and the instructions given, four volunteers from the audience are asked to stand around the table.

They represent volunteers within the project, where we have quite a lot of influence but not control. It is not possible to ask them to sit at the table and create the packages for distribution as this would require them to have a salary – which the project doesn't have.

They are asked merely to pass the completed packs to other people in the room and are not given any other instruction.

The game

If the staff have not started creating the packages, then they are instructed to start.

The facilitator watches and notes what happens during the game.

At the 10 minute mark, the facilitator quietly goes to two people in the audience. He engages with them in a brief comment on their artistic creation, and tells them that they do not have to stick to only the resources given, they are free to use any sheets of paper in the room, or the pens, whatever is to hand. He briefly encourages them to be creative, and notes they can also work collaboratively on a bigger piece of art.

(We suggest the facilitator does not engage in long conversation about the art, is not directive about the art, and tries to avoid questions from other people in the room as they pass through it. If someone explicitly asks whether they can use other paper – the facilitator can say 'Sorry, the rules of the game do not allow me to answer that – although "Jane" can', and point to the person you just quietly told that other paper use was allowed.)

Continue to note what is happening.

Stop after 20 minutes.

At the end of the game

Take a sample of the audience to share their creative art – try to ask the table with the two people the facilitator gave advice to last. Allow enough time for people to appreciate the art, but take a manageable sample – not everyone.

Once this is done, conduct the following survey, by asking participants to raise their hands:

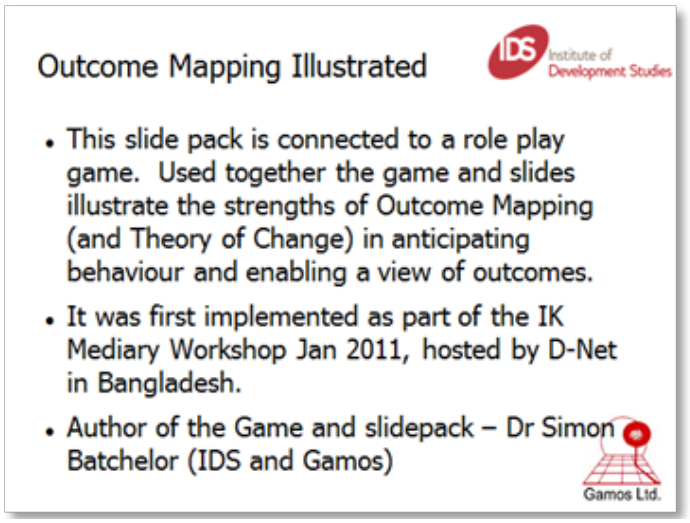
- How many people only drew on the sticky notes?
- How many people reformed the sticky notes into a physical art piece?
- How many people only used the sticky notes?
- How many people used the white sheet of paper as a part of the art (as opposed to the white piece being the sheet that holds the sticky notes in place)?
- How many people used other sheets of paper?
- How many people worked with someone else?
- How many people got together and worked collaboratively in a group?

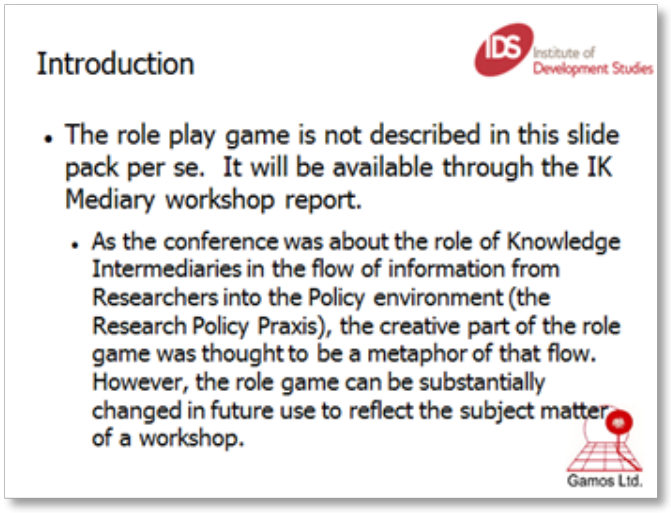
You now have in place the data you need to discuss the role of Outcome Mapping. Use the accompanying slide show to explain the predictive nature of Outcome Mapping in a mildly complex influencing game.

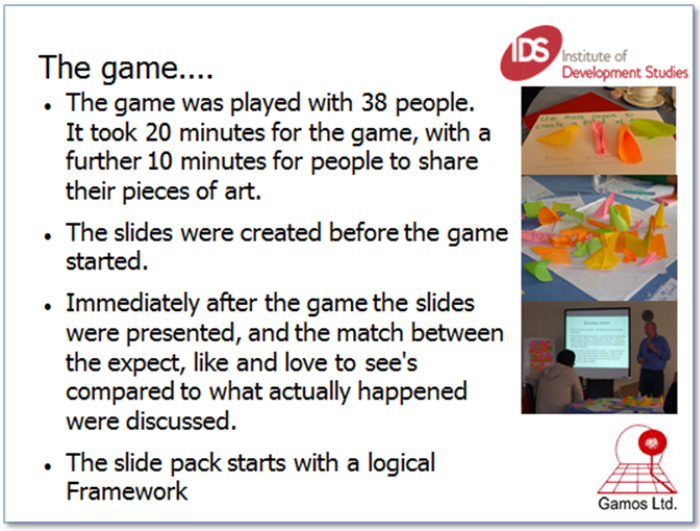
Adaptation

If you have adapted the game, or created a new one, then you will need to go through the outcome mapping process to create a new predictive slide show – before running the game. For the times we have run it, the impact and impression of the slide show was in its predictive element – people were wowed that it could describe the outworking of the game, even taking into account unexpected outcomes. It would not be acceptable to play the game, then write the Outcome Mapping slide show and present it half an hour or an hour later.

Elements of the slide show



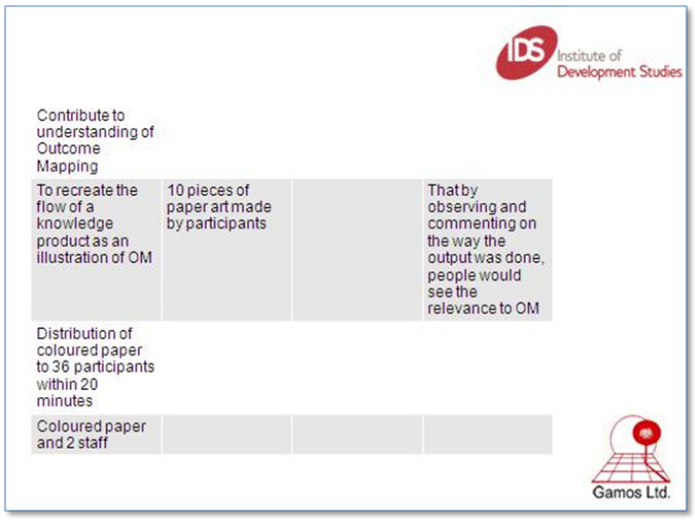


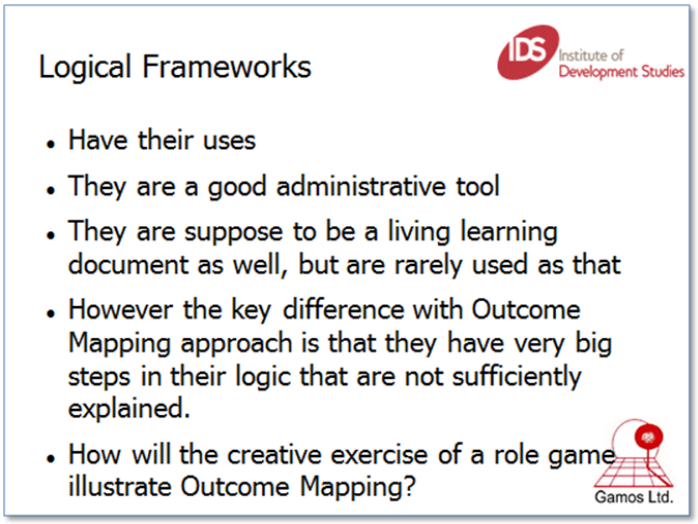


Logical Framework as an introduction

The slides started with a Logical Framework. Many of those working in development find difficulty working out how Outcome Mapping relates to the Logical Framework. By describing the activities and the purpose the opening slide adequately summarises the role play game, but says nothing about how the game will play out. One of the challenges of the logframe is that it makes the steps of logic quite large.

We are not against Logical Frameworks. When handled correctly they can assist in logic, planning and management. In Logical Framework training, the 'logframe' is spoken of as being 'living', changeable, and being able to cope with the unexpected. By placing the 'logframe' here as an introductory slide, the ongoing slides for Outcome Mapping stand out in contrast at the level of detail they include.





Introducing Outcome Mapping

After discussing the Logical Framework, and introducing Outcome Mapping, the standard 12-point toolkit that IDRC present for Outcome Mapping is shown. The audience are told that we will now work through each step.

Three stages of outcome mapping

Intentional Design

1. **What** are you trying to achieve? (vision)
2. **How** are you going to do it? (mission)
3. **Who** do you need to influence? (boundary partners)
4. How will other people **behave** if you have been successful (outcome challenge
5. What **changes** do you hope to see in other people aloong the way (progress markers)
6. What will you **do** to achieve the mission? (strategy maps)
7. How will you **behave** if you are working well? (organisational practices)

Outcome and Performance Monitoring

8. How will you **make monitoring manageable?** (monitoring priorities)
9. How will you record changes in **other people?** (outcome journals)
10. How will you record changes in **what you are doing?** (strategy journal)
11. How will you record changes in **your own behaviour?** (performances journal)

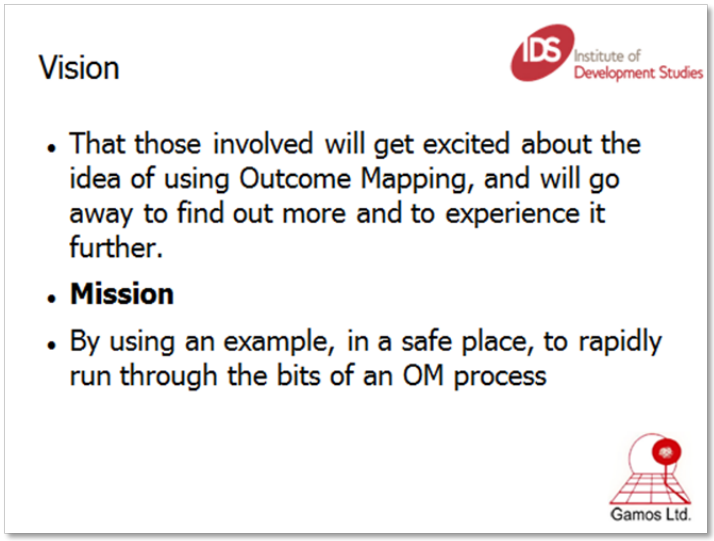
Evaluation Planning

12. What will you **explore in-depth?** (evaluation plan)

Source: adapted from IDRC toolkit.

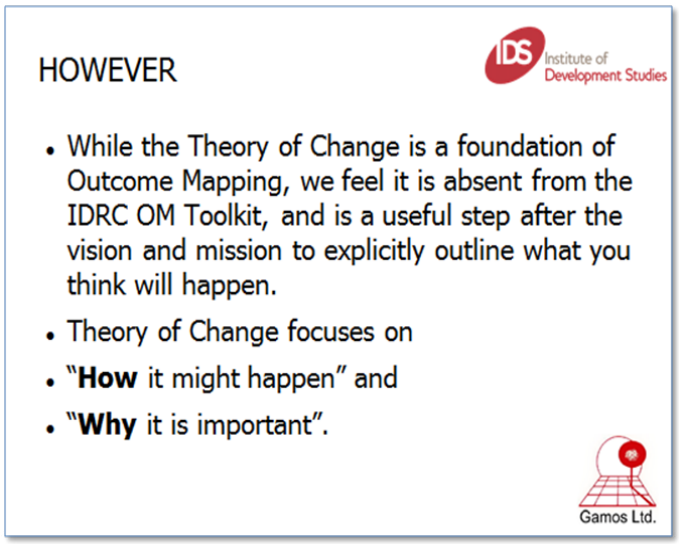
Vision and mission

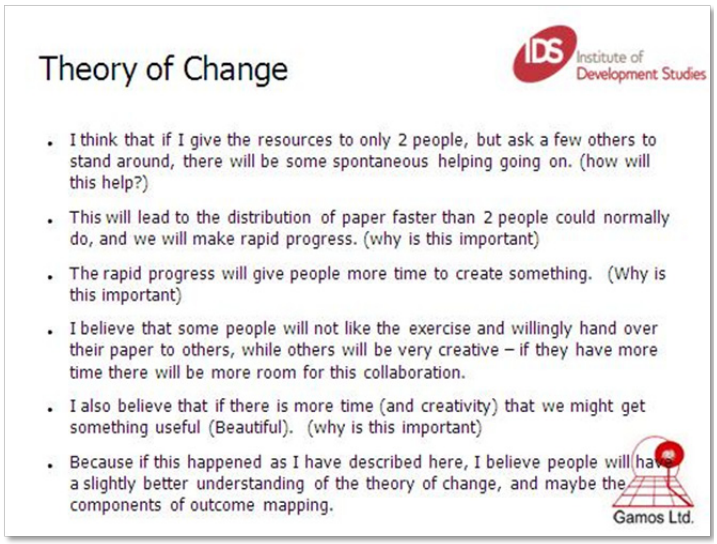
The vision and mission slide is self-explanatory.



Theory of Change

We believe that the Theory of Change (ToC) approach underpins Outcome Mapping, and that using it alongside or as a precursor to the OM process is a key step. Here we insert a ToC, explaining that we believe it is absent from the IDRC toolkit and is best inserted after thinking about the vision and mission and before tackling Boundary Actors.





At this stage in the presentation the Theory of Change can be related to the actual outworking of the game. In our case the volunteers joined in after one and a half minutes and asked if they could help. By six minutes into the game they had reorganised the creation of the packs and got into a system of work (one person writing, another putting the sticky notes onto the white sheet).

Boundary Actors

Before moving on, we need to explain our understanding of the Outcome Mapping process. In a standard session of training on Outcome Mapping, the 'expect, like and love to see' markers are applied to the outcomes only and the progress markers, not to the behaviour of the Boundary Actors per se. They are also presented as a ladder, and this implies some hierarchy of achievement, that one 'like to see' outcome could not be reached without going through the expected outcome.

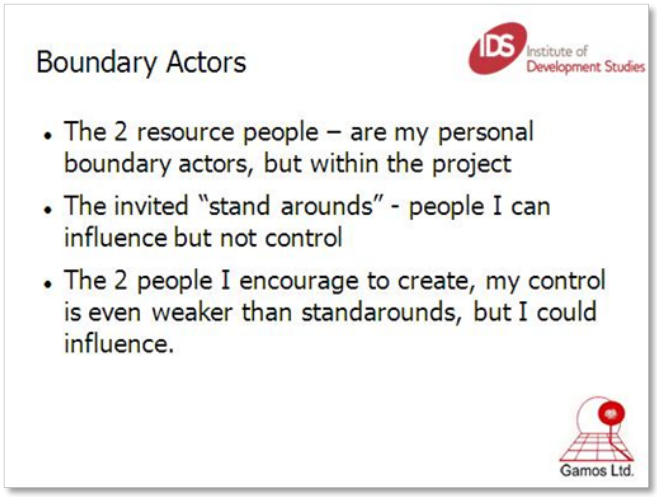
In our use and adaptation of Outcome Mapping, we feel that the 'expect, like and love to see' idea is a very welcome insight into complex systems. We think that the originators of Outcome Mapping (IDRC but in particular Terry Smylto, Director of Evaluation Unit) had a great idea in breaking away from a single achievement defined in a Logical Framework and presenting the idea that one could have a minimum expectation, but supplement it with some ideas

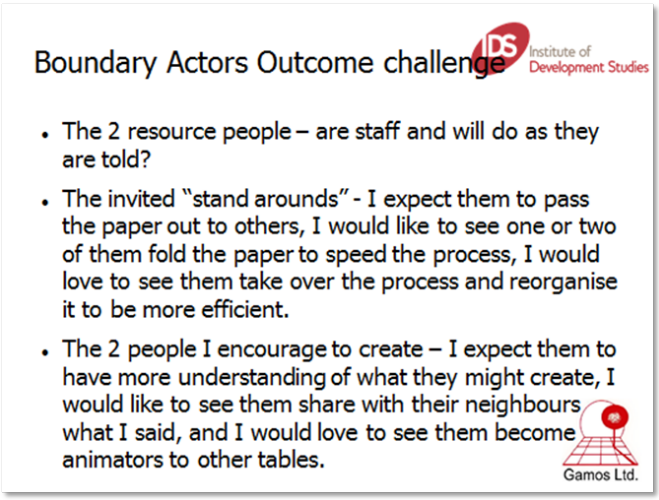
and hopes that the programme might go beyond the minimum to achieve the 'like and loves'.

While documenting our admiration of some of the elements of Outcome Mapping we might also state clearly that the focus on behaviour of people was another great insight. All development depends on people, and (almost) all interventions can be discussed in the light of behaviour.

However, although there are some core aspects of the IDRC Outcome Mapping model that we admire, when we use Outcome Mapping we adapt and modify some of the toolkit around the boundary actors. We have used Outcome Mapping to assess what behaviours we expect the boundary actors to show, and we have broken these expectations down into 'expect, like and love'. We also see these as being markers on a landscape or a map, not milestones on a single road. We move away from the ladder metaphor, and have the idea that we might reach a 'like to see' behaviour without that person ever experiencing the 'expected' behaviour.

In light of this comment, the following two slides documented the boundary actors and our expectations for their behaviour. Therefore after revisiting the OM toolkit, we discuss the Boundary Actors. There are three Boundary Actors.





A slide states what the expectations are around their behavioural change.

Again we relate their behavioural change to what happened in the game.

Interestingly, in the I-K-Mediary workshop and other trainings, the staff did not do 'as they were told'. In the I-K-Mediary workshop, one of the two wrote variously on the paper 'Use these sticky notes to create a piece of art' and 'Draw on these sticky notes something artistic'. This unexpected behaviour influenced the impact – there were 'policymakers' (audience) who only drew and were constrained from exploring all forms of art by the command they were given. The same staff member also got out their chair to deliver their resources by hand to the audience.

> *This illustrates the reality that no matter how clear and simple instructions are for a project, staff and team members may yet do something subtly different in the field and this could have an impact on the outcome.*

As stated above, the 'standaround volunteers' did join in the resource creating process. At one and a half minutes they asked if they could join in the creation of resources. At three minutes they had grabbed some pens to help with the writing. By six minutes one of them had reorganised and set up a chain of work – one person writing, two others folding and sticking. Interestingly, having been asked not to sit down at the start, it was almost the end of the game before they sat – most of the work was done by leaning over the table.

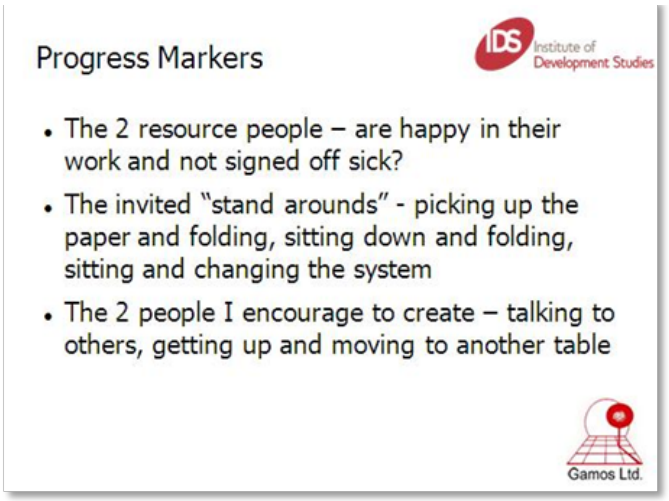
We might also have documented that we thought someone might challenge the folding of the sticky notes. We could not decide when writing the slides whether this was an 'expect to see' or a 'like to see' – in fact we couldn't decide how this challenge could be viewed within the OM format. Perhaps mistakenly we therefore did not document that expectation. And interestingly it did not occur.

Of the two people who were spoken to, one shared what had been said with their neighbours on the table (Table A), resulting in creations that were more than the four sticky notes. The other did not tell the table, but only one person to their side. However neither of them used more paper, partly because one of them had the command 'Draw on these sticky notes to create a piece of art' – a limiting variation of the original command.

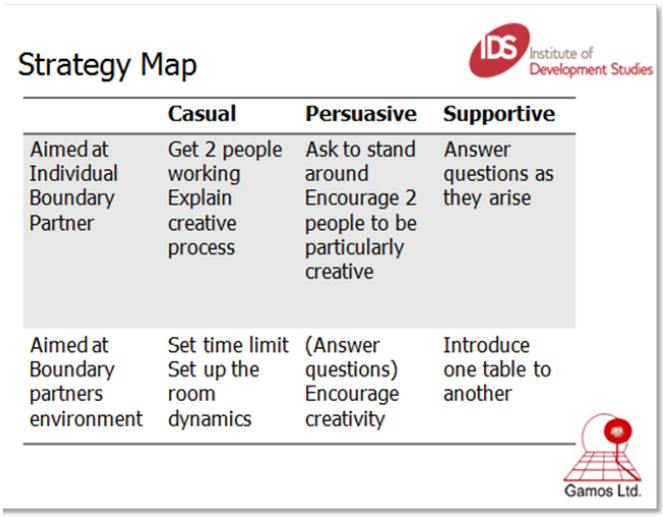
Neither person got up and went to another table – however in the last minute of the game, perhaps illustrating exchange visits, a person on another table turned to look at Table A's creations and when they challenged that everyone had used more than their four notes, they were told that this was permitted. With the lack of time they took no action – but given more time they were likely to modify their art with more paper.

Progress Markers plus

After revisiting the 12-step toolkit again, we move on to Progress Markers. Sometimes, surprisingly, people have difficulty with Progress Markers – what makes them different from logframe indicators? Hopefully this slide illustrates the difference.



Strategy – The Outcome Mapping process is about documenting as many of your assumptions as possible. In the advisory, the OM manual suggests creating a strategy map for each outcome and each boundary partner. In this limited game these have been squeezed into one map.



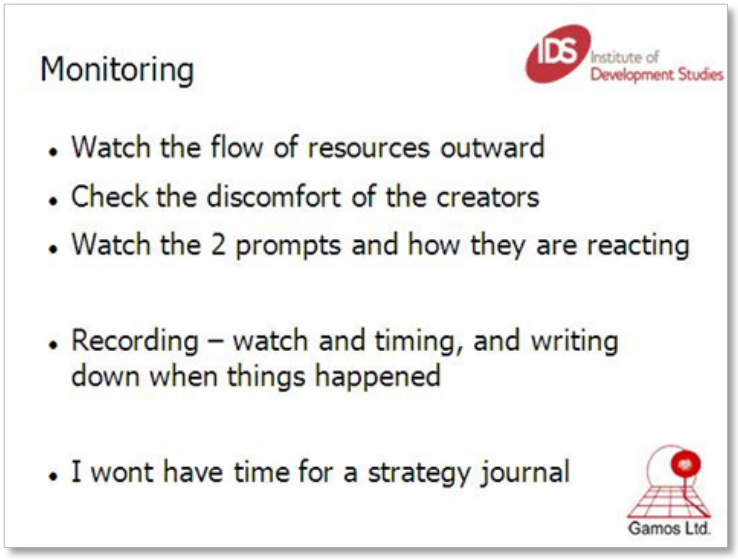
	Casual	Persuasive	Supportive
Aimed at Individual Boundary Partner	Get 2 people working Explain creative process	Ask to stand around Encourage 2 people to be particularly creative	Answer questions as they arise
Aimed at Boundary partners environment	Set time limit Set up the room dynamics	(Answer questions) Encourage creativity	Introduce one table to another

Remember, the idea of presenting what was written before the game is to illustrate how the process of thinking through the Outcome Mapping walks us through even mundane behaviours and things to look for, which make our recording of what actually happened easier.

The next slide illustrates how organisational behaviour can affect the outcome of the game – IF staff were told not to accept volunteer help the whole process would not work. It challenges people to see that flexibility to how systems operate can assist us on a journey towards our vision.

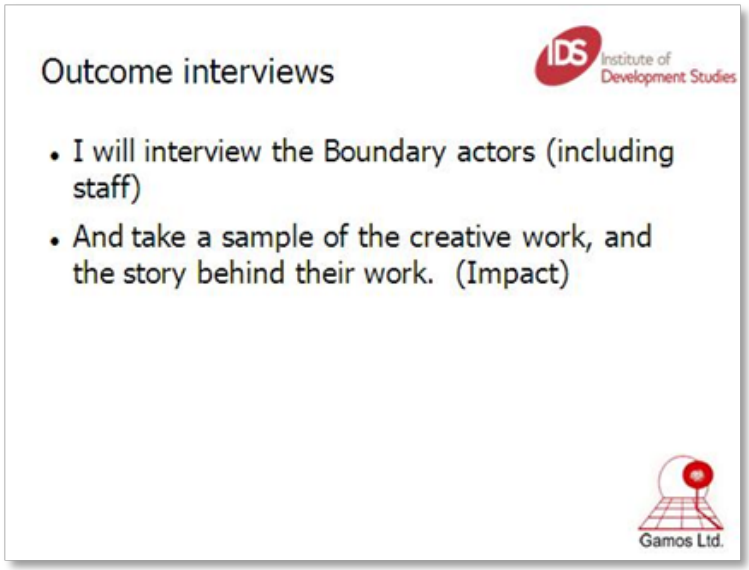
Throughout the slide presentation you will have been referring to your notes. Make sure the notes include timings, as this illustrates how a journal can contribute to the monitoring. It also shows how it is not deep mystery.

The slideshow should take 30 minutes.

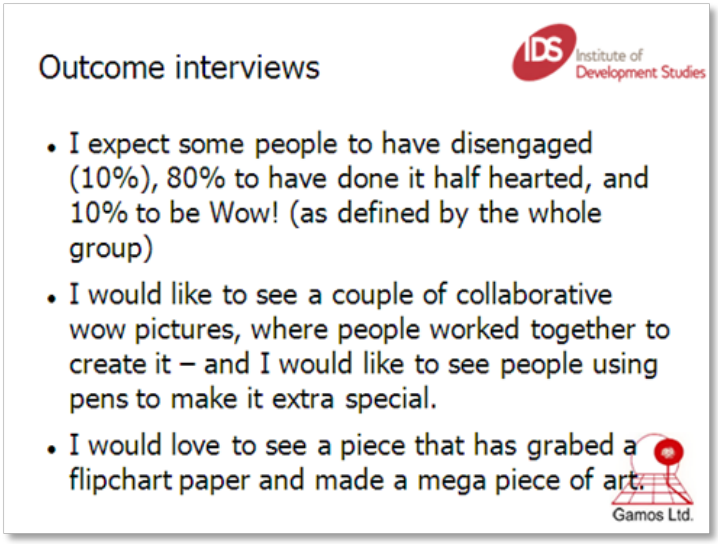


Outcome interviews

After revisiting the toolkit for the last time, we point out that we had undertaken a sampling of 'policymakers' (audience) to see how they had matched our stated expectations.



Finally this is the 'Wow!' slide. The behaviour of the 'policy environment' (audience) has been predicted in 'expect, like and love'. In our case this was accurate up to love.



In the game as it played out in January 2011, there were indeed five people who had disengaged after spending only a little time on their art – two doing their emails on their laptop, and three just waiting and chatting. There were at least seven who could be described as enthusiastic, possibly more. One person had created origami pigeons to represent peace, another had made the clothing to represent the administrator, five or more had brought all their pieces together to make a single grand piece of art – a Wow! piece.

Some joined together and made collaborations, although few used the extra pens that were around. And no one team grabbed the flipchart, although the table that worked together joined several A4 bits together to make their grand creation.

This is not about predicting the future in a vacuum. The OM framework had prompted me to think about the possible behaviour of each of the players, and to use my experience to take a guess at what might happen. It doesn't matter that five out of 38 is not exactly 10 per cent – what matters is that in the slide pack I had signalled to the 'donors' that some people might have disengaged, and that I was ok with that in my project plan.

And unexpected outcomes were there. I had said nothing of the content in my OM. Yet many of the participants made drawings or art related to the I-K-Mediary Network. They had illustrated processes and ideas. Some of these were captured in the sampling of the art – and in a repeat of the 'project' (the game), the idea of content could be mentioned in the 'expect, like and love to see' of the outcome interviews.

Conclusion

The Outcome Mapping toolkit assists project planners to work through their expectations. Its strengths lie in its focus on:

- People – defining who is going to be involved with your project;
- Behaviours – what you expect those people to do or change;
- Influence – not on control – how might the project influence people?;
- Complexity – mapping the project environment, and taking into account that life is not simple, that unexpected positive and negative results occur;
- Contribution not attribution.

The role play game gives people a chance to see how each element in the toolkit could work, and walk them through the process of using the IDRC Outcome Mapping toolkit (with the addition of the Theory of Change tool) to map their expected outcomes. We accept that the role play is not perfect, and at one session the Logical Framework was challenged as being too simplistic. If you adapt the game or gain experience of using it, please do share with us or the OMLC to continue to build a common understanding of Outcome Mapping.

Reference

Smith, R. Mauremootoo, J. and Rassmann, K. (2012) 'Ten Years of Outcome Mapping Adaptations and Support', OM Ideas 4

The Outcome Mapping Learning Community OMLC is a dynamic resource for all things Outcome Mapping. www.outcomemapping.ca

Learning about How to Role Play Outcome Mapping in an Hour

About the Impact and Learning Team (ILT)

What makes development research accessible, relevant or appropriate for people outside the research community? Does development research get its due in policymaking and practice? What would be value for money in research communication?

The Impact and Learning Team at IDS are interested in how communication of research brings about change - in particular, what happens when people and technology mediate between researchers and decision makers. We use the term 'intermediary' to describe people and technology acting in this way. We think they play a critical role in making knowledge accessible, relevant and responsive to demand.

The work we are doing in the Impact and Learning Team (ILT) is exploring and testing this assumption using action research. We support people to think about the difference they want to make as well as how they are going to go about it. We draw insights and approaches from IDS's history of research, and the fields of marketing, strategic planning and evaluation, and capacity development.

This Practice Paper is an output from our work.

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