The Evidence of Change Approach to Monitoring, Vanessa Tilstone, ELMT Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor, CARE Somalia

The evidence of change approach has been adapted from a tool used by CONCERN Worldwide in Mozambique in 1996 for monitoring of changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice. It has been refined over the years and some elements of outcome mapping have now been incorporated.

What is it?

The evidence of change approach is about defining, as a team, the specific changes the program hopes to influence within the implementation period and jointly reflecting on a regular basis on whether those changes are taking place in order to enhance program implementation. It is a learning approach to monitoring and evaluation that requires front line staff to cite concrete examples of where change is occurring both positive and negative so that the team can reflect on how much this change is due to the program compared to other influences and in order that they can agree on how their own actions can be strengthened to promote positive change or limit negative change.

The evidence of change framework can be used on it's own as a tool for team review and reflection or it can be used as a basis to develop a more comprehensive monitoring system, the information from which can enrich the evidence of change review.

Evidence of change framework

Change indicator (expected change)	**Evidence of positive change (what specific concrete changes have you observed and how do you know?)**	**Evidence of negative or no change**	**Action point to build on positive change or address negative or no change or explore the example further**
IR1			
IR2			
Cross cutting issues			
Social and gender equity promoted			
Conflict sensitive service delivery			
Strengthened customary institutions			
Collaboration with other stakeholders			
Other changes observed			

How to use the evidence of change framework?

Step 1: Defining change indicators

As a team, for each activity take each of the key stakeholders you are working with e.g. a particular group within the community, CBO, local government or other actor and identify the key changes that you hope your program will influence within the program period. It is useful to identify changes that could happen at different stages of the program and different intensities of change e.g. changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices/behaviors. Be as specific as possible and try and limit the number indicators that will be reviewed at any one session to around 10, otherwise the review can be too extended or too superficial.

Step 2: The evidence of change review

Every quarter with your project team including front line staff and decisions makers:

a) Set the scene for open, honest reflection;
b) Review your indicators to make sure they are still relevant and adjust them if they are not;
c) Identify specific examples of change for each of the indicators: these should include: where, what, what evidence you have. Remember: '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?'

d) Agree as a team whether this change is actually happening and the influence you feel the program has had vis a vis other influences;
e) Note down the change and define action points: how to build on positive change or minimize negative change or explore the example further.

Often the evidence of change cited needs further exploration to understand the complexity of the change processes underway. This is best done through in depth interviews with the individuals or groups concerned. It is suggested that for learning purposes these interviews are documented as case studies of change (see separate guideline). As part of the review it is also good to reflect on how your strategies and organizational practices are supporting the change and how they can be strengthened in the future.

Some of these examples of change and case studies could be used for reporting, however, it is important that this is only done where the team feels comfortable sharing the information so not to inhibit the openness of future reviews and the documentation of the case studies.

There are a number of principles to ensuring an effective the evidence of change review. Firstly it is important to remember that with other tools, it depends on how it is used. The review needs to be done analytically, in a spirit of openness and self criticism and should be done as a team with field staff (who can see the change happening in communities) **and** program managers (who can ensure recommendations are taken on). The examples cited need to be specific and verifiable – not general subjective assertions. Indicators should be reviewed and adjusted regularly to incorporate improved understanding and changing context and focus. Finally the evidence of change review is very much enriched if it draws on information from other monitoring tools, particularly participatory techniques to gather stakeholders' perceptions of change and unintended consequences.

<u>Developing a monitoring plan with the evidence of change approach:</u>
The following schema can be used to develop a more comprehensive monitoring plan and tools developed that explicitly collect information on the change the program has influenced. This need care to ensure the collection of information is focused on these changes rather than collecting loads of information on aspects of people's lives that the program has had no influence over.

Change indicator (expected change)	**Monitoring tool to be used**	**How often**	**By whom**	**How will the information be analyzed**
IR1				
IR2				

Step 1: For each change indicator define monitoring tools that collect information about the change
These could include: monthly/quarterly monitoring formats; in depth case studies; periodic stakeholder questionnaires; broad community questions e.g. Most Significant Change Technique; personal journals etc. In order to be practical and to maintain focus, limit the number of monitoring tools, however make sure that there is some triangulation i.e. mechanisms to verify changes are in place through, for example, reviews or evaluations.

Step 2: Design the tools
The tools should explicitly collect information on the change indicators that have been identified. However, other information e.g. for reporting purposes and on cross cutting issues, and for enhancing understanding could also be included as long as everyone is clear on why information is being collected and how it will be used.

Make sure that tools are:
a) Simple, focused and easy to use/understand;
b) Should record information in the order that you collect it;
c) Collect information on cross cutting issues: e.g. social and gender equity: how many women and socially marginalized people are included, whether the activity enhances access and control of resources; and conflict sensitivity.
d) Provide space for unanticipated changes and recommendations and follow up;

If possible design the tools with those people that are going to use them and make use the people that will use the information are also consulted. Some example tools are given below.

Step 3: Pilot tools with the staff which are using them and adapt them together;
Make sure that information is collected in time to feed into evidence of change review and that it is synthesized beforehand.