



How to engage young people in project planning, monitoring and evaluation using Outcome Mapping¹

“How do we know whether they are better off, whether they gain or they lose from our projects and our interventions and our programmes? The answer to that is, ‘Ask them.’ They are the experts on their own condition, and we do not ask them enough. Ask them!”
(Robert Chambers, 2002)

I. Why engage young people in project design, monitoring and evaluation?

Plan International is one of the leading international, child-centred community development organisations in the world. It supports interventions in 49 developing countries, benefiting over 11 million children and young people, their families and communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Its work, informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is based on the recognition that children and youth are citizens with rights and responsibilities. In partnership with them, their families, civil society and government actors, Plan supports their voices to be heard on the issues that affect their lives.

Plan UK’s Governance Programme aims to improve the wellbeing of children and youth by supporting them to engage with and demand accountability from the government and other duty bearers, particularly in decision making processes relating to the delivery of basic services. The programme supports a range of projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. While advocating for the value of increased youth participation in the governance processes that affect their lives, we also strive to actively engage young people in the programme’s operations, including project planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. We believe that young people should inform, in their own words, the decisions about what constitutes the programme’s success and failure.

This briefing presents an outline plan for a three day project design workshop using elements of Outcome Mapping (OM). It draws on our experiences piloting OM across a number of different projects but particularly focuses on initiatives in Malawi and the UK. The briefing concludes with some “top tips” on using OM with young people.

II. Piloting Outcome Mapping in Plan UK’s Governance Programme

We decided to pilot OM because the methodology focuses on the types of changes that any governance initiative is most concerned with - changes in the behaviour, attitudes and practices of civil society and state actors, and in the relationships between these different actors. In addition, we are hopeful that some of the OM tools (e.g. visioning exercises and graduated



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progress markers) can be easily adapted for use with young people and so enable them to play a key role in shaping projects supported by the programme.

Plan's youth and governance project in Malawi aims to support youth groups to engage with and demand accountability from local government, particularly in relation to devolved funds available for youth-led income generating initiatives. It includes activities to: (a) strengthen the skills, knowledge and experience of young people in areas such as advocacy and resource mobilisation; (b) sensitise local government officials on the importance of engaging with youth and build their skills to enable this; (c) support improved information flows in communities on local governance processes; and (d) provide technical support to the income generating initiatives of youth groups. The project is being implemented in four districts through Plan Malawi's local offices, each working with a different partner. We ran a one day OM workshop with young people to review the project concept note which had been developed with limited participation from the different stakeholders. It was followed by a one day meeting with project partners.

Plan UK's Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) has a total of 14 members and aims to support Plan UK to realise its vision of "a world in which all children realize their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity". YAP engage in a range of different activities, including holding events and workshops to raise awareness and support increased action on development issues by UK youth and their networks; supporting Plan UK staff to engage more effectively with UK youth through online tools, publications etc; and lobbying government ministers and other key decision makers on development issues such as climate change and girl's rights. We ran a one day meeting with YAP to reflect on achievements against their annual work plan and develop a draft monitoring and evaluation framework for their work over the coming year.

III. Conducting a workshop with young people using Outcome Mapping

What follows is a description of a three day project design workshop with young people using OM (see annex one for a summary of sessions). It is assumed that a project outline/concept note has already been generated and this can form the basis for discussions. Workshop participants should include: a representative sample of young people potentially or already participating in the project; project staff; partners; and other relevant stakeholders. To encourage active participation we recommend a maximum of 20-25 participants, the majority of them young people. It is important to take into account the age range of the young people participating and to tailor the agenda accordingly. We have used OM with young people aged 15-21 years.

- **On the first day** young people potentially (or already) participating in the project work with relevant project staff to identify the project's vision, mission and boundary partners.
- **On the second day** the same group review the previous day's outputs and then focus on identifying markers/milestones against which project progress can be monitored.
- **On the third day** the core project team process the information from the young people and complete a monitoring and evaluation management chart which includes identifying and/or creating data collection tools.

We recommend frequent breaks, with timing of the breaks determined by the group. Energisers, particularly after lunch and in the late afternoon, are useful to motivate sleepy participants! It is likely that the young people will have plenty of ideas for energisers; encourage them to lead these.



Facilitators must be experienced in working with young people as well as OM concepts and should understand the project outline/concept note.

WORKSHOP DAY ONE: project design

The first day is an opportunity to review the overall project design as elaborated in the concept note/project outline. Do not assume everybody has the same idea of what the project looks like - discussions will likely draw out a range of perspectives. By the end of the day the group should have begun to move towards a deeper, shared understanding of the project, what it aims to achieve and how.

Opening (30 minutes)

Introduce the group to the purpose of the workshop and highlight the importance of supporting the active participation of the young people present.²

Explain the proposed agenda and seek approval from the group. Note that the workshop can be divided into four parts: (1) discussing the current situation, envisioning the future and using this picture to review the project outline/concept note; (2) determining the individuals, groups and organisations that the project must influence and in what ways to contribute to the vision; and (3) developing a framework for monitoring how the project is progressing towards the vision.

Emphasise that the workshop will be highly participatory and introduce a game/ice breaker to get people talking from the very beginning.³

Having youth participants in the workshop is not enough to ensure their active participation, particularly in a project design process which can become overly technical. The **exercises need to be tailored to young people**. In Malawi we paired each young person with an adult 'buddy', included an ice breaker/game at the beginning of each day and used participatory activities throughout. Male and female youth actively participated in the small group work. However, the female youth did not speak in plenary other than to feedback group work. On reflection, we could have been more sensitive to this potential challenge.

Where are we now? Participatory situation analysis (1 hour)

Brainstorm the different areas/challenges that the project seeks to address. For a governance project, this includes existing formal and informal spaces for youth and community participation in decision-making, budgeting structures and processes, current services being rendered etc.

Divide into small groups and ask each group to discuss the current situation in one of the areas identified during the brainstorm. Ask each group to record the key points from their discussions on a flipchart. Once they have done this each group should move around to a different group's flipchart to review the notes and add their own comments. One person from each group should

² To encourage this it might be useful to introduce ways for the young people to draw attention to any challenges to their participation (e.g. an acronym bell or a 'fast talking facilitator' flag). To encourage ownership of the workshop process you could also: (1) set up 'feedback teams' tasked with reporting back to the group at the beginning of each day; (2) identify youth-adult pairs of note takers for each session; and (3) identify leaders for the energisers each day. It is best to ask the group at the beginning for their own suggestions for ways to best ensure active participation (of adults as well as young people!) throughout the workshop.

³ For suggestions on possible games/ice breakers we recommend *Participation: Spice it Up! Practical tools for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations*, by Save the Children, 2003.



stay behind with their original flipchart to explain the notes. Groups should continue to move around until they have had the opportunity to discuss each area.

Summarise the key points from each area and reflect these back to the group.

Where do we want to get to and how? Reviewing the vision and mission (2 hours)

According to OM methodology, while the vision “reflects the large scale development-related changes that the program hopes to encourage”, the mission “describes how the program intends to support the vision”.⁴ We have used different activities for developing these with young people. In Malawi draft vision and mission statements had been generated prior to the workshop based on consultations and the project concept note. In the UK we used YAP’s work plan from the previous year to spark discussion.

Picture interpretation: divide into small groups. Ask each group to draw a picture to describe their dreams of what the future looks like to them in terms of the project theme (e.g. youth economic empowerment) and post their drawings on the wall. Examine each drawing in turn as a group, opening to the large group to describe what they understand from them before asking the group that has drawn the picture to explain/comment. After all of the group’s drawings have been ‘interpreted’ discuss what the pictures say about the project’s vision and mission. Draft new/amend existing vision and mission statements according to what has been discussed.

Story circle: sit the group in a circle. Ask them to imagine/dream that it is five years from now and the project has been a great success – what does life look like? What has changed and in what way? Going around the circle, each person must say one sentence or phrase to describe what they see. Write up what is said on a flipchart as you go along, more than one round might be necessary to tell the full story! Reflect the story back to the group and check that the narrative accurately describes the key elements of the project. Once you have finalised the vision explain that now the group have shared this vision, participants should start thinking about responsibilities for achieving this vision and how they will hold themselves and others to account for contributing towards its realisation.

We used the **story circle** methodology in the UK with Plan’s Youth Advisory Panel. The young people enjoyed being able to construct a picture of their own future as a group. The exercise made them think longer term than the one year work plan they usually develop and, in doing so, raised difficult questions about what they - as the Youth Advisory Panel - were hoping to achieve. It became clear that there were many different perspectives in the circle and it was challenging at times to maintain a logical flow to the story as ideas and aspirations veered in several directions!

Who do we need to influence to get there? Identifying boundary partners (1 hour)

According to OM methodology, boundary partners are “those individuals, groups or organizations with whom the program interacts directly and with whom the program can anticipate opportunities for influence.” Critically, “even though the program will work with them to effect change, it does not control them. The power to influence development rests with them.”⁵ It is

⁴ For more on vision and mission, see pages 33-39 of *OUTCOME MAPPING: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, by Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo, IDRC, 2001.

⁵ For more on boundary partners, see page 45 of *OUTCOME MAPPING: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, by Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo, IDRC, 2001.



important to recognise that the group includes boundary partners and very likely includes the boundary partners of the boundary partners (e.g. the young people and the project partners).

Explain the concepts of a project's 'boundary partners'. It is best to do this by using simple, concrete examples that come from the participants themselves. One option is to ask the young people to identify a personal ambition and ask them to list all the different individuals, groups and/or organisations that will need to contribute to making this possible. Ask the young people to use different colours to circle the actors listed that they will (1) directly work with and seek to influence in terms of behaviour, relationships, activities or actions (2) work with but not necessarily seek to influence.

Ask the participants to individually spend five minutes brainstorming the project's boundary partners and then turn to their neighbour to confer. Then get pairs to feedback so that the group generates one list. Boundary partners can be written on paper cards and stuck on a flipchart paper template with two circles highlighting 'sphere of influence' and 'sphere of interest'. This will allow the group to discuss any 'mistaken' boundary partners.

Close (30 minutes)

Allow time for a short, participatory evaluation of the day. This information can be used by the feedback group when they make their presentation to the group at the beginning of day two.

WORKSHOP DAY TWO: project monitoring and evaluation (part one)

The second day brings together the same group. It starts with a review of the previous day's efforts and then focuses on beginning to develop the monitoring framework for the project. This is a challenging task! By the end of the day the group should have a shared understanding of the key elements of the project design (including the specific changes that the project hopes to contribute to in relation to the project's boundary partners) and milestones for measuring project progress.

Lost in Translation there can be difficulties with OM terminology, particularly when working with young people who are less familiar with project cycle management. Different words or phrases may be needed. For example, in Malawi there were different views on what a 'vision' and 'mission' should include; many felt that the draft versions were too detailed and unwieldy. The term 'boundary partner' also caused difficulties because it was associated with implementing partner (i.e. local NGOs/CBOs sub-contracted to deliver programmes and projects) so we used 'key/target actors'. Elsewhere we have also found that the terms 'like' and 'love' may be the same.

What does our project look like? Reviewing vision, mission and boundary partners (1 hour)

Review the previous day's outputs with the group.

Ask the group if they have anything that they MUST add, query or amend. Unless there are serious concerns try to keep this discussion to one hour. It is important that the group understands that all three aspects of the project will evolve over time and will be regularly reviewed (be sure that there is scope for this within the project – e.g. if relevant, will the donor allow for changes?).

Divide into smaller groups. Ask each group to develop a short role play/freeze frame that presents what the project might look like at three different points in time. They should draw on the agreed project vision, mission and boundary partners. Each group then presents their role play. Wrap up with a discussion on any points raised during the role plays.



How will we know if we are making progress? Identifying progress markers (2.5-3 hours)

According to OM methodology, while the project vision “reflects the large scale development-related changes that the program hopes to encourage”, the project mission “describes how the program intends to support the vision”⁶.

In Malawi small group work on **developing progress markers** generated the most excitement. Having so many different perspectives represented ensured great debate on the types, depth and sequencing of the different changes identified. Discussions also focused on whether some of the “like to see” changes were actually “love to see” changes and vice versa. The quality of group work was dependant on whether there was a good facilitator who understood both governance work and OM concepts. ‘Expect to see’ was misinterpreted to mean critical to project success by one group. Two groups lost focus on their allocated boundary partners and developed a few progress markers which actually reflected changes in youth groups. Groups needed prompting during the gallery walk to unpack the changes they had identified.

Explain that there are lots of different changes that the project might realise. These changes can be classified by the depth of the change involved. “Expect to see” are the immediate changes that should occur in the early days of project implementation. “Like to see” are the changes that we hope the project will contribute to as implementation progresses. “Love to see” are the changes that are more likely to occur over the long term (probably beyond the project cycle) and reflect our dreams and aspirations if everything worked out perfectly.

Divide into small groups (ideally one group for each boundary partner) and ask each group to first draft a short summary of how their allocated boundary partner will look in the vision statement.

Ask the groups to think about what changes they will see in their allocated boundary partner as it progress towards its own “mini-vision”. Give each group three large paper cards with ‘expect to see’, ‘like to see’ and ‘love to see’ written on them and smaller, blank paper cards. Ask the groups to write one change per paper card and then stick them on flip chart paper under the appropriate paper card heading. Ask the groups to be as specific as possible about the changes. All the templates should be posted on the wall. Lead the group in a gallery walk around the different posts, encouraging discussion on each.

Close (30 minutes)

Leave time for a short, participatory evaluation exercise. As not everybody will participate in the third day this exercise should include a reflection on both days. The information can be used by the feedback group when they make their presentation to the group at the beginning of day three. It is important to agree concrete next steps for those not joining the next day’s discussions. This should include how you will feedback and how young people will continue to be able to contribute their views.

WORKSHOP DAY THREE: project monitoring and evaluation (part two)

The third day is an opportunity for participants to process the information from the two day workshop with young people. We suggest that it is limited to the core project team to enable

⁶ For more OM background on this, see “Describe the vision” and “Identify the mission” (p24 and 26) of *OUTCOME MAPPING: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, by Sarah Earl, Fred Carden, and Terry Smutylo, IDRC, 2001.



more technical discussion on indicators, project requirements etc. However, depending on the project, this could include youth.⁷ The day begins with a reflection on the previous two day's work and then focuses on refining the progress markers and identifying systems and tools for data collection. By the end of the day the group will have generated a draft project monitoring and evaluation framework.

Are our progress markers user-friendly? (2 hours)

Map the progress markers identified by the young people against the project objectives outlined in the concept note/project outline. Discuss any gaps, amendments and/or additions highlighted by discussions over the previous two days. Agree which of the progress markers you will incorporate into the project's monitoring and evaluation system.

Translate the selected progress markers into SMARTer indicators that can be used by project staff. It is likely that some of the markers will need further discussion before this is possible. For example, what does the progress marker 'enhanced networking between youth groups' involve? Could this be measured by recording the number of collaborative projects completed? Does this fully capture the change being monitored? If not, what else should be recorded?

Discuss the timeframe for the progress markers. It is important to emphasise that the 'love to see' progress markers and associated indicators are meant to be highly ambitious. While they might not be accomplished during the project period, good foundations can be laid. These must be recorded and celebrated. Furthermore, having this longer term vision is useful for prompting and framing thinking beyond project boundaries.

To create a **data collection tool with YAP** in the UK we:

- Divided into small groups and asked the young people to list the types of questions they needed to ask to assess their activities and achievements over the past year. The groups wrote each question on a different paper card and posted them on the wall.
- Reviewed the questions on the wall, removing duplications and looking for common themes to group the cards. Having identified four categories we wrote a heading for each on paper cards.
- Inserted the information into a simple chart on flipchart paper with the categories along the top and YAP's key activities over the past year down the side.
- Asked the group to devise a scale for rating their activities and achievements. They decided to use an 'A' (completely achieved) to 'D' (not achieved) scale but other possible scales include numbers, symbols etc. The appropriate scale will be determined by the project, questions identified and the young people involved.
- Divided into small groups and gave each group two-three activities to try out the chart.

What tools will we use to monitor project progress? (1.5 hour)

Discuss the purposes for which you will be doing monitoring and evaluation (e.g. donor accountability, programme effectiveness etc). With these clarified, discuss how best to collect, document and share information about the project as it progresses.

Brainstorm possible data collection tools. This could include: workshop observation protocols with a site visit calendar; key informant interviews; and/or a pre and post questionnaire for training participants. Ensure that the group identifies a role for young people and tools that they are interested in using.

⁷ For example, in Malawi the 'core project team' includes the Plan Governance Advisor, Plan local office staff, implementing partners and youth.



How will we coordinate our monitoring and evaluation tasks? (1 hour)

Complete a monitoring and evaluation management chart (see annex two for an example chart). The chart should include: project objectives; progress markers; indicators; means of verification; a rough calendar; and a map of roles and responsibilities.

Plan for how you will continue to involve young people in project monitoring and evaluation. For example, you might decide to schedule regular reflection meetings where the project team can report back to young people on progress so far and then hear their views. Or you might choose to include young people as youth representatives at project team meetings. These young people can then report back to their peers. It is also useful to



identify points during the project that might be offer young people the opportunity to try out different monitoring tools for their activities.

Close (30 minutes)

Hold a short, participatory evaluation exercise of the full three days. It is important to agree concrete next steps. As noted, this should include how you will feedback to participants and others involved in the project that have not participated.

IV. Top tips for using OM to engage young people in project planning, monitoring and evaluation

- Introducing OM concepts to a group of mixed ages, perspectives, skills and experiences takes time! Be creative and use concrete examples where possible.
- All activities need to be tailored to young people to ensure they can participate fully in the project design process. This includes youth-friendly versions of key reference materials.
- The ages of the young people involved must be taken into consideration. A 15 year old is likely to engage in the activities differently as compared to a 21 year old. Gender sensitivity is also important (e.g. young women speaking in workshops may not be common).
- In addition to the lead facilitators, as many participants as possible should have a thorough understanding of OM so they can guide small group discussions. Ideally the facilitating team should include young people; they can help to engage their peers.
- Include regular breaks and energisers to maintain the group's interest. Games are great for breaking the ice between adult and youth participants and can provide a way for young people to lead on part of the workshop.
- Be aware of language barriers, especially when using OM terminology.
- Developing progress markers is a great opportunity to explore the project's intervention logic, including prompting discussion on power relationships. Allow time for this, be sensitive to the different interests present and don't expect consensus on all points.
- Youth are instinctive visionaries! Adult participants may be reluctant to try a new approach, however young people are quick to grasp ideas and contribute their aspirations.

Further information

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Annex

1. Summary of the sessions for the three day workshop

Session	By the end of the session participants will have...
DAY ONE	
Workshop opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the workshop purpose, approach and agenda Identified 'feedback teams', note takers, energiser leads etc Engaged in an ice-breaker/game
Where are we now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a quick situational assessment
Where do we want to get to and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed/drafted a project vision Reviewed/drafted a project mission
Who do we need to influence to get there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed the concepts of a project's 'sphere of influence' vs. 'sphere of interest' and boundary partners Identified the project's boundary partners
Close of day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflected on the day's achievements Evaluated the day
DAY TWO	
Opening of day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflected on the previous day Reviewed the day's agenda
What does our project look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the project vision, mission and boundary partners Presented the project through role play
How will we know if we are making progress?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified and discussed progress markers for each of the project's boundary partners
Close of day/two day workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflected on achievements of the two days Identified clear next steps Evaluated the two days
DAY THREE	
Opening of day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflected on the previous two days Reviewed the day's agenda
Are our progress markers user-friendly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapped the progress markers against the project's objectives to identify any gaps and/or required amendments Developed indicators for some of the progress markers
What tools will we use to monitor project progress?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed systems for tracking the project's progress Brainstormed possible tools
How will we coordinate our monitoring and evaluation tasks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a monitoring and evaluation management chart Planned for how to continue to engage young people in the project's monitoring and evaluation
Close of three day workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflected on achievements of the three days Identified clear next steps Evaluated the three days

2. Example monitoring and evaluation management chart

Objectives (from project concept/ outline)	Outcomes (progress markers)	Indicator (for progress marker)	Timeframe (short, medium, long term)	Means of verification (tools)	When will data be collected? (specific dates)	Who is responsible for collection? (name)
Objective 1	Outcome 1a					
	Outcome 1b					
Objective 2	Outcome 2					
	Outcome 2b					