



## Outcome Mapping Workshop Report *Piloting Outcome Mapping with Youth in Malawi*

### Background

Plan UK's governance programme aims to improve the wellbeing of children and youth by supporting them to engage in government decision making processes, particularly those relating to the delivery of basic services. The programme supports a range of projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Where there is interest, we are working with colleagues to integrate elements of OM into project design. This short note presents an overview of a one day workshop co-facilitated by Plan Malawi's Governance Advisor and a Plan UK Programme Officer in February 2009. Not all stakeholders had contributed to the original project proposal. We hoped that the workshop would foster a shared understanding of the project and embed youth participation in the project cycle.



### Participants

- Youth (aged 16-18 years) from the four target districts for the project
- Representatives from the four implementing partner organizations
- Plan Malawi Governance Advisor
- Plan UK Programme Officer
- Representative of the National Youth Council
- Other Plan Malawi Head Office staff, including staff responsible for overseeing monitoring and evaluation and relevant technical advisors
- Plan Malawi local office staff working on the governance programme

### Narrative overview

The project aims to support youth groups to engage with and demand accountability from District government, particularly in relation to local funds available for their income generating initiatives. It includes activities to (a) strengthen the skills, knowledge and experience of youth 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.

A one day meeting with key project stakeholders had been scheduled. Ahead of this, the Governance Advisor and Programme Officer held consultations with youth, project partners and relevant Plan Technical Advisors. Based on this input and drawing on the existing project documents, we developed a draft project vision and mission.

- We began the meeting with an ice breaker/game on governance followed by a brief presentation of the challenges identified by youth during the consultations. The OM



manual doesn't provide guidance on how to include a situational analysis but we found this background information was needed to focus the group and provide context to the day's discussions.

- We then presented the draft project vision and mission. We had planned to have a one hour session reviewing/validating these statements. However, the group actually spent over two hours discussing the statements in small groups, presenting their amended versions and attempting to generate a synthesis in plenary. It was interesting to see how differently some participants viewed the project. Discussions also highlighted how challenges and opportunities for youth in the four districts differed. Most felt the draft versions were too unwieldy – “people won't be able to get behind these long paragraphs”. Short of time, we asked for volunteers to finalise the statements over the break.
- We moved on to identify the project's boundary partners.<sup>1</sup> After presenting the key concepts we did a group brainstorm to identify all possible actors before identifying the boundary and strategic partners. This was a demanding session, with a few participants finding the concept of a project's 'sphere of interest' too limiting and some of the youth participants requiring more support to understand and engage in the discussions. The session took about one hour.
- Following the lunch break, the volunteers presented the final mission and vision. We divided participants into four groups, allocated each a boundary partner<sup>2</sup> and asked them to develop the outcome challenge and progress markers. The quality of the group outputs varied. 'Expect to see' was misinterpreted as 'critical to project success' by one group. Another group lost focus on their allocated boundary partner and developed progress markers which reflected changes in youth. This likely reflects a tendency to focus on monitoring changes relating to youth and their communities rather than duty bearers. The groups presented their outputs in plenary, sparking the liveliest discussion of the day.
- We closed the workshop with a short session on next steps, including provisionally scheduling a follow up meeting to further refine/develop the progress markers and generate monitoring and evaluation plans.

Timveni, Plan Malawi's youth-led radio team, documented the meeting and interviewed some of the participants. This generated material for their show on youth-local government interaction and, when broadcast, also prompted discussion on the importance of involving youth in project design processes.

## Key lessons

### Organization and planning

- **Introducing OM concepts to a group of mixed perspectives, skills and experiences takes time!** Our agenda was too ambitious and to properly embed concepts, including refining the progress markers, would have required more time.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'boundary' was not easily understood and the term 'partners' was thought to be too closely associated with implementing partners so during the workshop we referred to 'key/target actors' and 'strategic actors'.

<sup>2</sup> The boundary partners identified were: youth groups/organisations, community leaders, community governance structures (Village Development Committee and Area Development Committee) and district governance structures (District Executive Committee and District Assembly).



- **All activities need to be tailored to youth to ensure they can participate fully in the project design process.** We included a game at the beginning, participatory activities throughout and paired the youth with an adult 'buddy'. Both male and female youth actively participated during the small group work. However, the female youth did not speak in plenary other than to feedback group work. The approaches and exercises we used could have been more sensitive to this potential challenge.

#### Facilitation

- **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** (particularly whoever will lead on monitoring and evaluation of the project being discussed). On reflection, it would have been good to support youth to run some of the sessions. These youth could help ensure their peers are actively participating and, following the workshop, take an active role in project monitoring.
- **Youth are instinctive visionaries!** While some of the adult participants were hesitant, citing concerns about setting unrealistic targets and/or reluctance to try a new approach, the youth participants were keen to contribute their aspirations.
- **Be aware of language barriers, especially when using some of the OM concepts.** We altered some of the terms for the workshop but still encountered difficulties (e.g. the differences between 'expect', 'like' and 'love'). The youth participants had fair English language skills but translated materials on the project and OM would have been helpful.
- **Developing progress markers is a great opportunity to explore the project's intervention logic, including prompting discussion on power relationships.** The facilitator needs to be able to negotiate varied stakeholder perspectives, remain sensitive to how comfortable youth participants feel discussing these issues in a mixed group and guide the group to produce a framework that is flexible enough to incorporate different perspectives.

### **Concluding remarks**

We achieved our objective of generating a shared understanding of the project's aims and objectives. The meeting outputs were used to revise the original project proposal and formed the basis for the monitoring and evaluation plan developed at a subsequent meeting. Overall we found the youth participants were able to engage with OM, particularly the visioning exercises and graduated markers. We hope to include youth in the facilitating team at future design workshops and introduce more youth-friendly exercises, including some that do not rely so heavily on literacy skills.<sup>3</sup> For many adult participants, the meeting was their first opportunity to work alongside youth in generating a project framework (often youth are consulted and this is then fed into project planning processes). It is hoped that embedding youth participation at this early stage will help ensure youth are involved throughout the project cycle.<sup>4</sup>

### **Further information**

Jessica.greenhalf@plan-international.org  
Plan UK Programme Officer

---

<sup>3</sup> For example, in a workshop for a different project we asked youth and adults to either draw or produce a freeze frame of their vision. This generated lots of excitement and helped overcome language barriers.

<sup>4</sup> Currently the core project team (Plan Governance Advisor, Plan local office staff, implementing partners and youth) meet on a quarterly basis to review project progress. Youth groups involved in the project are being encouraged to use tools such as video/audio documentation to monitor the changes that the project is contributing to.