

For when there are too many examples...

Dr Paul Vare

Academic Advisor to UNECE Steering Committee on Education for
Sustainable Development

'Most Significant Change'

This technique can be used for selecting examples to be used in UNECE ESD reporting with the participation of your stakeholders.

It can be summarised in three steps...

Step 1: Identify stakeholders

- Identify stakeholder organisations that could (and that want) to be involved in reporting
- Share the question(s) from the UNECE reporting format that apply to their area of activity

Step 2: Invite them to supply their examples

Agree on the '**domains of change**' that you are reporting on (this could be number of people engaged, changes in behaviour, improved test results, unexpected outcomes, links to local culture, etc.), then...

...ask the stakeholders for their **most significant** examples of change, and their **rationale for why** they selected them.

NB Stakeholder organisations may use this approach themselves to ask their own members to select examples (and justify their selection)

Step 3: Select the most significant examples

Meet with stakeholders (online or in person) to make the final selection for the UNECE report:

- Decide which examples will be highlighted and which will be mentioned in a summary paragraph
- Any summary can include links to websites where further details can be found on each of the examples.

Further information

The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique
A Guide to Its Use
by Rick Davies and Jess D.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It involves the collection and selection of stories of change, produced by programme or project stakeholders. MSC can be used in projects and programmes where it is not possible to precisely predict desired changes beforehand, and is therefore difficult to set pre-defined indicators of change.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation (MBE). It was first developed in Bangladesh in the 1990s, by Rick Davies. Since then the technique has been widely used by a variety of organisations, especially CSOs. In 2005, a definitive guide to using MSC was developed. That guide is still the most comprehensive guide to using MSC, and is the basis of much of this paper (see Davies and Dart 2005).

MSC involves the collection and selection of stories of change, developed by programme or project stakeholders. It is a participatory technique which relies on engaging stakeholders in a process of discussing, analysing and recording change. MSC can be used in projects and programmes where it is not possible to precisely predict desired changes beforehand, and is therefore difficult to set pre-defined indicators of change.

MSC was developed partly to overcome the perceived weaknesses of more conventional monitoring and evaluation processes that are not always able to deal with complexity (Davies 1996). As with other 'alternative' methodologies, such as Outcome Mapping, it is often used by CSOs wishing to experiment with methodologies that do not rely on the kind of linear planning encouraged by the logical framework approach.

MSC is normally used as an ongoing monitoring technique, assessing change throughout the lifetime of a programme or project. However, its focus on change (outcome and impact) means it can easily be adapted for use in evaluations as well. According to the author of the technique, MSC is most useful where:

- it is not possible to predict in any detail, or with any certainty, what the outcome of a project or programme will be;
- outcomes vary widely across beneficiaries;
- there is no agreement between stakeholders on which outcomes are the most important; and
- interventions are expected to be highly participatory.

marketing, fundraising or communications work through generating stories that show changes in people's lives. However, its primary purpose is probably to enable learning, particularly within large or complex programmes focused on social change in areas such as mobilisation and empowerment.

How it works

There are many ways of implementing MSC, depending on the context and type of intervention. The following steps are normally included.

- STEP 1: Define domains of change
- STEP 2: Decide how and when to collect stories
- STEP 3: Collect significant change stories
- STEP 4: Select the most significant stories
- STEP 5: Verify the stories

STEP ONE

The first task in MSC is normally to introduce a range of stakeholders to the technique, and thereby gain their interest in, and ownership over, the process. Stakeholders may include

intrac
for civil society