



new roots

Growing good from the ground up.

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Most significant change (MSC)

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Outline

1. Introduction to MSC
2. IRC examples and results from using MSC
3. Discussion: How can MSC be applied to your work?

Definitions

- **Quantitative Research** is considered to have as its main purpose the quantification of data. This allows generalizations of results from a sample to an entire population of interest and the measurement of the incidence of various views and opinions in a given sample. Yet, quantitative research is not infrequently followed by qualitative research which then aims to explore select findings further
- **Qualitative research** is considered to be particularly suitable for gaining an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons and motivations. It provides insights into the setting of a problem. At the same time, it frequently generates ideas and hypotheses for later quantitative research.

--SAMPLING ---OUTCOMES—METHODS--

	QUANTITATIVE	QUALITATIVE
SAMPLE	Sample selection seeks out a large number of cases that are expected to best represent the population of interest. Individual respondents are selected at random.	Sample selection is usually based on a smaller number of not-necessarily representative cases. Respondents are frequently selected with the expectation that they fulfill certain criteria.
METHOD	Highly structured, rigid techniques such as online questionnaires, on-street or telephone interviews. Unlike qualitative research, which allows unlimited expression from respondents, quantitative research relies responses to pre-formulated questions.	Unstructured or semi-structured, but methodologically flexible techniques e.g. Individual in-depth interviews or group discussions, that are suited to elicit great detail and a comprehensive view.
OUTCOME	Quantitative research is essential for providing a broad base of insight on which typically a final course of action is recommended.	Is typically is exploratory and/or investigative in nature. Its findings are often not conclusive and cannot automatically be used to make generalizations. However, it is indispensable in developing a deep understanding of a given thematic complex and sound rationale for further decision making

Why do we need qualitative methods?

Albert Einstein "Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted."



instead of ...:

35 women increased income from small holder
farming initiatives supported by IRC



Story: group small holder farming activity

“Before the war, I farmed with my wife and children but everything became difficult when the war came. I wasn't working the earth anymore, and everything else became difficult. Today, with the group everything is going better. We farmed 1 hectare of rice and we have produced 10 bags of rice and 7 bags of corn on the same terrain. We sold all 7 of the bags of corn and 5 bags of rice which made us a profit of 200,000 CFA. And 1 bag of rice for seed and four for food for the workers.”



Story: group small holder farming activity

“Before, I would do my activities alone, I was overwhelmed. But today, with the group, it’s better because we give each other advice, ideas, we do the work together. Working in a group is profitable. I earn money with the association and I earn money from my own field which allows me to take care of my family.”

MSC introduction

- The most significant change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation championed by Rick Davies.
- *It is participatory* because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analyzing the data.
- *It is a form of monitoring* because it occurs throughout the program cycle and provides information to help people manage the program.
- *It contributes to evaluation* because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the program as a whole.

MSC Main steps

1. Start and raise interest
2. Defining the domains of change
3. Defining the reporting period
4. Collecting SC stories
5. Selecting the most significant of the stories
6. Feeding back the results of the selection process
7. Verification of stories
8. Quantification
9. Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring
10. Revising the system.

Rick Davies, Most Significant Change Technique

<http://mande.co.uk/special-issues/most-significant-change-msc/>

MSC : Main questions

The main question asked :

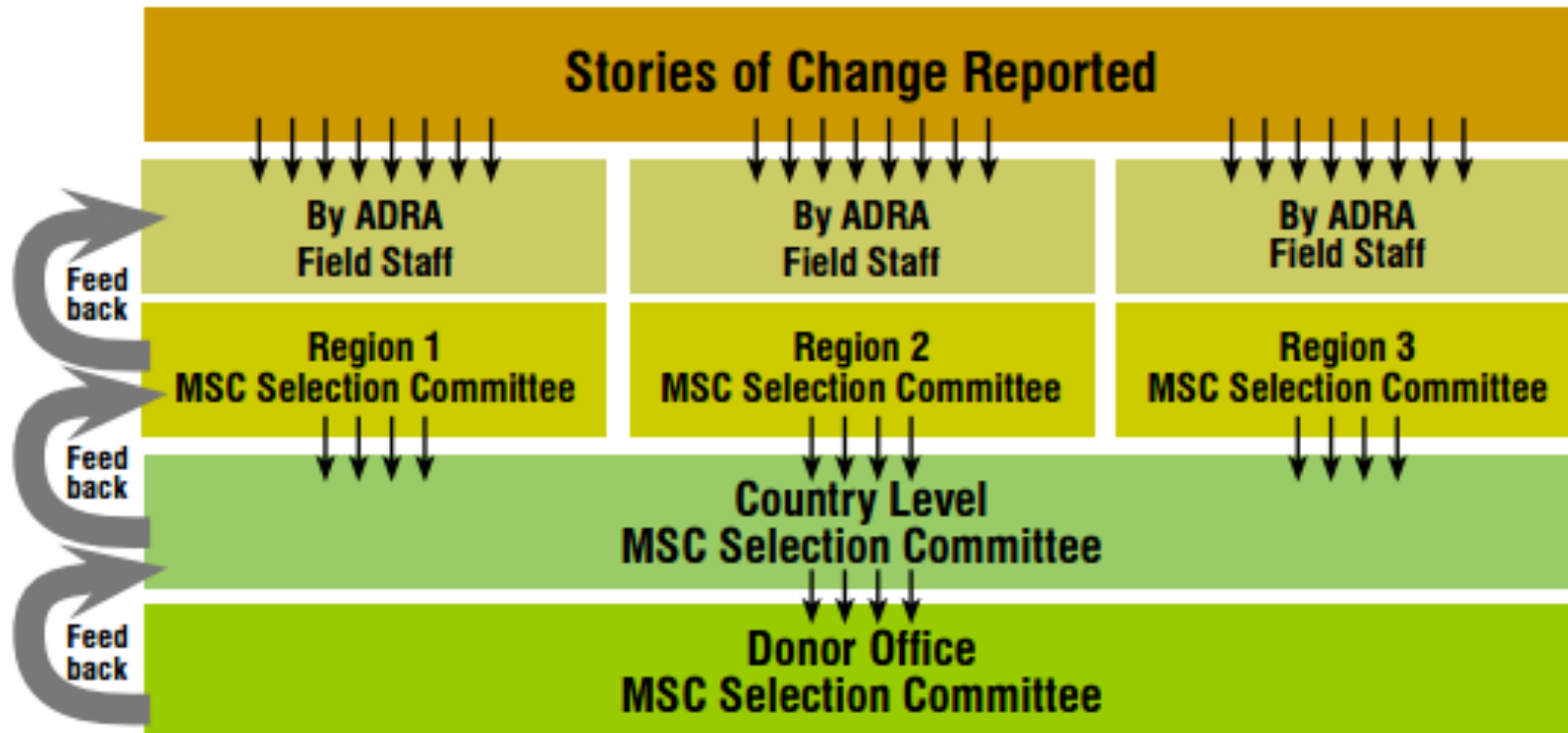
‘Looking back over the last month, what do you think was the most significant change in [particular domain of change]?’

A similar question is posed when the answers to the first question are examined by another group of participants:

‘From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant change of all?’

MSC process

This process provides a simple means of making sense of a large amount of complex information collected from many participants across a range of settings. Telling each level about the choice of significant changes made at the higher levels is an essential component of the whole process.



MSC Why do it?

1. It is a good means of identifying unexpected changes.
2. It is a good way to clearly identify the values that prevail in an organization This can happen at all levels of the organization.
3. It is a participatory form of monitoring that requires no special professional skills.
4. It encourages analysis as well as data collection because people have to explain why they believe one change is more important than another.
5. It can build staff capacity in analyzing data and conceptualizing impact.
6. It can deliver a rich picture of what is happening, rather than an overly simplified picture where organizational, social and economic developments are reduced to a single number.
7. It can be used to monitor and evaluate bottom-up initiatives that do not have predefined outcomes against which to evaluate.

Group Work Part 1

Who: 1 person will be a scribe, 1 person will be interviewed.

Action: Scribe – ask your story teller to answer the below question.

Timing: You have 10 minutes to talk and take notes.

‘Looking back over the season, what do you think was the most significant change in the farmers that you work with?’

Group work Part 2

Action:

- In a group of 4 discuss what domains of change emerged in your 2 stories.
- Switch pairs until you have read 2-3 stories and found their domains of change.

Time: 10 minutes

GROUP DISCUSSION

Now Let's discuss together :

'From among all these significant changes, what do you think was the most significant change of all?'

Share out

- What domains of change did you come across?
- Did anything surprise you? What did you find difficult or really useful about the stories and the process?

Time 10 minutes

Example 1: DRC Community Score Card Project

- In 2007 began the implementation of a Community-Driven Reconstruction (CDR) program in the DRC.
- Assumption: people's needs are best met when public authorities are capable of providing basic services, when they are responsive to citizens' needs and priorities.
- MSC was introduced to explore the changes elicited by the score card approach, as perceived by project stakeholders

MSC DRC

Two phases:

- 1) November 2011 to November 2012
- 2) November 2012 to March 2014

- This two-phased approach facilitated the integration of learning emerging from the implementation of the MSC technique.
- This technique also permitted to collect approximately 125 stories of change.



Results:

- MSC is an innovative methodology to explore the effects of complex program elements such as the community scorecard.
- Structured qualitative approach which MSC allowed for the collection of rich and valuable information directly from program beneficiaries in an open and participatory way, while at the same time obtaining data that allow for a certain level of comparability
- The technique effectively built on the field agents' unrivalled contextual knowledge, while at the same time developing staff capacities in a way that surpasses their everyday mobilization and facilitation tasks.
- Discussions among team members at three different staff levels made for an innovative opportunity to debate the program's expected vs. actual results in an interactive and constructive way.

Lessons Learned:

- Training and writing skills required
- Budget your time wisely! : 2-3 days for the initial training of program staff, 2 hours to interview person. Each step and keeping the process moving requires time.
- Stories of change represent perceptions of change and cannot be considered as evidence of change. Reported changes will need to be corroborated through other means and complemented by additional sources of information (e.g. hospital/school attendance register, etc.)

Example 2: MSC amended survey

1. Perceptions of economic wellbeing

“How do you perceive your economic wellbeing right now as compared to this time last year?”

“Why did you answer the way you did?”

2. Perceptions of the level of the impact or “helpfulness” of IRC support

“In your opinion was IRC support beneficial?” “Why” ...

Focused on IRC’s *long-term* income generating activities for sentinel sites including:

- Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA)
- Value chain development
- Business support projects (financing, TA, etc)
- (Long-term) Employment / Jobs programs (e.g. Apprenticeship, small holder farming cooperatives).

Summary Findings

- Narrative allows us to grasp the finer detail of the stories behind the hardships faced by the people in the project.
- All of the people who participated in this evaluation spoke of the difficulties of coping with risk and potential shock that may come from seasonal & personal
- While the actual activities proposed by IRC were seen as positive, useful and timely some recommendations were made pertaining to specific localities where we found some problems.

Lessons learned

- It is crucial that the evaluators are trained in interview techniques and have a clear understanding of the information that the evaluation aims to gather
- Take time to translate questionnaire and field test it before starting the evaluation – you'll be surprised what you'll find!
- People we work with really would love to tell you what they think – but sometimes it takes a little work to get them talking



Questions Emerging: Could MSC be useful?

- Production scale – What works?
- What is the value for investment for Agropreneurs?
- For Micro-producers?
- For Gardeners?
- For the Greater Community?
- What makes an independent refugee/ beginner farmer successful?
- How to develop stronger self advocacy skills?
- Behavior change – production, preparation, business skills
- Community oriented projects...





REMEMBER M&E INFORMATION IS USEFUL
ONLY IF IT IS USED!

THANK YOU

Useful links:

MSC technique - <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>

CWIQ method:

http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African.Statistical.Journal_Vol3_2.Articles_8.ExperiencesApplicationCoreWelfareIndicatorQuestionnaireCWIQ.pdf