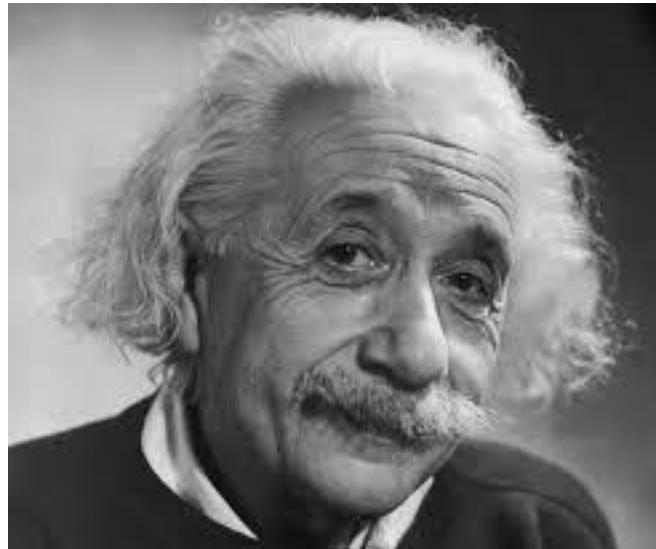


March 2017

Most Significant Change Technique



“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” ~Albert Einstein



What is the Most Significant Change Technique?

- Is a qualitative and participatory form of monitoring and evaluation based on the collection and systematic selection of stories of reported changes from develop



Most
Significant
Change

Benefits

- Facilitates program improvement by focusing the direction of work away from less-valued directions toward more fully shared visions
- Helps uncover important, valued outcomes not initially specified
- Creates a space for stakeholders to reflect and facilitates dynamic dialogue
- Can be helpful in explaining HOW change come (in what situations and contexts)



6 Factors Drive Successful MSC

- Support from senior management
- The commitment to the process of leader
- The development of trust between field staff and villagers
- An organizational culture that prioritizes reflection and learning
- Infrastructure that enables regular feedback of the results to stakeholders
- Time to run several cycles of the technique



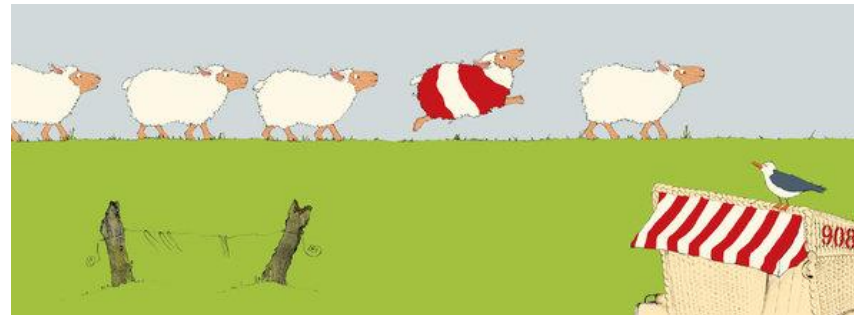
MSC Should not be used to

- Capture expected change
- Prepare stories for public relations
- Understand the average experience of stakeholders
- Generate an evaluation report for accountability purposes
- Conduct a quick evaluation
- Conduct retrospective evaluation of a completed project or program

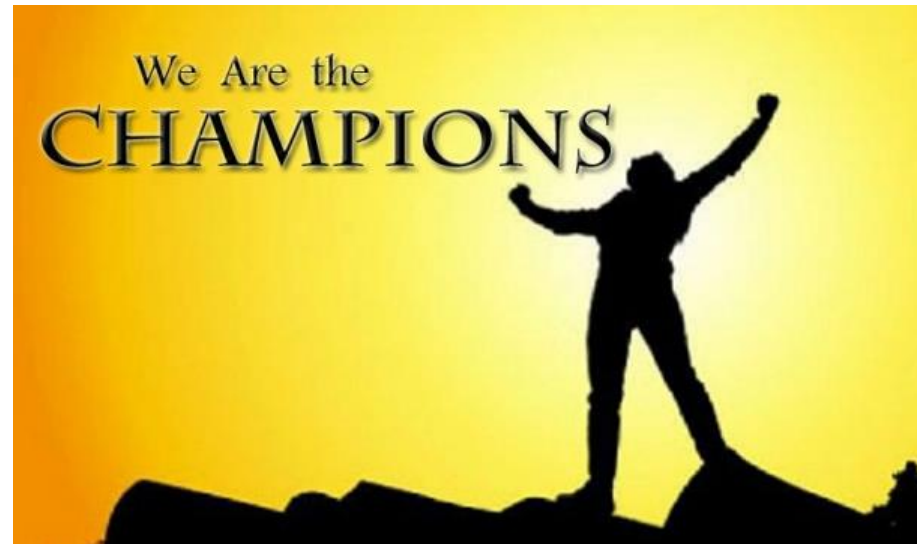


Differs from regular M&E in that:

- The focus is on the unexpected
- Information about change is documented in text, not numbers
- Major attention is given to explicit value judgments
- Info is analyzed through a structured social process



- **1. Getting started: establishing champions and getting familiar with the approach**



- 2. Establishing domains of change



- **3. Defining the reporting period**



Title of Story	Woman community facilitator voted as president of community network
Who was involved and what took place?	A local woman who has received capacity building support and training on leadership skills, has been voted as president of the community facilitator network representing 5 villages
What change took place?	A local woman is now representing her community as a leader in local development issues. She had the confidence to put herself forward and was voted by her community to play a leading role in the community's development process.
Why is the story significant?	The story shows that women in communities where the NGO works are playing an increased role in politics and decision making as a result of capacity building and training from the NGO
Lessons learned/recommendations for the wider program	Training and capacity building can help build women's confidence to participate in local politics. If women are given the opportunity to become involved in local politics they will. The beneficiary can be a role model.

4. Collecting significant change stories

For each change story, the following info should be collected:

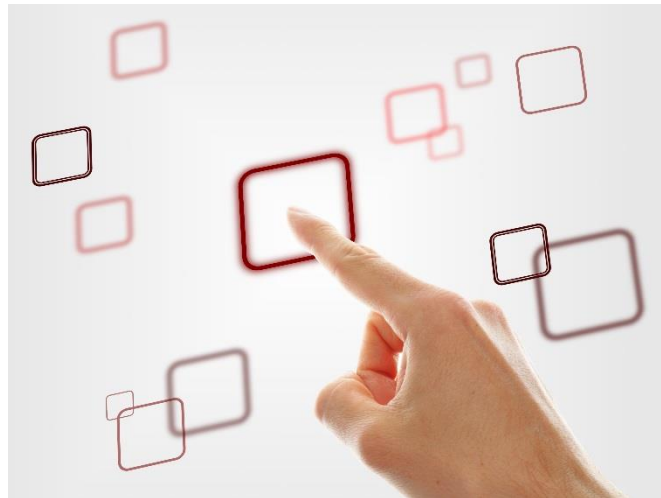
- Title of the story
- Information on who was involved and when the change took place
- Information on what change took place
- Why the story is significant***
- Any lessons learned/recommendations for the wider program

Define
what significant
means to your
team!

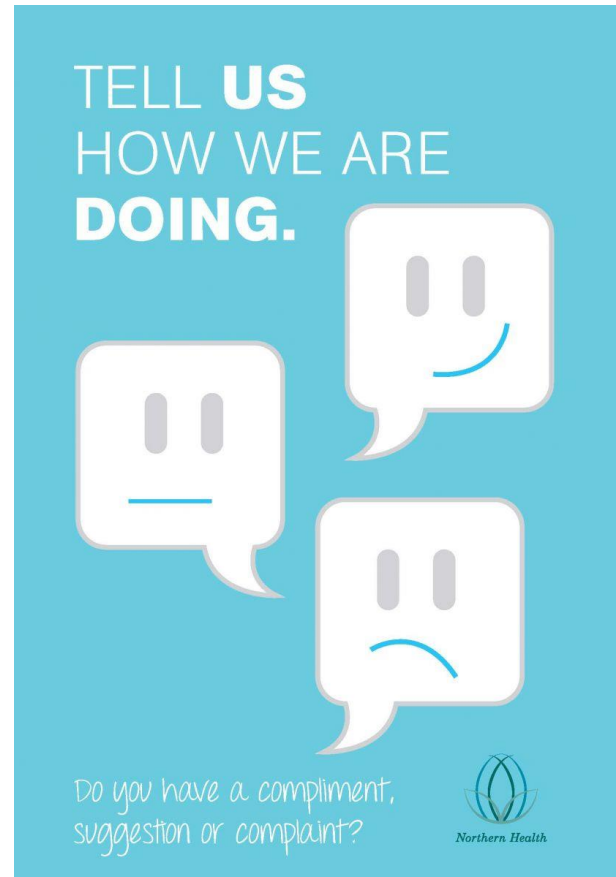


• 5. Selecting the MSC stories

- everyone reads the stories
- the group holds in-depth conversation about which stories should be chosen
- the group decides which stories are felt to be most significant, typically through voting
- the reasons for the groups choices are documented!!



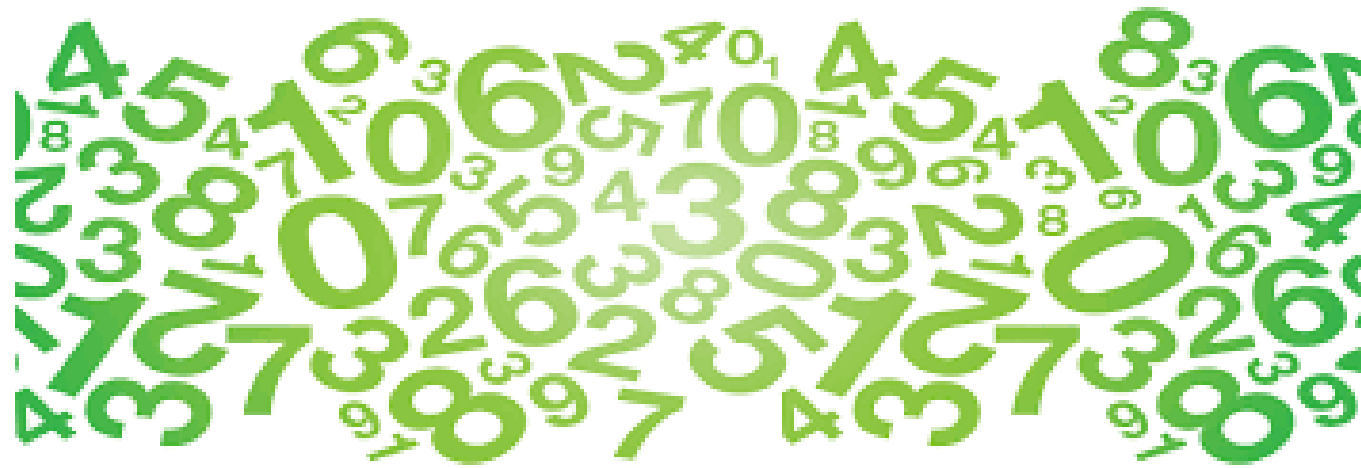
- 6. Feeding back the results of the selection process



7. Verifying the stories



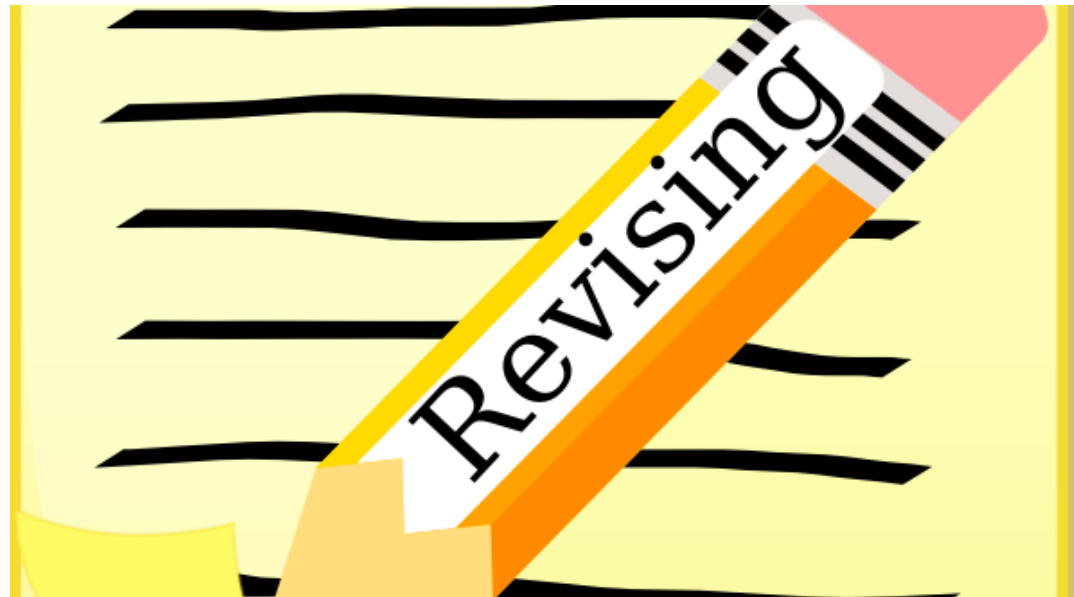
8. Quantifying



9. Doing secondary analysis (bigger picture)



10. Revising the system



Challenges

- Can be hard to get engagement of different groups involved in process and to maintain their interests
- Requires time and resources
- Not as good as other qualitative techniques in showing whether the change was likely caused by a particular program



Tips for Good MSC

- Good facilitation skills
- Don't have too many cycles of review
- Ability to identify priorities
- MSC works best in combination with other options for gathering, analyzing and reporting data



Share your MSC!

- The full MSC process involves analysis of stories and sharing with both donors and stakeholders



The MSC is a good choice when:

- You want to measure intangible indicators related to social change (e.g. empowerment, confidence, etc>0
- The field team has a lot of contact with program participants, allowing them to collect stories regularly
- You need to collect data on impact rather than outputs
- You want to find out about any unintended consequences of the program



The MSC is NOT a good choice when

- It is a simple program with easily measured quantitative outcomes
- The field team is too busy to collect stories regularly
- Managers are too busy to discuss them
- Managers do not have analytical skills or experienced required to select and interpret stories effectively

