

Uwezo Uganda MEL framework operational guidelines

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I. Introduction & Objectives

These operational guidelines accompany the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework of Uwezo Uganda. They contain two tools, the After Action Review template and the Outcome Harvesting do-book.

II. After Action Review

The purpose of this After-Action Review (AAR) template covering four questions, is to facilitate a simple dialogue of a completed project, event, or activity. It serves as a tool to gather insights, lessons learned, and feedback to improve future performance.

The percentages indicate the amount of time that should be spent on talking about that question. For example, if you take 1 hour, the first question (What happened?) should take approx. 9 minutes (15%); the second questions (What did you intend?) should take appr. 12 minutes (20%); the third question (What can we learn about it?) should take appr. 15 minutes (25%) and the fourth question (What should we do differently next time?) should take appr. 24 minutes.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW

Project:

Date:

Participants:

1. What happened? (15%)

2. What did you intend? (20%)

3. What can we learn about it? (25%)

4. What should we do differently next time? (40%)

III. Outcome Harvesting Guideline

What is Outcome Harvesting?

This chapter explains what Outcome Harvesting, the chosen evaluation method for measuring our effects. It explains what exactly an outcome is and how to describe it.

Outcome Harvesting (OH) is an evaluation method used to recognise, formulate, test and interpret effects. The method was developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and colleagues. It is applied in more than 140 countries within all kinds of social and government projects¹.

Outcome Harvesting maps relevant and observable effects into behaviour, actions, policies and practices of the stakeholders of the project or programme.

How does change take place?

When measuring effects, we often look at change in a linear way of looking at change. A leads to B, B leads to C. We assume here that there is a direct relationship between cause and effect.

The world is complex

However, change does not always take place in a structured way! There are often external factors that affect influence. In addition, there may also be effects you did not expect beforehand.

What is Outcome Harvesting used for?

Outcome Harvesting is mainly used for issues where the relationships between cause and effect are not known or can be ascertainable. The method does not measure progress towards a predetermined goal but works backwards. It starts at what effects have been achieved and then looks at how the programme or activity contributed to that. This makes the method suitable for measuring effects of complex issues.

What is an outcome?

An outcome is also referred to as an effect or a change. According to the Outcome Harvesting method, an outcome is a visible change that occurs in the behaviour of an actor (an individual, a group of individuals, an organisation or an institution).

The effect can be positive and negative and intended or unintended. Most importantly, there is a relationship between the activity carried out and the effect.

Components of an outcome statement

An outcome statement always consists of four parts:

1. Title
2. Contribution of Uwezo Uganda
3. Significance
4. Adherence to principles
5. Evidence

1 Title

¹ Source: outcomeharvesting.net

Always start with the title. This has a fixed form: WHO CHANGED WHAT WHEN AND WHERE.

WHO

Outcome Harvesting distinguishes different types of social actors:

- An **individual**: this is a person, such as a specific participant or a stakeholder at whom an activity is specifically targeted, such as a district officer or a headteacher.
- A **group** or **community**: these are several individuals together, such as a group of participants in a training or the residents of a specific village.
- An **institution** involves a public institution, such as a municipality or a court.
- An **organisation** can be either a company or a social organisation.

CHANGED

In a title, what matters is a real change. So, in the outcome should describe something new or different than before. The change must be visible and observable.

WHAT

Outcome Harvesting also distinguishes between different types of changes:

- An **action**: a social actor does something new or different than before (one-off).
- *Example: a social organisation launches a campaign in the village. Or an official develops a plan of action for the introduction of new policies.*
- A **practice**: a social actor (an organisation or institution) conforms to new policy or implements this. This is also seen as an action that is repeated (not a one-off).
- *Example: a civil society organisation implements procedures for procurement of services or a government agency implements policies more accurately.*
- A **relationship**: two or more social actors change the way they interact with each other.
- *Example: two local parties join forces to work together work together instead of competing.*
- A **policy**: a social actor (an organisation or an institution) changes rules, norms or laws.
- *Example: the Regional Authorities pass a new law.*

WHEN

State as specifically as possible when the effect took place.

WHERE

Indicate as specifically as possible where the effect took place.

2 Significance

The second component is significance. This component describes why the outcome is significant for achieving the desired outcomes described in Uwezo Uganda's theory of change. This can be in both a positive or a negative way. Also indicate whether you think the effect is short- or long-term and why. In the other parts of the outcome description, give a more objective description of what happened. But for significance, on the contrary, you may share your own reflection. This is mainly about the importance of this outcome. Subjectivity is thus OK!

3 Contribution of Uwezo Uganda

The third component is Uwezo Uganda's contribution. The contribution explains briefly how an activity, project or report of Uwezo Uganda contributed to the outcome. Here you describe

as specifically as possible all the activities that influenced the outcome. In the contribution, you also explain whether it is an expected or unexpected outcome. And what else influenced the outcome, such as the activities of others or other external influences.

4 Adherence to principles

The third component consists of a reflection on the adherence to Uwezo Uganda's principles. What principles were adhered to during the activities that lead to the outcome (Uwezo Uganda's contribution)? Select the principles from the list in Uwezo Uganda's strategy 2025-2028 and explain how and when they were adhered to exactly. Be as specific as possible.

5 Evidence

The last part is the evidence section. Here you identify the sources that demonstrate the outcome. You can use different types of sources:

(a) **Existing information** such as programme documents (newsletters, work plans, activity reports, minutes of meetings, bids, proposals, attendance lists), existing databases (demographic data, population data), research reports, media recordings or other evaluations.

(b) **People** are the most common sources of information. They can provide evidence in the form of their comments, testimonies and stories, through questionnaires or responses to questions during an interview.

Which people?

Think of:

- Participants.
- Stakeholders: anyone with knowledge about or an interest in the outcome (e.g. teachers, parents, previous participants).
- Policy makers, officials and government staff.
- Programme staff, managers, volunteers.
- Funders.

(c) **Visual information.** Images sometimes illustrate better than words. Images can powerfully support the outcome statement. Consider images and videos, such as before and after pictures, (such as a piece of land before and after it became a school garden); videos showing new skills (such as of a meeting where participants speak in front of an audience); images that show the changes that have occurred, or photos of activities that show participants.

(d) **Observation** provides information about the actual situation and circumstances that can help to understand what is happening. The advantage of observations is that they do not depend on other people to provide information. Consider observation of physical surroundings, relationships, events and activities, verbal and non-verbal behaviour (e.g. people working together in a team or attending an attending an event).

Tips for writing outcome statements

Don't

- Describing an activity as an outcome: 'We organised a workshop or published a book.'
- Forcing yourself to formulate outcomes for all your activities.
- Report only positive or intended effects.
- Give vague descriptions.
- Formulate everything perfectly right away - you're still going to edit anyway.
- Write woolly or too elaborate.

Do

- Describe what the social actor did through influence of your activities, not the activities themselves.
- Also report outcomes that are negative, unintended or unexpected.
- Use simple language and be concise.
- But describe enough details so others can understand.
- Reason from the outcome ('backtracking'), not the activity. It may be that an activity will lead to an outcome only a year from now or not at all.

OUTCOME STATEMENT
Name: Date: Organisation:
Outcome title
Significance
Contribution of Uwezo Uganda
Adherence to principles
Evidence