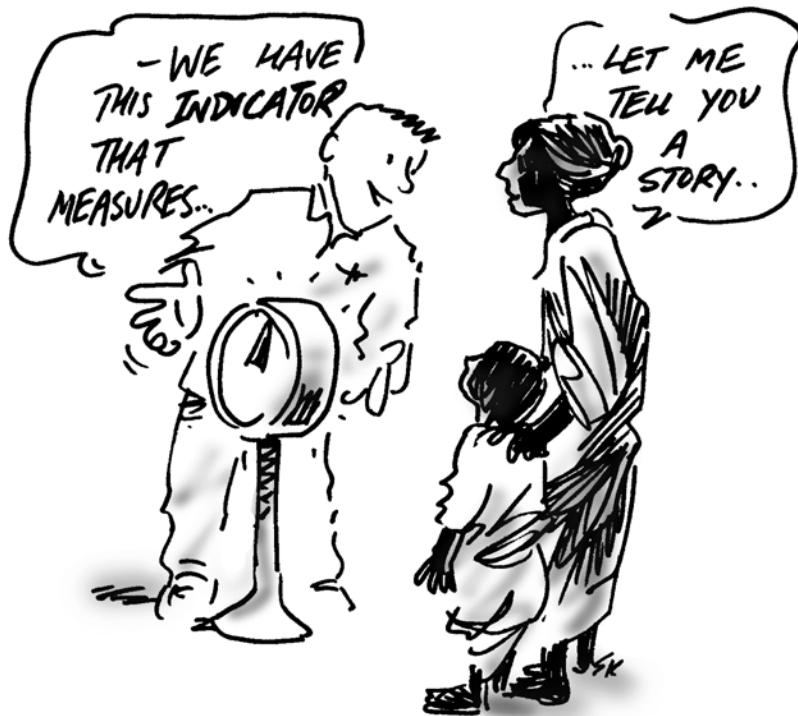


The Most Significant Change Technique (MSC)



Dr Jess Dart



- Form of qualitative, participatory M & E
- No indicators are used
- Based on 'stories' of significant change
- Developed by Davies 1996 - Bangladesh
- Not a stand alone approach to M&E



Bare bones of MSC

- Collect stories of change
- Review stories and select most significant
- Collate 'selected' stories review
- Document reasons for choice
- Feedback results



Why stories?

- People tell stories naturally - indigenous
- Stories can deal with complexity & context
- People remember stories
- Stories can carry hard messages /undiscussables
- But stories not known for accuracy/truth
- The “impact” of an intervention often lies in the story!



Case study

- Osi Tanata, Bougainvillian NGO
- Formerly Oxfam New Zealand Program
- 8 staff
- 99 income generation projects
- Main aims reconciliation and reconstruction after conflict
- Started to use MSC in 2004
- Already had a monitoring of participant numbers, income generated, and other quantitative measures



Exercise – a taste of MSC

In groups try to select what you think is the most significant change story AND why?



Imagine

- Imagine you are members of the board of small NGO in Bougainville:
- You might be, other NGO staff, government reps, project staff, community members



Key question:

- *From 'your' point of view, which story presents the most significant change?*
- *NB We might then use this story to show case the best of what this project has achieved*
- *How to select? Read both stories – discuss what they are each about – then vote! Try to come to a conclusion – and note why you selected each*
- *10 mins only!!*



Selection is a key tool of MSC!

- People don't like it necessarily
- It puts people out of their comfort zone
- It's a technique to get people to enter into deeper level of dialogue
- It ensures people to really read the stories
- But it's not about *the choice* - it's about the dialogue! It's about surfacing values



Examples of MSC use

- Bougainville case study continued...

How they collected stories

Staff and evaluator conducted interviews with community participants ***around*** the following question -:

- *“Looking back over the last few months, in your opinion, what do you think was the most important change that took place as a result of the support/ training you received from Osi Tanata?”*
- The respondent (community member, etc answers)
- Often done under a tree - chewing betel nut, after a days work... Recorded next day and feedback. Note or tape recorders used
- 40 stories were collected over a year



Review & filtering process

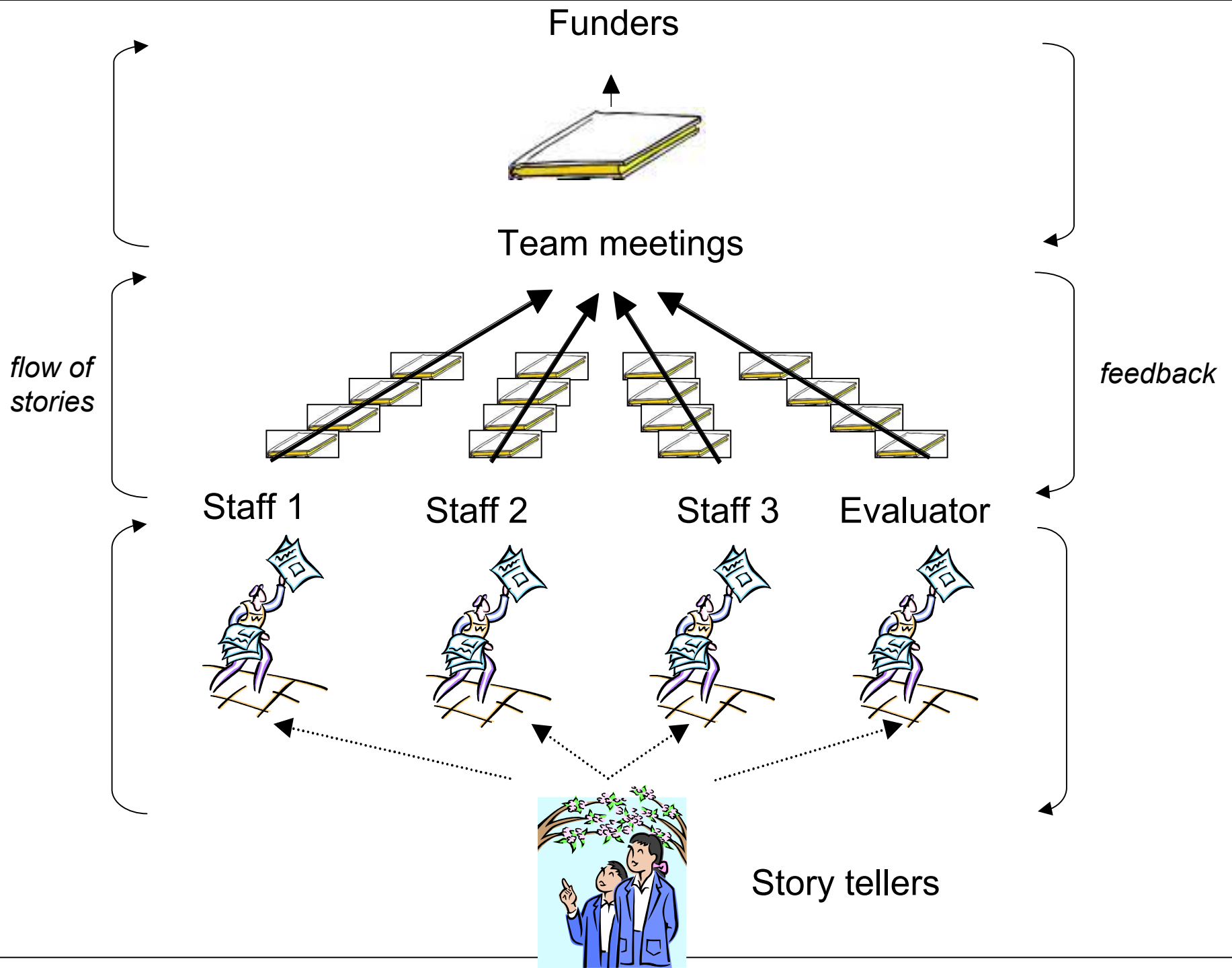
The stories were reviewed by:

- *The Osi Tanata Staff and community reps (every 6 months)*
- *The Osi Tanata Board, and Oxfam New Zealand (every year)*



How they conducted feedback

- Feedback to community where possible
- Staff give reasons for choice to funders in 6-monthly reports
- Funders feedback to staff via memos and email
- Ideally it allows a slow but continual dialogue between staff, funders and community



Impact of MSC – Osi Tanata

- Staff gained a whole new view of ‘impact’ - not all about income generation!
- Process boosted their morale
- Helped develop a more fully shared vision
- Combined with a program logic model/ logframe, the M&E framework received praise from funders and NGO colleagues alike.



The full steps of MSC



Full Steps to design an MSC system

1. Scope the purpose of the MSC monitoring system
2. Get started and collect the first MSC stories
3. Establish 'domains of change'
4. Establish on-going collection of MSC stories
5. Determining a structure to select MSC stories
6. Determining a process for reviewing the SC stories
7. Feedback
8. Verification
9. Secondary analysis /meta monitoring
10. Reflection, learning and improvement

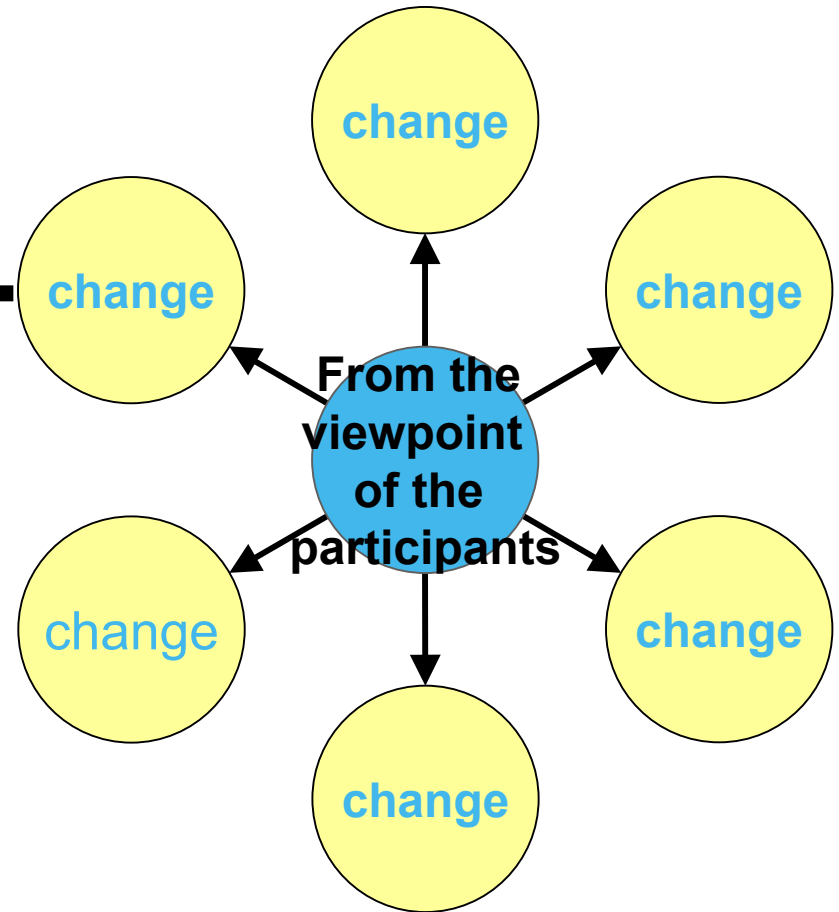
Fundamental Steps

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Program out

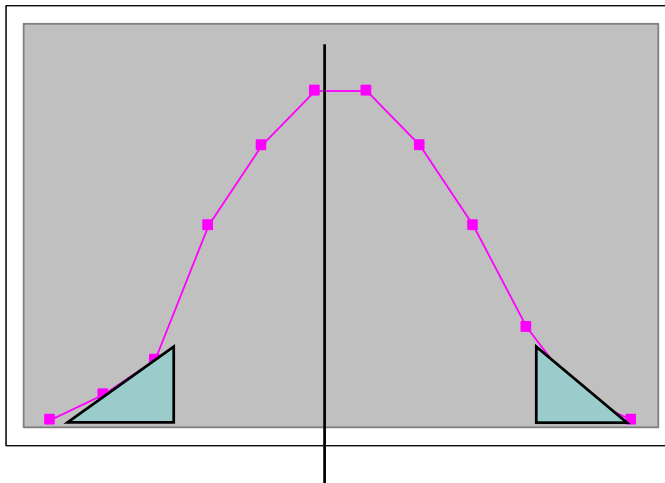


Context in

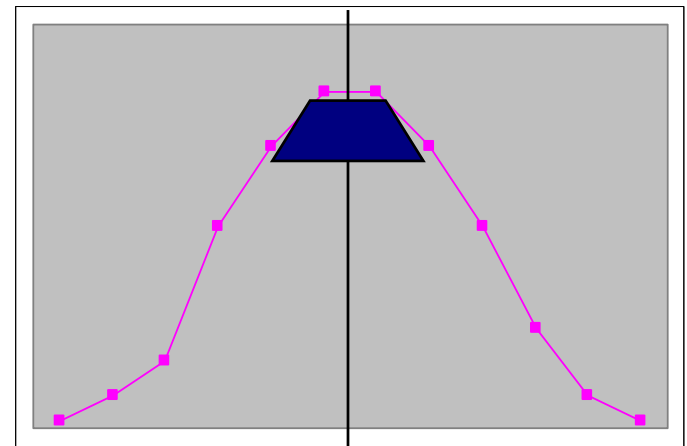


Outer-edges of experiences Vs central tendencies

Learning



Prooving



How MSC in use in conjunction with other techniques

- MSC is a supplementary technique
- Analyses individual people's experience
- Enrich a M&E by:
 - Adding human voice
 - Help search for unexpected outcomes
 - Provide basis for learning and dialogue
 - Often the key data that SHOWs impact – but never enough alone 😊