



OutcomeMapping
LEARNING COMMUNITY

Ten years of Outcome Mapping adaptations & support

An analysis of

- how and where outcome mapping has been applied,
- how users have experienced OM and
- the support options available and required for its use.

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Outcome Mapping Learning Community Webinar

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www.outcomemapping.ca



Purpose and objectives of the study

Purpose

Provide the OMLC, its stewards, funders and others interested in OM with an overview of where, how and why OM has been used, situations when OM is most / least useful, support needed, and experiences of those who have used / adapted OM, in order to further the use and development of OM and the OMLC.

Objectives

1. Provide a stimulus for the OMLC to update tools to assist with information requests by extending the data available on OM applications and trainers/consultants.
2. Contribute to a fuller understanding of how OM can be used, further developed and promoted through analysis of OM applications and user experiences.
3. Inform the development of training and other support for OM users by identifying gaps in the current support available.

Timeline: September 2011 – March 2012, in consultation with the OMLC stewards (preliminary results were presented at the OM Lab 2012 in February).



Methods

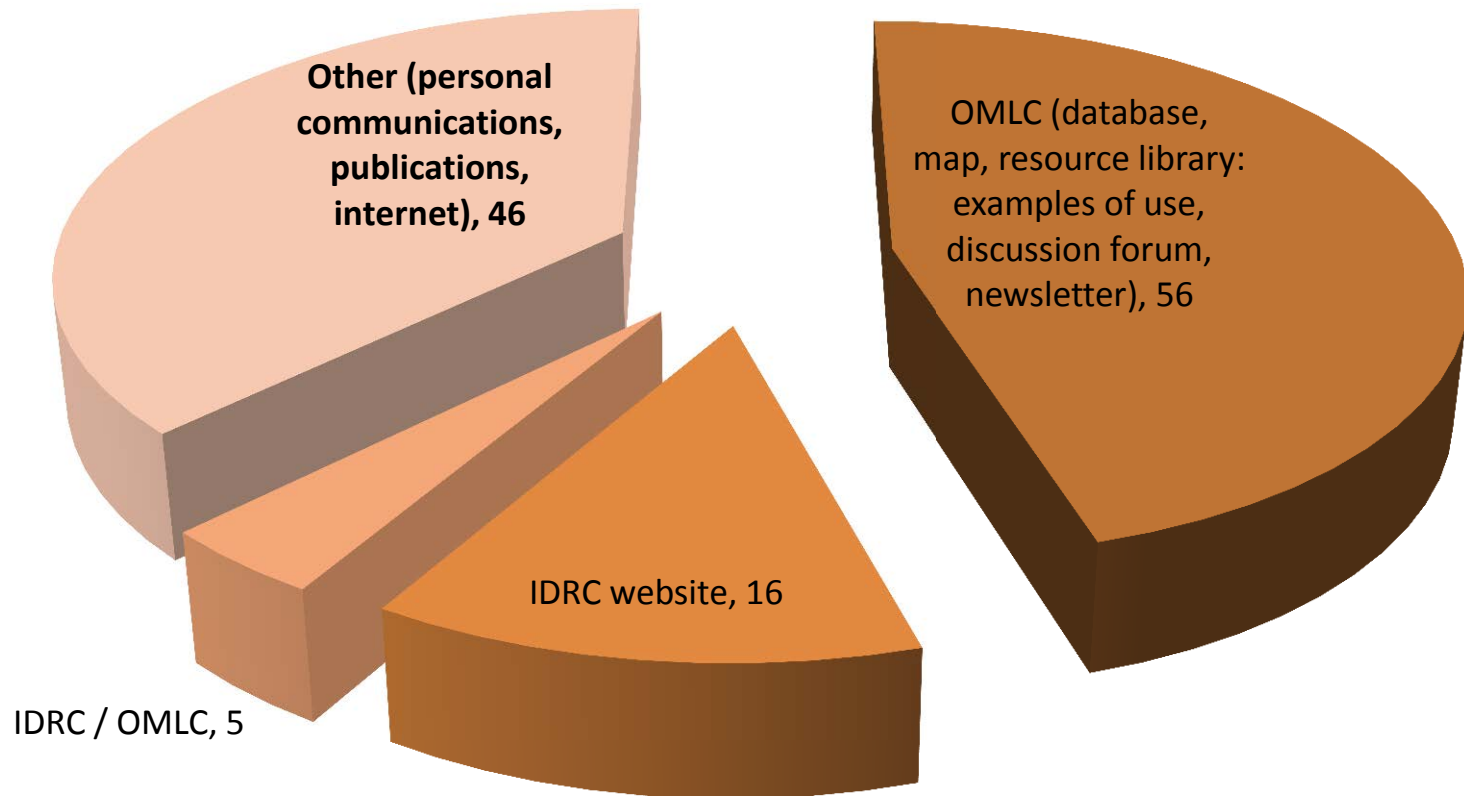
- Two Excel databases: case studies and practitioners (including trainers)
- Types of data sources: 1. OMLC and IDRC databases / websites, online research, correspondence; 2. 24 in-depth interviews with OM users and consultants / those providing training or other support
- Definition of 'OM' agreed with OMLC Stewards: explicit reference to use of one or more of the 12 OM steps | 'OM inspired': approaches that cite OM concepts but do not explicitly use OM steps

Cautionary notes:

- The data is indicative of OM applications, user experiences and support available and required – this is not a comprehensive assessment
- Interviewees may be more likely to have a positive view of OM than others; however, we had a near 100% response rate to interview requests and many shared problems as well as solutions



Data sources: 123 case studies



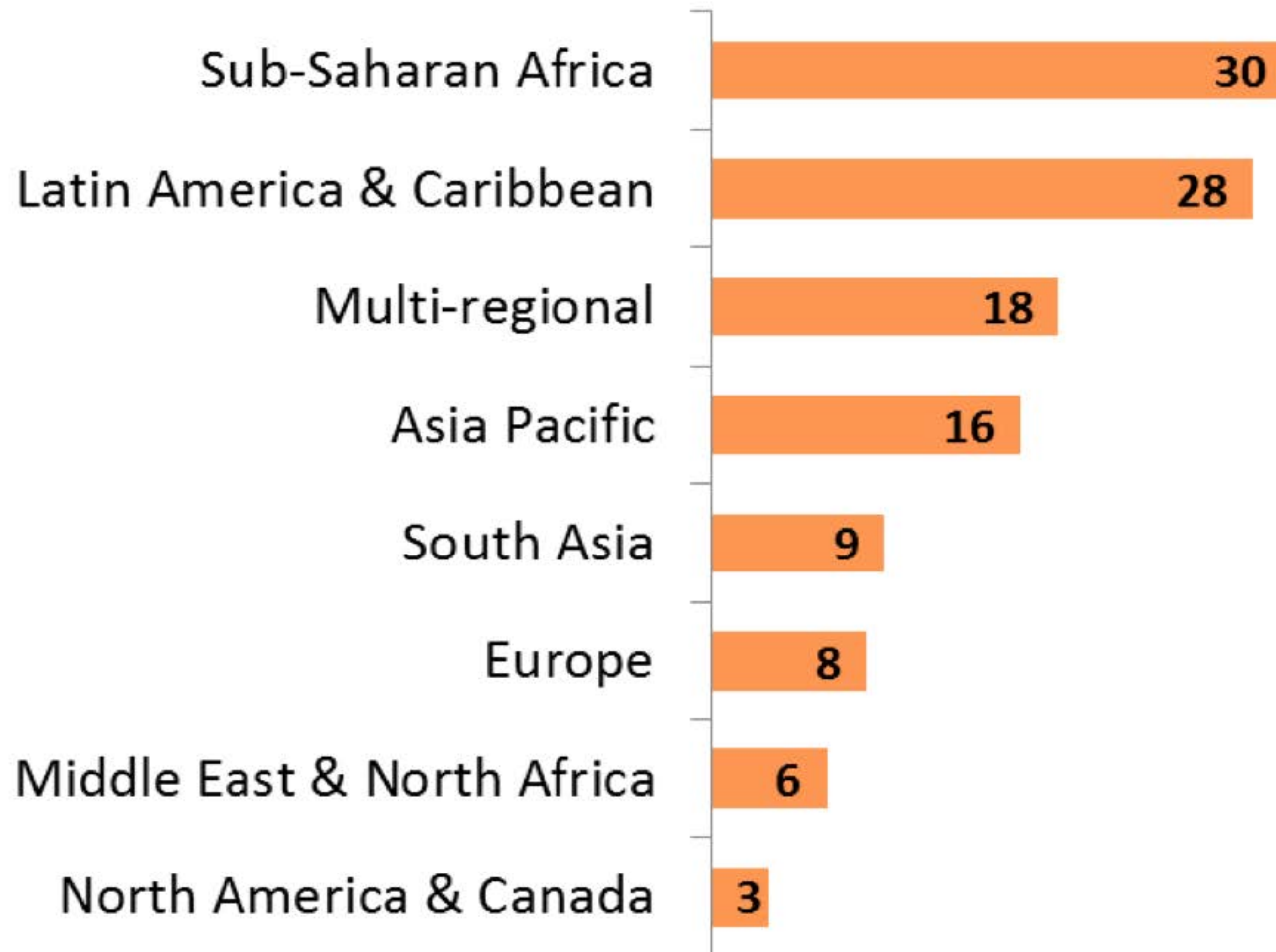


Findings: scope

Where and in what contexts has OM been used?

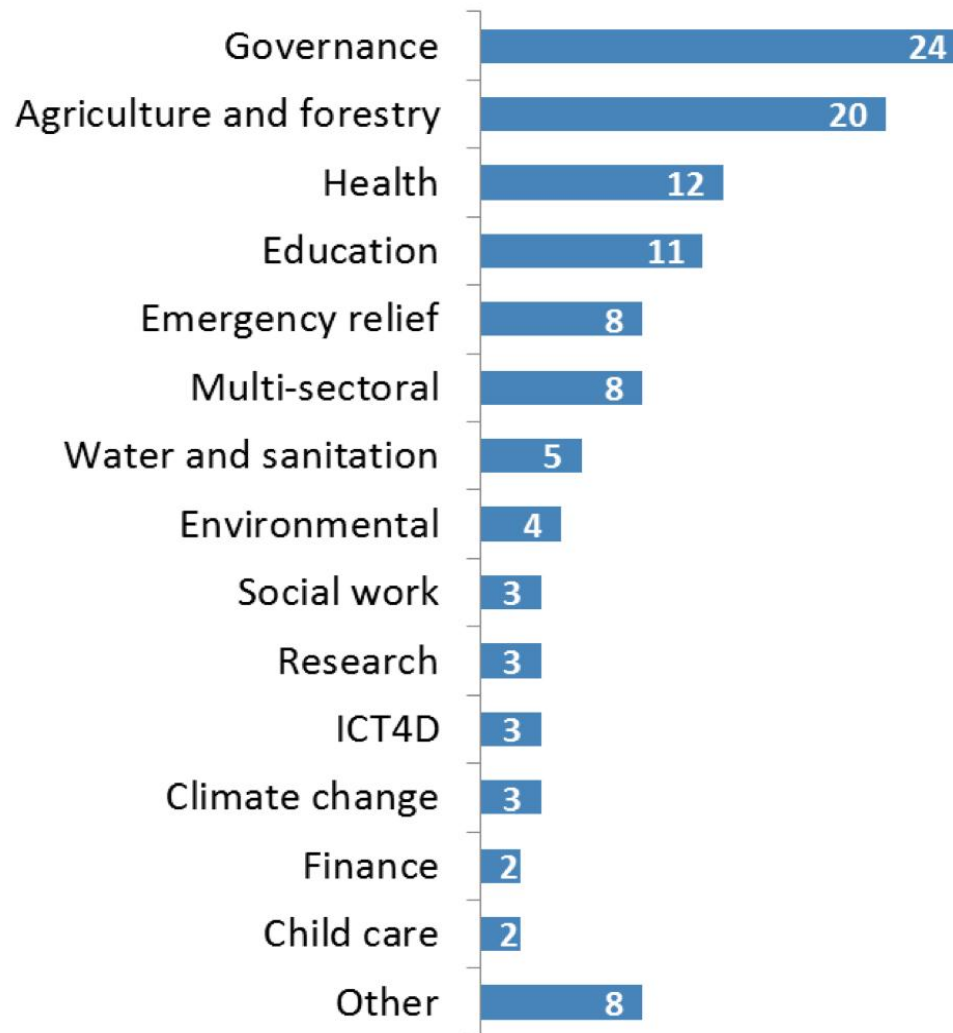


OM use by region





OM use by sector





Findings: user experiences

Motivation, benefits-challenges-solutions,
training



Motivations for using OM

- Enthusiasm for OM
- Dissatisfaction with LFA
- Recommendation from colleagues
- Piloting an alternative approach
- It was being used by the organisation

Focusing on change in social actors that you only influence is a breakthrough I have heard described as a revelation, an epiphany and revolutionary.



I came to appreciate OM as an attempt to be intellectually honest about RBM. LFA expects a direct link to results. In OM, it is explicitly recognised that results will not be solely attributable to the project / intervention. Rather the project will contribute to results.

Image: Laurie Chipps, CC BY-ND 2.0



Appreciation: OM Concepts

- Outcome orientation: *OM forces people to use an outcomes-oriented planning approach. Most projects / programmes are not planned from back to front (i.e. results-oriented) but from the front (activity-oriented).*
- Outcomes as behavioural change: *OM introduces a paradigm shift which helped people realise that to achieve results we need to change attitudes.*
- Boundary Partners and spheres of control, influence and concern: *People realise they need to be modest and honest about what is in their scope / influence.*
- Attribution/contribution: *I came to appreciate OM as an attempt to be intellectually honest about RBM. In OM, it is explicitly recognised that results will not be solely attributable to the project.*



Appreciation: planning/design

Planning - there is nothing more useful than OM.

OM focuses people. Stop trying to change the world; focus on your sphere of influence. Tell me about 3-4 Boundary Partners, not 90 stakeholders.

We use OM concepts mostly for project / programme planning, where we find the biggest deficits in our partners' capacity. Well planned is half monitored!



Issues and solutions: planning/design

- letting go of *their LFA history*. People familiar with traditional PME approaches may struggle with an approach that appears to be imprecise and fluid.
- OM mentoring as part of a continuous learning approach
- Plans can be *very heavy and impractical where there are numerous BPs, long lists of Progress Markers and overlapping support strategies*.
- Adapt plans so that they are situationally responsive
- Involving BPs in planning can be a challenge because “partners” often lack the time or inclination for engagement.
- Pragmatism regarding the involvement of BPs and use complementary methods to develop the intentional design when engagement is not possible.



Appreciation: Monitoring

[OM provides a] link to learning. With OM you are always monitoring your strategy; if it is not working, you change something. It provides evidence to base decision making on: quarterly planning meetings are based on evidence, not the views of the most assertive participant

OM is great for organisational learning. It is the only PME method that tries to bridge across programmes and organisations, offering approaches for both in a combination



Issues and solutions: monitoring

- *Trying to 'do it by the book', using all the journals described in the OM manual is impractical / too demanding / generates too much data to be useful.*
- *It is important to be careful where to use Progress Marker data: the detail can obscure the bigger picture.*
- *Using journals risks an overload of data and a fall back into a report mode.*

Most projects adapted / simplified OM monitoring by:

- Use of only some of the steps / journals.
- Instead of journals, use of face to face meetings of the project team and Boundary Partners.
- Use of complementary methods



Appreciation: Evaluation

The OM concept of outcomes helps people to think about evaluation differently. It does not handcuff participants...

An OM-inspired evaluation methodology, 'Outcome harvesting' suggests capturing what others can already see. But the evaluation actually produced outcome statements that were unexpected as they had not been captured by the monitoring we had been doing. We were surprised and impressed by the contributions our programme had made.




Issues and solutions: evaluation

- *The evaluation planning step is very brief*
- *OM is currently more useful for planning and monitoring, less so for evaluation purposes*
- OM has inspired evaluations that capture behavioural change outcomes to which an intervention contributes
- Outcome Harvesting and other OM-inspired approaches can be used whether or not OM was used for designing or monitoring the intervention



Training – is there a mismatch?

A photograph of a white statue of a man sitting in a meditative pose on a pedestal. A seagull is perched on top of his head. The background is a clear blue sky.

Many felt that training should go beyond
“The seagull approach “
- land, xxx and leave!

More could be achieved more quickly if introductory training can be given for those in similar situations rather than to mixed groups

Support is needed for implementing partners to get the reflection/learning cycle moving.

The findings suggest a need for more trainers and consultants experienced in using OM in a range of sectors and of trainers and learning tools in the multiple languages and locations in the economic south

Image: Frank Wuestefeld, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Conclusions and suggestions

Adaptation, enabling factors, when OM works best, training / support / learning resources, donors and log frames



Never cook by the book!



With some adaptations, its various elements and tools can be used separately or in conjunction with other processes (for example, a SWOT, a situational analysis, or an LFA). This manual does not provide the reader with instructions on how to adapt Outcome Mapping, but instead assumes it is being used in its totality. (p11, OM manual, Earl, Carden, Smutylo, 2001)

Image: Lee Stranahan, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



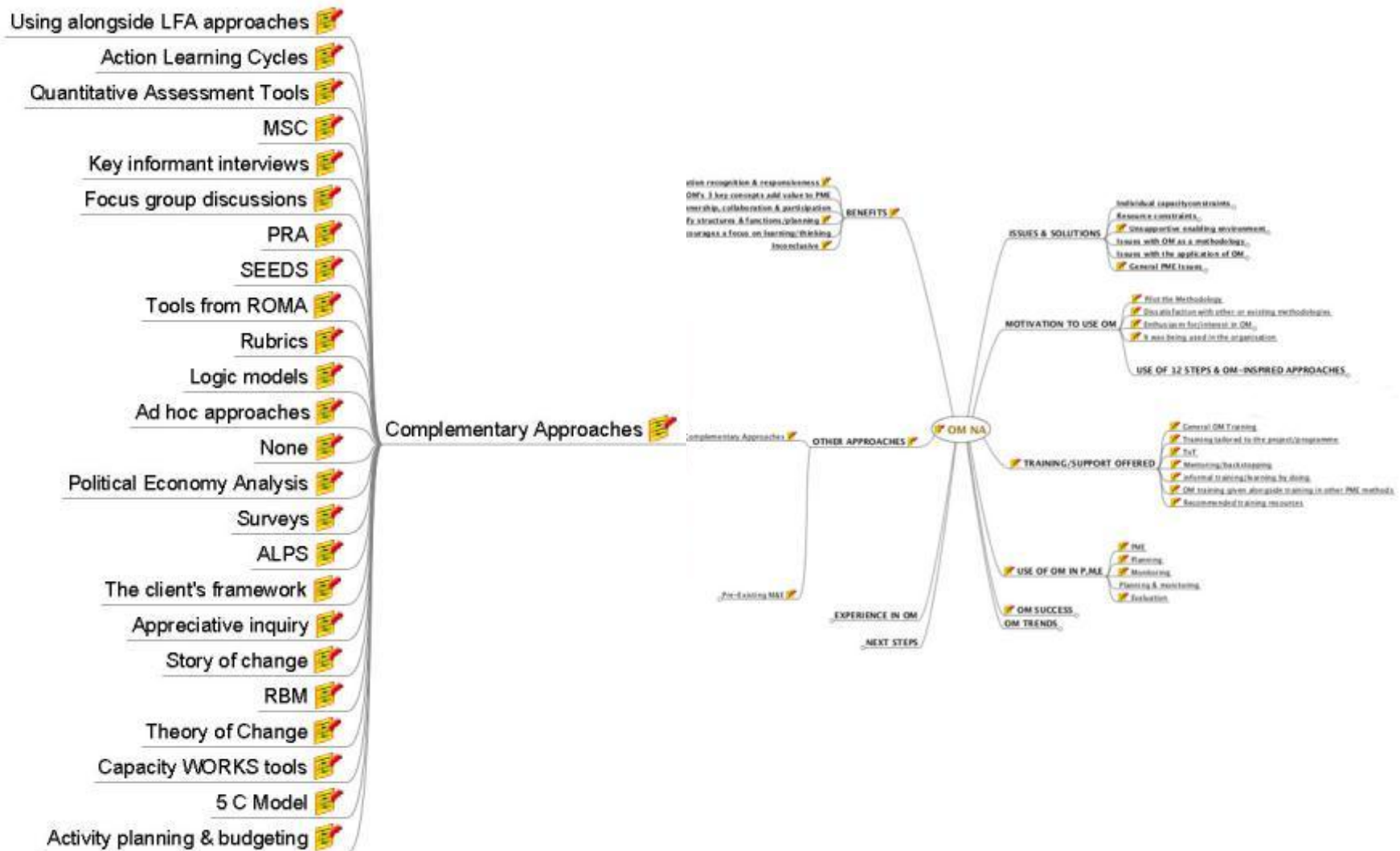
Adaptations of OM

Adaptation has taken four non-exclusive forms:

- 1. Use of some but not all of the 3 stages / 12 steps;
- 2. Use of one or more of the key concepts – such as outcomes defined as behavioural change - with or without any of the 12 steps;
- 3. Starting not with stage 1 (intentional design) but with monitoring or evaluation;
- 4. Using OM with other approaches, including the Logical Framework Approach and Most Significant Change.



Use of OM with other approaches





Proposed Enabling Factors

Essential

- 1. Complexity in the intervention environment.**
- 2. Appreciation of the rationale for OM application.**
- 3. Champions and appropriate technical support.**

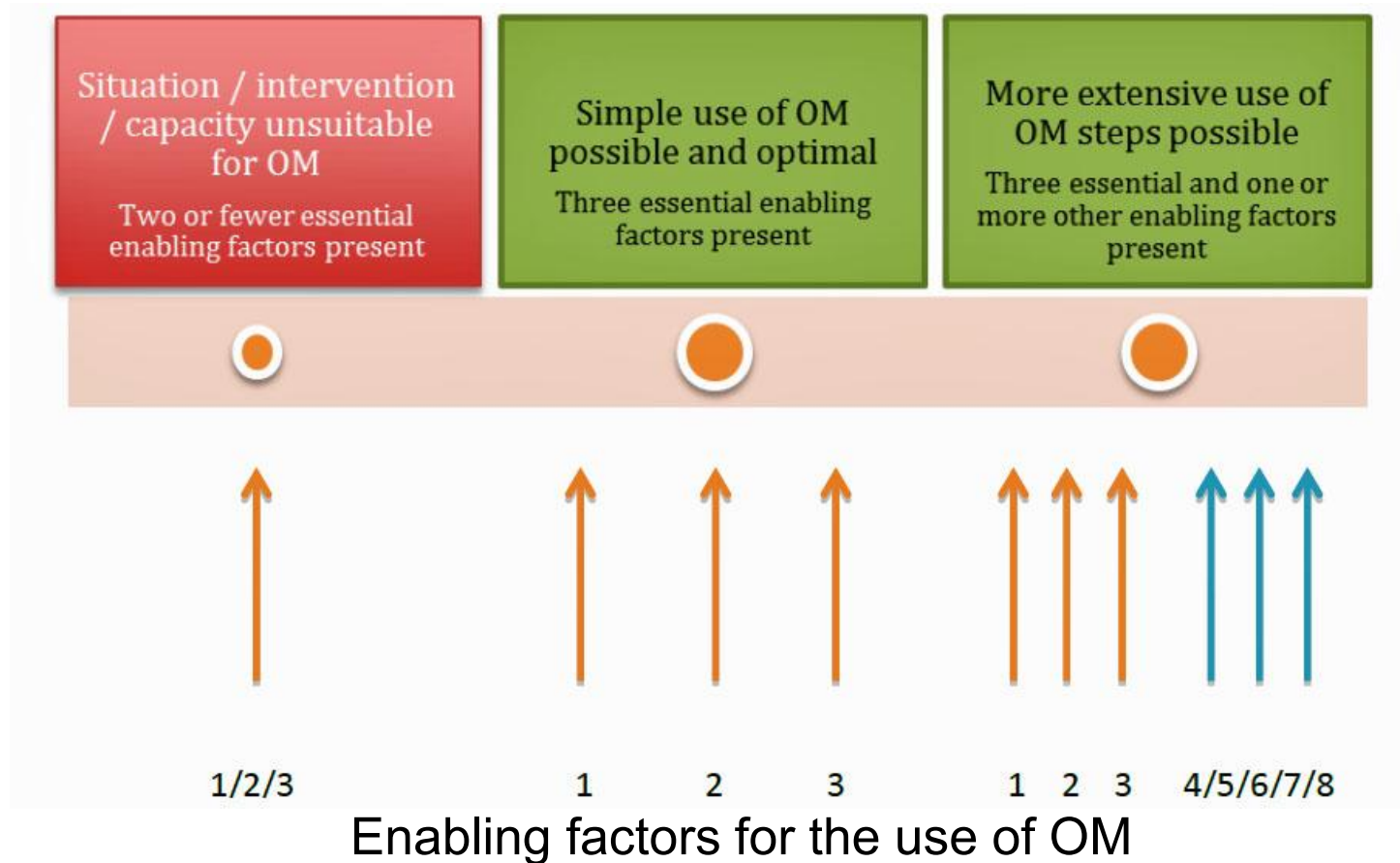
Optional

4. Funder support for using OM
5. Support for and understanding of OM at the executive level
6. The promotion of an organisational learning culture
7. An appreciation of the value of a results and learning-oriented PME system at multiple levels in the organisation
8. Availability of sufficient resources



When OM works best

The 'OM receptivity continuum'





Training, support & learning resources

Many users lack the confidence needed to adapt OM to their situation - > three suggestions:

- Step 0 training: trainees can position their intervention on the OM receptivity continuum and prepare for OM use
- Mentoring: including remote mentoring - a cost-effective way of providing ongoing support for champions of OM
- E-learning tool: encourage OM adaptations through a structured access to existing / new OMLC resources that
 - Introduces OM concepts in the context of other PME concepts
 - Introduces case studies to explain how OM can be simplified / used with other PM&E approaches / non-linear use of OM tools and concepts
 - Encourages the use of OM thinking in evaluation / impact evaluation



Donors and LFA

- *[OM is] inconsistent with the way donors work.*
- *OM and LFA are incompatible*

- Still, many persist with using OM often alongside LFA and are excited about the results **AND we identified 36 funders of interventions that used OM**
- However, most funders are probably often unaware when OM has been used because of the strategies used:
 - Using OM 'by stealth' i.e. without the terminology
 - Using OM internally and LFA for donor reporting



Proposed outreach to donors

- After 10 years of OM, there is much potential for outreach to foundations and public funders:
 - Donor-specific training / ongoing support in participatory PME (OM and other approaches)
 - Promote OM as part of a toolbox to be drawn from, not alternative that has to be used to replace existing approaches in entirety
 - Publicise examples of how OM adds value in LFA context e.g. how OM outcomes help understand progress / obstacles to achieving impacts
 - Seek champions within donors and facilitate the sharing of experiences among donors
 - Describe contexts where OM is most / least useful



Thank you!

For a summary, see OM Ideas 4:

<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/resource.php?id=380>

For the full report, Ten years of OM adaptations and support:

<http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/resource.php?id=379>

The authors are independent consultants experienced in programme management, design and evaluation using OM and other approaches, with international development, environment and agriculture expertise and a passion for helping realise the potential of partnership networks.

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