

# **A M&E Capacity Development Package Implemented with CBOs in Thailand, China and Laos**

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## **Presenters**

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M&E for ME!: A M&E Capacity Development Package Implemented with CBOs in Thailand, China and Laos  
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[Background voices]

Anne Coghlan:

Hi. I'm Anne Coghlan. I'm with ACTION Consulting here in Bangkok, and this is –

Chatwut Wangwon:

Chatwut from Pact Thailand.

Anne Coghlan:

And we're going to tell you about an M&E capacity development package, and we'll explain what we mean by package, designed specifically for community-based organizations. Before we start, though, we'd like to point out to you our co-authors, without whom this study wouldn't have been possible. There was Tatcha here in Thailand, and then Chunxu, and Guo Miao in China.

Now the second challenge –

[Background voices]

Anne Coghlan:

Oh, okay. Okay. Just as a little bit of background, in 2010, PACT Inc., which is a US international development organization with funding from USAID, developed an M&E capacity development package specifically for HIV/AIDS care and prevention community-based programs, and then PACT implemented it over a period of time, first in Thailand, then China, and then Laos.

And so what – in telling you about this, we’re going to start with the rationale, the demand for this initiative, then the design of it. What did it look like, or what does it look like? It’s still in progress. And then we’re going to talk about the results, both as kind of the general outputs, but then the specific outcomes, capacity development outcomes for each country. And then lastly, we’re going to synthesize our lessons learned across the three countries.

So the rationale. In the kind of community-based HIV/AIDS programs, there’s been growing call, demand by community-based organizations, or CBOs for short, for greater participation and ownership of the M&E process, or processes. And for example, a meeting that was held here in Bangkok several years ago, it was a UN AIDS M&E regional meeting. Several very dynamic CBO leaders stood up and said, we need to involve, empower communities in the M&E programs, not as beneficiaries, but as partners.

Someone else said, nothing for us without us, and then also saying, locally developed – that we need locally developed M&E approaches that are flexible and sensitive to communities. And other leaders – it’s not up here, but others said that they also need not so much prescriptive instructions, but guidelines and capacity development.

And so this is about M&E for CBOs, for themselves, and not necessarily only for

donor agencies. And the idea behind this is so that programs are more relevant, effective, and ultimately, hopefully, sustainable. So when we say M&E for ME, the me part is the CBOs.

So then the question became how to do this. So we took a capacity development for a competency-based approach, where the purpose was to develop the capacities of CBOs to design and implement M&E, or specifically participatory monitoring, evaluating, reporting, and learning, or MERL, which is PACT's kind of brand or form of M&E, with a particular focus, strong focus, on learning.

And we broke that down further into the actual specific capacities that CBOs should be actually competent in in order to have meaningful M&E systems. And so we identified those first as building a project logic model, or not just a logic model, but being able to develop conceptual frameworks of their programs, and then from that then developing an M&E plan, a MERL plan, then being able to design data collection methods and tools, and then collect and actually manage quality data, analyze and interpret M&E data. Last but not least, then actually use – how to use M&E data and feed it back into programming. And then throughout all these processes, how to involve stakeholders through each of those stages.

So those are the specific capacities that we had targeted. Now the way – and this is where I think M&E for me differs from a lot

of capacity development packages. We – from years of experience doing training in M&E, we thought that taking CBO leaders and stuffing them into a room for a week and jamming new concepts and examples in their heads would not be the most effective way to do M&E capacity building.

So we looked at those competency areas and actually chunked them out over a series of three interactive workshops that would take place over about a year. And in those workshops, they were only about two or three days each, so that was actually at the request of the CBOs. They said, we can't be out of our offices for a week. That's too much time. Make it two days. We can do that. Three days at the most. Two and a half days. That's good.

So we listened to that. We designed it around that. And then the workshops themselves were very active, with group exercises, peer reviews, practice sessions where they actually worked on their own M&E systems.

But it wasn't just the workshops. It was – participants were expected between the workshops to go back to their organizations, work with their own stakeholders, and start developing a lot of the M&E outputs. So they were building their own M&E plans and systems over time. So they would go back and they would do the logic model, and they would bring that back to the second workshop. We would review that. Then they would develop – they would practice the M&E plan in the workshop, then take it

back to their organization, get stakeholder – so it’s a very kind of iterative process, going back and forth.

And then the original design was then also PACT program and M&E officers would go and help participants do this onsite. So they would provide onsite coaching. They wouldn’t do it for them, but they would help facilitate that process. So there was oftentimes a lot of follow-up in terms of onsite visits, phone calls, emails, a lot of going back and forth.

So this is the basic model that then was adapted and done slightly differently in – well, Thailand followed this model, and then it was adapted for China, and then most recently for Laos. And so now we’ll look at how it was implemented in each of those countries, and some of the results.

Chatwut Wangwon:

I’ll talk about the major outputs from the M&E for ME workshop. And we will call it the minimum package of M&E that we work with the partners. So they were required to complete the logic model, the stakeholder analysis, and do the data plan. In the end, we call it the customized MERL plan for the partner to be able to own it, to use it, and to be happy to work with it, so they feel that these items, this application, belongs to them.

Let’s talk about the outcome, which it led to from the output. We conducted – to measure the capacity of the partner, we conducted three methods. The first one was the self-assessment. We asked before

and after the level of comfort of how they feel about that, and after we finish the workshop, how you rate yourself, you know, how comfortable now you feel.

And then the second one is we provided the monitored coaching to see whether or not they're comfortable with their MERL plan. And the last one is follow up interview, which is only – we did that in Thailand and China only due to the \_\_\_\_\_. I will talk about it later.

Actually, this slide's very, very busy, and I'm really – sorry for the cheap seat in the back.

[Laughter]

But you – we have really good stuff and we really don't want to take it out, so I'll be clear as much as I can.

For the M&E for ME in Thailand, we worked with ten CBOs, which, you know, in the field, the relationship, they were our grantees. We provided four full workshops, with high follow-up and onsite coaching.

In the outcome, in the bottom part, that's the \_\_\_\_\_ to measure the capacity of the organization that we worked with. We start with logic model, stakeholder analysis, \_\_\_\_\_ how to use the result that they develop.

Anne Coghlan:

So these are the capacities that we identified early on. Each one is a capacity area.

Chatwut Wangwon:

And, you know, obviously, they have a big progress in developing the logic model. The average – overall average, you know, is about 1.5, which shows the effectiveness and



efficiency in progress of using the logic model. And also, the – it's also clear to me that onsite coaching is really, really important in terms of providing the self-education, make them believe that they can do it on their own, and with PACT staff being a facilitator, which when we compared results to other countries, you see that that onsite coaching really mattered.

Anne Coghlan:

So again, this is a scale of 0 to 4, or 0 to 3, excuse me. So there are marked increases. Of course, we couldn't test for significance, because the sample sizes were very small. But then – okay, now we're going to go from Thailand to China, which was done about – started about a year later and it was done with seven organizations. Again, HIV/AIDS community-based organizations. But it was different in that half of the participants were PACT grantees, and half were non-grantees. They were other organizations that wanted to participate in this, and they elected to. They saw an advertisement for it, and said, oh, we want to go.

So it took – it was also chunked out over four workshops, but it was over a period of 16 months, which was long, and the reason why was because of kind of certain logistics and resource constraints. It wasn't originally planned to be that long. And then with a medium level of follow-up, with some onsite visits and some phone calls and emails, not as intensive as it was with Thailand.

As with Thailand, there are marked increases in each of the capacities, not as large. I think there's an average increase of 1.1 as compared to 1.5. The largest change was in – was in developing standard operating procedures for improving data quality, or for data quality management. And the least amount of change, interestingly enough, was for the stakeholder analysis, because they said, that's still really hard to do. So that's something to spend more time on.

I think what's interesting about here is they talk – in the qualitative data, they talked a lot about the use of the logic model, and they found that extremely useful. Just for an example, at the baseline, they said before the workshops, we had difficulty understanding the difference between results and impact and outcomes, and just thinking about results.

And then at the end of the fourth workshop, someone said, a logic model really can be used for all of our work, including for running a small shop or a restaurant. And that's what they do for this project, \_\_\_\_\_ this project. So I – for that group. So it was interesting. They really internalized it and saw it was being used for everyday use.

And then lastly, in actually their use, they did use logic models to plan projects better and present it to new donors, and they got additional funding for that. Okay? Now we'll go to Laos.

Chatwut Wangwon:

For Laos, we worked with four NPAs. They don't call it CBO. They call it NPA, nonprofit association. We worked with four of them. And the relationship between us, they were not our grantees. And because of the limited resources, we only can provide three workshops with really low level of onsite coaching and follow-up. We only can – we only could provide the email reminders. So it's really ineffective way for us, for the facilitators, to be able to capture, to help them, to assist them to understand how to work on the M&E.

And the overall average, only 0.9, which is quite low. I think that also reflect from the onsite – low level of onsite coaching. And I remember when I visited them last month, they talk about the mid-term evaluation that was conducted by USAID, they show that they have the logic model that, you know, presented to the evaluator, and they showed that they used SOP and DataPro to make sure the quality of monitoring data that they use in the project.

And the – this – you know, the pools that – the minimum package that developed from the workshop is not only used for the USAID funded projects. They used in pro-poor funds. They used in UNICEF projects. So it's really, once they know how to do it, they apply to all projects that were in their hands.

I think that's it for Laos, and I think that's very progress in terms of learning M&E which, to them, it looked very difficult. M&E data looked really scientific, this look

really academic thing. But when we present this to them, it's very easy, and, you know, for them to get it.

Anne Coghlan:

Right. And that was one of the key lessons learned in working with M&E for ME. And that's – based on our results, we conclude that M&E capacity building for CBOs, it really is good to take an overall package approach. It's something that can be adapted to different contexts, different cultural contexts, different learning styles, and certainly for different resource levels. That's what we learned, is that over time, you can't necessarily predict what your budget will be the next year, or what you will actually get.

So to have that kind of flexibility – M&E for me was originally designed just for Thailand, and it was the other country offices that said, oh, this is a really good idea. We're going to take it. We're going to adopt it. And it just happened that it was designed in such a way that they could do that. It allowed that kind of – that flexibility.

And then related to that was that within the package, and that it was chunked out in four workshops and session plans, it was really kind of bits and pieces that you can pick and choose from, which ended up being really important, because the different participants, the groups had all different abilities. They were all over the map. We had very sophisticated – I don't know how many of you are familiar with SWING here in Bangkok. They've been doing this kind of work for a long time, and they got a lot out

of the logic model, but they went well beyond that, and they grabbed onto the data flow diagrams. They did the indicator protocols.

Whereas the other organizations, like some of the \_\_\_\_\_ groups, the much more nascent groups, they just got to the logic model, and they said, you know what? That's great, and we're not going to continue right now. We're not ready. Now we know we have to work more on the program side of things. We'll come back next year. And so – but they still got a lot out of participating in part of the package. So that flexibility was good.

Most participants rated developing logic models as the most useful component, just getting clarity on outcomes. That was the major piece. That was new for them. And getting consensus amongst their stakeholders as to what the outcomes should be, then deciding what to measure, and then how to measure them.

They also found very useful peer reviews. We built into the workshops where they would review the other CBOs' logic models or SOPs or things. They would actually critique them. They found that useful. And what's not up here, because it only came from Thailand, not from all three countries, but a number of participants said, yeah, you know, the workshops were – they were cool. They were fun. But it was the onsite coaching that made the difference. So that I think is critical.

Chatwut Wangwon:

And this is the last slide. I'm going to sound like a broken record, but I think onsite coaching is very important.

[Laughter]

Chatwut Wangwon:

You know, help them to use it, to apply, to get in the implementation. And also, I think organizational capacity build-up takes time, as well as, you know, learning to understand, to use M&E.

So one – you have to give them time to digest, to learn, to make mistakes, to do trial and error. And once they own it, they feel that they belong, and that they are the best of the best in terms of using it. And then they show it to everyone.

And the last thing is the – Anne has talked about the selection of the participants. I think what to consider for the participant selection should be like the same level of knowledge, skill, experience. Otherwise, it's going to be really chaotic in the workshop with everybody being in the same room.

And also, the \_\_\_\_\_ capacity of the participants. The last thing, which to me is very important, the ability to participate in the whole workshop, not just –

Anne Coghlan:

The whole series.

Chatwut Wangwon:

The whole series of the workshop, not just one person for each workshop, and next workshop, we have another person. This is impossible to follow up and to provide input and to learn, you know, for the whole series.

Anne Coghlan: Which is a major challenge for this model, because we all know how frequently we change our jobs. And CBOs, it's as much or even more frequent, you know, the turnover in staff. So – but the good thing is that folks go on to other organizations and they take those skills with them. It's just whether they get the whole package.

Chatwut Wangwon: That's it for us.

[Applause]

Moderator: Thank you so much. That was a really helpful presentation. One of the things that really resonated with me, as both an M&E person, but our office also manages strategy and project design, is that unless we know where we're going with this, unless there's agreed upon what the actual outputs and outcomes are, it becomes impossible to really do good M&E. So it's something we'll be talking about throughout the day as well. \_\_\_\_\_, do we have time for questions, or do we have to move on? Do we have time for questions? Okay. A few questions. Any comments?

Audience Member 1: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_. I just have like one thing to clarify. I'm not sure if \_\_\_\_\_ focus on \_\_\_\_\_, but then the participants like being trained on how to do logic models and all that, it's kind of naturally linked to the other components of the MERL –

Anne Coghlan: Yes.

Audience Member 1: – model, right? Like, okay, they know how to do the log frame, then they can look at how to frame the question in their M&E, what indicators to choose, how to collect the data, and what should be planned for \_\_\_\_\_. One thing that I cannot like see the links in that model is the stakeholder analysis.

Anne Coghlan: Oh.

Audience Member 1: Like how that links to all of these, and how they use that analysis \_\_\_\_\_.

Anne Coghlan: That – I'm really glad you asked that. The stakeholder analysis is actually a really, really critical piece, and again, I think something that's a little different about this package, and we introduced it very early on, and that is identifying your stakeholder's information needs, M&E needs, and then plotting out – and it's – you know how we love matrices, right? So they identify the stakeholder group, what information do they need, or type of information? What will they use it for?

So use. We're planning for use from the very beginning. How do we want them to use it? When do they need it by? And what for? So they're immediately thinking about not just one report, but we're going to do a seminar. We're going to do a workshop. And by planning it out in the beginning like that, then they know it's a work – put it into their work plan as well as their budget.

So that was a really – that's kind of a linchpin to all of this. But it was not easy. Folks had a hard time. They kept – it was



hard for them to distinguish between information needs and programmatic needs and M&E needs. And that actually – it was an iterative process. It wasn't just they finished the second workshop and moved on. They had to go back to that time and time again. \_\_\_\_\_, did you want to add?

Moderator: Those are really good points. Sometimes I've found that our partners feel like the only stakeholder with information needs is the donor.

Anne Coghlan: Exactly.

Moderator: And then sometimes also there are multiple donors. They feel just overwhelmed with all the different information needs. But looking at it comprehensively, analyzing it from the beginning, I see that as very important.

Anne Coghlan: Right. And then also – and just one other thing to add on, we had another slide of great quotes. You know, we picked up anecdotal quotes, and we didn't have time for it. But one of the quotes was – I think it was someone from \_\_\_\_\_, said, "Questions? I didn't know we could have our own evaluation questions." And it never occurred to them they could have their own information.

Moderator: Any other questions or comments?

Audience Member 2: Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm working for Lutheran World Relief. So I'm glad that you presented this presentation, because we are also working in a similar field, and we are also training to our partners, and we are

also using the similar approach to our partners.

So my question is here, we are facing the problems with, you know, assessment of capacity of the partners you are doing. I'm not sure. It's about – you are talking about – is it design of the M&E systems you are talking during the workshop, you did the assessment with your CBOs? Or it's also the using of – after the using of the M&E systems, you are using the before and after, these kind of things? Because during the design of the projects, I found that in our partners with our NGOs, we also found that they have increased their knowledge in the different – you know, the components you have showed.

But after a while doing the – using the M&E systems, after one year, we found that they forget everything, and there were the new people who were coming up, and whoever was trained, they are not there in the NGOs. And we are getting problems on that. That is all, you know, one question, my concerns about that. I wanted to get an answer from you.

And what's the language you were using on that? It's a local language in Thai, China, Laos, or are you using the English language, and how it is effective on that? That's the two questions I wanted to ask. Thank you.

Anne Coghlan:

Thank you.

Chatwut Wangwon:

For the language, in China, we have PACT—we have PACT China staff to facilitate everything in the local language. In Laos, we

will conduct it – you know, we are using Thai language, for them it's very easy to understand. And for Thai – we also used in Thailand.

Anne Coghlan:

For Thailand, because I had – Tatcha, who I mentioned in the beginning, was co-designer of the whole package, and she's Thai, so she and I worked very closely together developing it and delivering it. So we co-facilitated. I spoke in English, but she was much more than a translator. I mean, she actually facilitated that process. So that was in Thai. So yeah, local language, hugely important.

And then not only the language, but the examples that are used have to be local as well. And that – that's something else that we had to – it was important to make things relevant to the CBOs' everyday life. So demystifying M&E, as \_\_\_\_\_ had mentioned, was really a critical piece.

About the use – you were spot on about this – the long term-ness of this – how long does it last. We did go back, and we did these follow-up interviews to see how it was used, and in the charts, and we didn't go over it because of time, but we have use – so the ways that they actually use – so we conducted interviews. We said, from what you got out of the workshop, what do you still have in terms of a document, and how have you used it? How have you used the M&E plan and the systems?

And a number of them used it actually to get additional funding. They could show

program effectiveness. They could show better planned programs because of the logic model, for one example. Sorry. I'm sure we went over time. Sorry.

Moderator:

All right. Well, thank you so much. This was a really helpful presentation. I'd like to

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