

Newsletter

December 2016



INTRAC at 25: our ongoing mission to champion civil society

Welcome to our December newsletter.

In November, we formally celebrated the 25th anniversary of INTRAC. This milestone offered us the opportunity to reach out to former staff, trustees and long-standing friends; people who have helped us to achieve so much over the past 25 years and who continue to share our vision.

Many came together to help us celebrate in Oxford on 6th December. Others have written to us recalling their memories of INTRAC and how they see the role of organisations like INTRAC now and into the future. Over the next couple of months we will be producing a documentary collating short video clips from our global network of practitioners and activists. We have already received videos from friends in Mexico, Papua New Guinea, South Africa and Senegal reflecting on how civil society can be strengthened in innovative and sustainable ways. If you would like to get involved in this project, please do get in touch.

It is a real delight to include in this Issue a viewpoint from Roy Trivedy, a longstanding friend of INTRAC, who is currently the UN Resident Coordinator in Papua New Guinea. You will also find reflections on 25 years of M&E from staff members Anne Garbutt, Alison Napier and Dan James, as well as news on our work, upcoming training and our latest blogs and papers.

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This opportunity to reconnect with our history reminds us about what INTRAC stands for and why it is so important that we continue to champion civil society.

I came face-to-face with this recently on a trip to South Sudan. INTRAC is contributing to the design of a new programme, funded by the Dutch, Norwegians and Swedish, that aims to support and invest in the development of South Sudanese civil society. There are few places in the world quite as difficult as South Sudan at the moment and in many ways the situation is bleak. Yet, while I was there I heard about a group of young South Sudanese artists and musicians who have been putting up public art and graffiti around Juba with the message “we are tired” and “we want peace”. These beautiful, colourful images are designed to send a strong message to their leaders and their fellow citizens that they want a different type of future. Even in the most difficult of situations, ordinary people are taking initiative and finding creative ways to come together and to try to change things for the better. That is what civil society is all about, and I think it is our role as INTRAC to continue to try to support people like that and to help them to do what they are already doing better.



In this photo taken Sunday, Nov. 6, 2016, a mural painted by the Ana Taban, or "I am tired" artists movement, depicting South Sudanese families, is seen in Juba, South Sudan. (Photo: AP)

The past few weeks have seen a fresh round of global development debates, such as the latest High Level Forum of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and Climate Change talks. We have also seen a raft of aid policy reviews coming out of UK Aid and the European Commission. There are huge expectations about the role that civil society will play in achieving global development objectives, captured primarily in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which sometimes jar with the realities facing civil society in so many places. It is easy to get lost in the breadth of the debate and the scale of the ambition. So as we head into the end of a turbulent year, with a lot more uncertainty to come, I hold on to that good reminder from South Sudan of the essential. Ultimately, change starts with people and those people are us.



Best wishes and good strength to all for 2017!

Clare Moberly is INTRAC's Acting Executive Director, and Director of Consultancies and Training.

Implementing the SDGs: how and where civil society organisations can make a stronger contribution

As a passionate advocate for civil society, I follow the work of INTRAC, CIVICUS, BOND, PRIA, and others, including leading development blogs. Some of the themes that have dominated the literature over the past few years include:

- Protecting the ‘space for civil society’ to work in different country contexts;
- Measuring results and strengthening the impact of civil society contributions to development and humanitarian work;
- How to ensure that governments, political leaders and citizens value and support civil society;

- Establishing longer-term sources of sustainable finance and resourcing to support different elements of civil society work at local, national and international levels including programming, administration, advocacy and campaigning?.

These are important issues that many civil society leaders in the UK (and elsewhere) are grappling with. I have however been surprised by the relatively little attention that appears to have been paid by civil society organisations to the issue of how existing ‘business models’ may need to change and adapt to improve the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I think this is worth exploring further because it may also unlock some answers to the questions posed above.

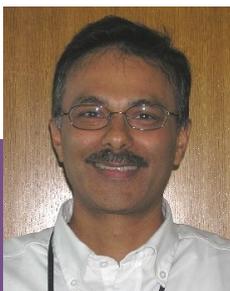
When global leaders agreed the SDGs, they recognised the need for us to think and act in new ways beyond the ‘normal’, ‘business as usual’ for the world to achieve the SDGs. If governments, development partners - including the UN, CSOs and others, continue doing what we have always done and in the same ways, many countries are unlikely to achieve the Global Goals and the situation of many marginalized and vulnerable people is unlikely to be improved. We need more creativity, innovation and passion in *what we do, how we do it and who we partner with*.



Three specific areas where civil society could be making a stronger contribution to improving policy and practice are:

1. On ‘improved partnerships’ and alliances to address the critical challenges that the world faces. To achieve the SDGs requires us to forge new and renewed partnerships that genuinely transform the way we live and work. It would be great to hear how CSOs are piloting some new ‘partnership models’.
2. The ‘movement for achieving the SDGs’ needs to be inclusive – it cannot be just about governments and ‘aid agencies’. We need national governments, parliamentarians and community leaders, CSOs, CBOs and others to prioritize the work required. We need to find better ways of engaging people (young, old, boys and girls, women and men, children and people with disabilities ,etc..) in their workplaces, schools and homes. How are CSOs improving engagement with key stakeholders? How are CSOs adapting their communications strategies to get more citizens involved in taking individual and collective action in support of the SDGs?
3. Getting businesses involved in implementing the SDGs is essential. Promoting environmental and socially sustainable business practices is not only good for the planet but also helps make businesses more profitable and productive. What are some of new ways in which CSOs are working with businesses to implement the SDGs?

All of this requires us to be more adaptive, responsive and pro-active. We are now starting year 2 of the SDG implementation journey to the 2030 milestone. Are we all doing all that we can to bring about the change that we want to see? As INTRAC celebrates its 25th anniversary, I believe that it would be valuable to explore some of these themes over the next few years.



Roy Trivedy is UN Resident Coordinator for Papua New Guinea. He was previously Head of Civil Society Department for DFID UK.

25 years of Monitoring and Evaluation at INTRAC: what have we learned?

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has been central to INTRAC's mission since the organisation was founded in 1991. Since then, much has changed for civil society organisations in the international development sector, but the need for proportionate, appropriate M&E to support organisations to learn, improve and be accountable remains. So what shifts in M&E have we observed in the past 25 years? What have we learned? And crucially, where are we headed?

In INTRAC's early days, many of the tools gaining traction (such as the still widely used logframe) had their roots in corporate management techniques. While this brought more rigour to M&E and encouraged its incorporation in planning processes, M&E practice was often characterised by technocratic, centralised approaches involving standardisation, managerial control, and the search for blue-prints in what makes for a good M&E system. It was viewed by many in the sector as a technical problem, with evaluators considered to be the experts.

From its inception, INTRAC has been a critical voice in challenging this conventional (i.e. donor-led) thinking. In response, INTRAC argued for a less top-down approach to M&E that incorporates and values the many different perspectives and voices in the development process. Through our research, publications and conferences we advocated for participatory approaches to M&E and through our own practice and training programmes, we encouraged M&E practitioners to consider themselves as facilitators rather than technical experts.



Forest of M&E Action. © INTRAC 2011

Over the intervening years, we have seen and been part of many shifts in the development sector. Participation and bottom-up monitoring tools became more mainstream and shaped the way many of today's larger INGOs think about development. At the same time, more complex organisational forms and approaches began to emerge, such as large INGO families and organisations coming together to do development in consortia. With the expansion of official development assistance during the 1990s and early 2000s, the pressures for accountability increased, and donors became increasingly focused on M&E for accountability, through Results-Based Management and a greater emphasis on evaluation and impact assessment.

More technocratic approaches to assessing effectiveness and impact of the work of civil society have re-surfaced. But this time the inspiration comes from science rather than business: the Randomised Control Trial became king (at least in aspiration, if not in practice). Characteristically, our work has not embraced this 'scientific turn'; for INTRAC, M&E is more of an art of understanding organisations and the complex development processes they are involved with and seek to influence, than an exercise of scientific measurement.

So where are we headed? More resources are going to M&E, information and knowledge is more easily accessible to practitioners, and there is an abundance of M&E approaches and tools compared to when we started out. However, the expectations on staff responsible for M&E are also greater; and many are still searching for blue-prints.

25 years on, INTRAC continues to straddle theory and practice, research and consultancy work to support M&E practitioners across the world in their day-to-day work. Our open training courses, such as [Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation](#), Theory of Change and Impact Assessment and our [online training](#), such as Foundation M&E, continue to focus on giving people the skills and confidence to develop and adapt context-appropriate M&E tools, approaches and systems, providing them with the information they need for accountability and learning.

Our research and consultancy work still challenges donors and M&E commissioners where we think M&E requirements are undermining genuine learning and honesty in reporting results. Our publications, such as the 2016 papers on [Qualitative Comparative Analysis](#) and [Summarisation](#), still tackle old – and new – M&E challenges and contribute to debates. And we continue to explore and promote participatory approaches to M&E, such as through our recent research work on [beneficiary feedback mechanisms](#).

In the next 25 years, we hope that INTRAC will continue to adapt and respond to the needs of civil society organisations struggling to learn from and give an account of complex programmes in complex environments. And still underpinning our work will be the belief that approaches to M&E should be ‘fit for purpose’ and help CSOs and actors to manage and use their resources effectively to bring about social change.

To read more about the values that will guide INTRAC’s M&E work in the coming years, read our *Monitoring and Evaluation manifesto*: <https://www.intrac.org/intrac-monitoring-evaluation-manifesto/>

By Anne Garbutt, INTRAC Fellow; Alison Napier, Principal Consultant; and Dan James, Senior Research Consultant.

INTRAC training

Join us in the New Year to refresh your skills, gain new insights and perspectives from our expert practitioners and exchange ideas and learning with participants from a range of countries.

All our training courses include an individual coaching session.

- **[Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation](#)** 30 January – 3 February 2017
Improve your current monitoring and evaluation systems.
- **[Advocacy and Policy Influencing](#)** 20 – 24 February 2017
Learn how to influence policy makers.
- **[Gender Analysis and Planning](#)** 27 February – 1 March 2017
Explore how to plan and develop humanitarian programmes from a gender perspective.

As a cost effective and convenient alternative to our face to face training we are offering our:

New online Monitoring & Evaluation 13 February – 13 March 2017

Develop your understanding of monitoring and evaluation through live webinars led by experienced trainers, collaborative group activities, individual coaching and discussion forums using INTRAC ‘s learning platform.

For further details, visit our [website](#).



Our work

Needs assessment for the Humanitarian Leadership Academy

The Humanitarian Leadership Academy commissioned INTRAC last summer to conduct a needs assessment on what capacity building is provided in the Middle East North Africa region, to inform its operational, partnership and learning requirements.

Adam Taylor-Awny, INTRAC Principal Consultant for the MENA region, led a team that included Suzanne Hammad, INTRAC MENA Associate, and INTRAC researchers. The assessment analysed existing capacity building provision and identified critical gaps and weaknesses; it involved desk-based research and scoping, as well as semi-structured interviews.

Advocacy training for Libyan women's coalitions

Floresca Karanàsou, INTRAC Principal Consultant for the MENA region, and Ahmed Karoud, INTRAC MENA Associate, provided a training course on advocacy for two recently-formed Libyan women's coalitions. This followed on from a workshop led by Floresca and Ahmed on coalition building for Libyan women's organisations hosted by the British Council Libya last February in Tunis.

Evaluation of CAFOD's use of unrestricted income

INTRAC and IPE Triple Line are conducting an evaluation of CAFOD's use of strategic funding, including its Programme Partnership Agreement funding from DfID over the past 6 years.

The evaluation includes document reviews, interviews with CAFOD staff and management, remote interviews with a sample of CAFOD's partners and a country visit.

INTRAC Principal Consultant, Alison Napier, led a country visit to Kenya in November to interview three partners and communities. The interviews focused on how CAFOD has contributed to strengthening and supporting partner organisations, including faith and non-faith partners, and what difference this has made to the people and communities that they work with.



INTRAC consultant Alison Napier leads a group discussion with programme participants in Kenya. © CAFOD 2016

The evaluation is now at the validation stage to ensure findings and recommendations are practical, geared towards the identified users of the evaluation and will feed into and inform strategic decision making and action.

Women Participating in Public Life project - Jordan

INTRAC has been working for three years in support of the British Council on the Women Participating in Public Life project. This aimed to increase women's political participation by facilitating groups of local organisations to carry out action research as the basis for advocacy action in seven countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. In September, the Jordanian National Election provided an opportunity to observe and document the results in one country.



© INTRAC 2016

The **She Parliamentarian** coalition was formed of 14 Jordanian organisations involved in the project. Their advocacy activities included an attempt to amend the electoral law, 17 small scale 'Social Action Projects implemented (e.g. community level plays, awareness sessions, coffee meetings), 150 published news items and training 120 women parliamentary candidates.

The election results showed that the number of women winning 'open competition' seats increased from three to a record five. Of these, She Parliamentarian had trained three, while another five candidates who won via the women's quota took part in Active Citizens initiatives also supported under the WPIPL project.

Naturally, the She Parliamentarian Campaign cannot take all the credit for these achievements. But it has been widely recognised as one important player in a complex situation in which there were many other actors. The election did mark an important step forwards along the road to equal representation and there were some useful learning from the process.

INTRAC Principal Consultant, Rod MacLeod, has written a [Praxis Series Paper documenting this in more detail](#).

Supporting public consultative councils in Kazakhstan

At the end of October, INTRAC trainers Charles Buxton and Anara Moldosheva conducted a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop for civil activists in public consultative councils in many of the largest cities in Kazakhstan - Astana, Almaty, Karaganda, Ust-Kamenogorsk - and other smaller centres.



Participants at the UNDP Kazakhstan public councils workshop, October 2016
© Buxton/ INTRAC 2016

The public consultative councils were set up after a government decree in November 2015 and aim to fill a gap in the democratic system. They provide a space to debate a whole range of local issues as well as some controversial national ones like the recent proposal to allow privatisation of land including sales to foreign companies.

The TOT was funded by UNDP Kazakhstan and preceded by a conference led by senior deputies in the Kazakhstan parliament and a representative of the newly formed Ministry for Religion and Civil Society. Key issues that emerged included how to ensure a truly open recruitment of public council representatives and to manage a large amount of paperwork, including draft laws and regulations presented for comment; how to maintain a measure of civic independence in these "invited spaces"; how to gradually deepen participation (since public councils are being extended to district and village level); and how to work effectively in the absence of a budget.

At the end of the TOT, INTRAC produced a trainers guide that will help participants to reproduce or adapt this workshop at local level.



Publications and blogs



New Praxis Series Paper: She Parliamentarian campaign

INTRAC Principal Consultant Rod MacLeod analyses the success of the She Parliamentarian campaign in Jordan in our latest Praxis Series Paper: 'She Parliamentarian: A campaign for women MPs in Jordan'.

This resource is available as a free downloadable PDF on our resource centre: <https://www.intrac.org/resources/praxis-series-paper-no-2-parliamentarian-campaign-women-mps-jordan/>

Listening, Power and Inclusion: Languages in Development NGOs

How do we ensure that language is not a barrier to effective communication? Vicky Brehm feeds back on the recent workshop 'Listening, Power and Inclusion: Languages in Development NGOs' held in London on 2nd November. This workshop was jointly organised by INTRAC, the University of Reading and the University of Portsmouth, as part of the three-year research project '[The Listening Zones of NGOs: Languages and Cultural Knowledge in Development Programmes](#)'.

Read the blog here: <https://www.intrac.org/listening-power-inclusion-languages-development-ngos/>

Tackling the SDGs through research: how can civil society contribute?

Fresh from facilitating a two-day conference hosted by the Leeds Social Sciences Institute and the Centre for Global Development, INTRAC's Research, Learning and Communications Director, Rachel Hayman, reflects on the value-added of collaborative research projects between academics, practitioners and policy-makers in tackling the issues set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Read the blog here: <https://www.intrac.org/tackling-sdgs-research-can-civil-society-contribute/>

Exit strategies and post-exit evaluation: a perspective from Central Asia

Who benefits from a post-closure evaluation? How and when can it be of value for the receiving organisation? Charles Buxton shares the challenges and opportunities of exit strategies and post-closure evaluations in the Central Asia region.

Read the blog here: <https://www.intrac.org/evaluating-exit-perspective-central-asia/>

Meet the team



Adam Taylor-Awny

Principal Consultant Middle East and North Africa

Adam joined INTRAC in March 2016 as one of two principal consultants for the Middle East and North Africa. He has worked on social development in the Middle East region for over 20 Years.

Adam has an MSC in Social Policy and Planning from the LSE and an undergraduate degree from the American University in Cairo. Fluent in Arabic and English Adam has experience in advocacy and influencing, programme management, project and programme design, monitoring and evaluation and organisational structure and management.

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