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Please note INTRAC's general
email address has changed to:
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Who is Doing the Counting and Why?

Much attention has been given recently in development circles to combining quantitative and qualitative methods. This attention has focused on the measurement of **outcomes** rather than **outputs**. How do we understand whether communities have actually been empowered? How do we know when livelihoods are more sustainable? How do we assess whether the marginalised have been more effectively included? How do we measure increased capacity, institutional development, or organisational efficiency? How do we count the achievements of a 'rights-based' approach, or know when 'trust' has been enhanced and 'risk' reduced? Why do we need to know and who tells us when we are successful? Who does the counting anyway? In the final analysis, is it not really about increasing *control*?

Addressing such questions leads to the heart of current debates about development effectiveness. Yet, this is not necessarily in the manner assumed by those who consider traditional forms of analysis suitable in addressing new sets of problems. Instead we enter the new century with a new set of dilemmas that require fundamentally different tools. The argument that truth may be found in a judicious mix of 'qual/quant' methods **assumes** that we accept the underlying implicit explanatory framework that sees them as occupying different ends of a spectrum.

We structure reality by the world views we espouse. We need to recognise that meanings are always negotiated and that our actions are implicitly, if not explicitly, informed by particular and often competing world views that emanate from specific cultural contexts. Some attention is being given to that cultural context with the emphasis on organisational, institutional and attitudinal change. The traditional focus on projects is being replaced by a more holistic focus on processes. This shift is characterised by attempts to build frameworks that support integration – the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) – and approaches that are pro-poor – the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Yet, even with this reformed approach, the emphasis still appears to be on capturing and controlling processes, on replicating and scaling up in order to produce a uniformity that is simple and replicable.

... freedom is surely about liberation rather than control?

We must recognise the formal and informal, the explicit and implicit dimensions of organisational cultures. We must also recognise that realities are constantly being renegotiated in those cultural contexts: Who knows how to build social capital? At what point is a community 'developed'? How do we build both trust and authority? Amartya Sen argues that governments must

continued on next page

In this issue: David Marsden draws on the debates arising from both the Cornell Conference of 2001 and the Swansea Centre for Development Studies' Conference of 2002 concerning evaluation, accountability and inclusion; Janet Townsend discusses the issues regarding trust, evaluation and accountability; Tony Vaux exemplifies the practical aspects in the context of the Red Cross Code of Practice in his evaluation of the Gujarat earthquake; Anne Garbutt discusses development of monitoring and evaluation indicators in INTRAC's work in Central Asia.

Readers are invited to contribute comments on the themes debated in *ontrac*. INTRAC reserves the right to edit letters for brevity. Contributions can be sent to: The Editor *ontrac*, INTRAC, P.O.Box 563, Oxford OX2 6RZ, UK. Email: e.harris-curtis@intrac.org

continued

provide opportunities for citizens to make informed choices in order to gain and then exercise entitlements; freedom is surely about liberation rather than control? If the methods and instruments we use are shaped by our implicit assumptions then whether they are quantitative or qualitative makes no difference. One world view will try to ensure that results are extracted and abstracted to inform and support objective proofs. Another world view will support a more participatory process involving informed stakeholders in the contextual interpretation of the results. It is important to recognise that behind every method there is a motive.

Onora O'Neill focuses on the 'Crisis of Trust' and argues we have built a culture of suspicion. We talk of rights

We talk of rights whilst ignoring obligations.

whilst ignoring obligations. We emphasise accountability and transparency whilst imposing managerial targets and performance assessments. Where we have guarantees and proofs we do not need trust. As she argues, 'transparency has marginalised the obligation not to deceive.' Thus, control, accounting and assessment may be the enemies of trust. By reducing uncertainty and ambiguity

we are actually stripping off the veil that hides (and protects) differences and inequalities. In fact, we can take little at face value if we recognise that each encounter is full of ambiguous meaning.

If qualitative and quantitative methods are complementary, why are they so often viewed as opposed? Qualitative researchers are more concerned with ethical ('soft') issues and quantitative researchers with ('hard') scientific objectivity. Yet, that objectivity cannot be above ethical consideration. Does the 'soft', context specific and subjective nature of qualitative analysis confine the results to impressionistic accounts? There is no counter-factual with which an unbiased interpretation may be achieved; no 'with and without' analysis can point to causal relationships

between inputs and outcomes.

Whichever methods

we use, the data will always be context specific and dependent on the perceptions of both the donor and the recipient of that data – whether we are talking about household surveys or Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs).

Such issues inform a debate that might be referred to as a struggle between an 'economistic' or

'economising' interpretation of the world by experts and the everyday interpretations of the world by people. One is deductive and builds from an understanding of reality as embodied in mutually comparable statistics, usually reduced to monetary values, because those are the proxies for guarantees and proofs and based on dubious premises of rationality and control. The other is inductive and is built on the singular and unique values with which people, with partial information, operate within the world as they perceive and interpret it. At this time the struggle continues to approach analysis in a more enlightened, holistic and contextually informed manner.

Written by David Marsden

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INTRAC's Fifth Evaluation Conference

Kontakt Der Kontinenten, The Netherlands

Monday 31st March – Friday 4th April 2003

80 - 120 participants.

As agencies take up the challenge to use the monitoring and evaluation of empowerment in the field, there is a need to examine how these efforts fit with the current trend amongst donors to encourage the use of performance assessment and results based management. The Fifth International Conference 'critically examines the interface between top-down, results-based, performance assessment systems and bottom-up, client-based, participatory systems.'

We seek to achieve a representative balance between geographic regions and different types of organisations and individuals. INTRAC welcomes applications to attend from policy makers, programme staff and academics engaged with development agencies.

For full details, please contact Ceri Angood, Conference Organiser.

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New Publications

PEOPLE AND CHANGE: Exploring Capacity Building in NGOs

Rick James, NGO Management Policy Series no. 15, June 2002, ISBN 1-897748-68-X £15.95 + P+P.

People and Change is about improving the impact of capacity building. Based on many years of practical experience with NGOs, largely in Africa, this book argues that for capacity building programmes to be more effective we should better appreciate the complex and highly personal dimensions to organisational change. Fowler also explains how organisations cannot change unless people change. To do this we need to understand the culture and context within which the capacity building takes place and adjust the programmes accordingly. Only then can we improve the impact of our capacity building by consciously learning from our work. *People and Change* also gives practical guidelines for taking the monitoring and evaluation of capacity building work more seriously.

This book is for anyone involved in capacity building whether a provider of services, a supporter, a donor or a recipient. Using a mixture of case studies, illustrations from experiences and articles based on reflective practice, *People and Change* provides practitioners with ideas, suggestions and challenges to improve the effectiveness of the capacity building interventions.



STRIKING A BALANCE [in Russian]
Alan Fowler 2001, ISBN 1-897748-65-5 £14.95 + P+P.

Abridged from a review that first appeared in the *BEARR Trust Newsletter*, 36, July 2002.

Striking a Balance gives a comprehensive overview of the operational management and strategic challenges facing Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs). The nine chapters cover several themes, including understanding development, strategic planning, relationships with partners, funding and finances, impact assessment and futures challenges.

Each chapter offers insights and practical tips. The chapter on impact assessment is particularly good, as is the final chapter on the future for NGDOs. There are, furthermore, useful nuggets throughout, covering a wide range of key areas.

The book divides development issues into geographical zones. While it mentions the South and the East, its emphasis is really on Northern and Southern experience. At first glance, it is unclear how relevant this book is to Eastern NGOs. On further reading, however, it becomes clear that as well as being an effective tool for the Western or 'Northern' NGDO managers and leaders for whom it appears to be primarily intended, it is also useful for Eastern NGO managers. They are encouraged to learn from the South's thirty years experience in aid and development work

and, therefore, avoid repeating their mistakes.

Of further relevance to Russian-speaking NGDOs is the focus on managers who have 'little formal exposure to... non-profit management applied to development work' and tend to 'learn about leading and organising by doing it'. It might have been useful, however, for INTRAC to explain the rationale behind a Russian translation and who they see as the target audience. Although it appears that this translation is essential reading for a narrow audience of Russian speakers working for donors or for international NGDOs, it could also be useful for the wider Russian-speaking NGO sector, providing advice and practical suggestions on a range of management issues.

Fowler's style veers between factual reporting of the way that NGDOs behave and active suggestions of ways they should behave. He himself appears to be 'striking a balance' between theory and practice, between the ideals of good management and the messy realities of sustainable development.

For further information about INTRAC's publications, please contact Carol Beaumont

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or visit the website, <http://www.intrac.org/pubs.html> ■

Senior Appointment at INTRAC: Research Director

This post presents a unique and challenging opportunity within INTRAC. We are seeking an exceptional candidate: someone who has an established international reputation, experience in international development and applied research and who will lead our growing INTRAC Research Team. As part of the INTRAC Senior Management Team, the successful candidate will also be responsible for areas of strategic development within the organisation and with promoting our key interests in Civil Society, Organisational Capacity Building and Participatory Development.

For full details of the post and an application form please write to: Personnel, INTRAC, PO Box 563, Oxford, OX2 6RZ, UK.

Email: b.pratt@intrac.org

Previous candidates need not re-apply.

Welcome to Capacity Building News No. 12. In this edition Anne Garbutt explores the processes involved in developing indicators in a participatory manner in Central Asia.

Participation in Developing Indicators

As Programme Managers we are often asked to develop indicators that measure the **complex objectives** we are aiming to achieve in isolation from the people who actually do the work. How often are monitoring systems developed by specialist units who are not part of the implementation team? We are all dealing with a tension between doing the work itself and measuring what we are doing. How many times have we all heard, 'If you can do it, you can measure it!' In reality, what happens is we develop monitoring systems that are designed to prove to the funders or senior managers that we are achieving something. We talk of the 'learning organisation' and developing indicators through participation, those indicators being used to help us manage the programme. In reality of course what happens is we get caught up by the huge workloads on our desks and cut corners by selecting a few chosen people to manage the monitoring system developed at the beginning of the programme, who provide the answers we would like to hear as managers.

The Institutional Development of Civil Society in Central Asia Programme of INTRAC (ICAP) has been grappling with these **challenges** over the past twelve months. There has been a series of workshops and meetings during which partners and INTRAC staff from Central Asia and Oxford have been developing a monitoring system. The outcome has included a series of indicators that will not only measure the progress of the work,

but provide adequate information for all the stakeholders to get involved in the evolutionary development of the programme.

As a manager and trainer I am often frustrated that I cannot directly respond to questions such as: what indicators are available to measure an activity or product we have produced? How often do we not have an answer? There are simply **no replicable tools** that are non-specific. Every programme is unique and provides a complex system that is specific to that programme alone. The context, the needs of the clients, the staff profile and the physical resources all influence how a programme develops and how ultimately it will perform. It would be impossible to recreate the conditions of any one programme anywhere else in the world; that is the challenge faced by all programme managers when they begin thinking about developing a monitoring system. INTRAC staff have all worked in many other areas of the world, yet lack the contextual experience of acting in Former Soviet Union States, working with people who have, and still are, experiencing major changes in their lives. How were we going to develop indicators that could measure what we were doing at the same time as facilitating and aiding our partners to develop indicators to fulfil their own objectives?

INTRAC attempted to assist their stakeholders (NGOs, CBOs, NGOSOs, Donors and International NGOs) to introduce monitoring and evaluation

as an integral part of the work. Evaluation systems are rarely integrated into a programme approach, most are developed separately by monitoring and evaluation departments, or experts who are often within the same organisation. Therefore, INTRAC aimed to develop a series of tools that would encourage them to become learning organisations and help them learn from the ICAP experience. Thus, further developing their understanding of critically assessing their role within the rapidly changing context of Central Asia.

The ICAP monitoring and evaluation system was proposed as a model on which the different stakeholders could develop their skills in understanding the process of developing such a system. This would be linked to an on-going training programme on monitoring and evaluation. Each stage of the development and implementation of the system would be accompanied by a training workshop. This was a particularly bold step to take as INTRAC's shortcomings, as well as successes, would be exposed to their partners.

The challenge was split into different phases:

Phase One

The developing of a monitoring and evaluation system that included a series of three workshops with representatives from NGOSOs, NGOs, Donors, International Organisations and ICAP staff from all five Central Asian states. The workshops were aimed at generating:

- Agreement on the broad objectives of INTRAC's work in Central Asia;
- Development of a set of key questions to be used as a framework for monitoring the outcomes and impact in relation to the programme's broad objectives; and,

■ Creation of a set of indicators that can be used at multiple levels as a means of monitoring the progress of the programme.

In February 2002 a review meeting was held with the ICAP staff to finally refine the indicators and provide a basis on which to develop the specific tools and agree data collection locations. The entire system would be derived from this in due course.

Phase Two

This has been to integrate the indicators into a monitoring plan, to be used by staff and partners to collect data in order to serve as the basis of the first year report.

The second phase was also linked to workshops focusing on reporting systems and the development of an NGO reference group where the tools could be cross-checked by different stakeholders. Triangulation was ensured by several means: addressing the issue of reliability; using a mixture of methods, tools and perspectives; working in teams; using multiple data sources; introducing tools including focus groups; meeting key informants; use of questionnaires and the analysis of secondary data and observation.

The key question raised during the process has been, 'does the data we are collecting provide reliable and valid data of sufficient quantity and quality?' The team recognises that the quality and quantity of data collected will improve over a period of time as

the stakeholders understanding and skills grow and refinement of the tools continues. The changes in the context and the development of the programme will also influence the information gathered.

Phase Three

The next phase planned will be to review the application of the different tools in the context of Central Asia. This will be linked to workshops that will examine the skills needed to apply the tools, thus strengthening the stakeholders understanding of the importance of using the tools effectively.

The process has been time-consuming and could also have been expensive, however, as it is integrated into the programme itself as part of the institutional development of the sector, the costs are absorbed into the programme budget. The process has needed to develop in a slower fashion than maybe the donors would have liked. However, the commitment by the stakeholders has been an invaluable gain that will

increase the quality of the information gathered as all the participants want to see the success of the system they have developed.

The ICAP Programme has not found the answers to many of the questions being raised by managers and more questions are arising all the time. However, what it has done is allowed the different stakeholders to become involved in the process. By this means they are gaining a stronger understanding of the issues and problems that arise when developing a monitoring and evaluation system. This should be seen as an every day part of any project or programme that will assist the people doing the work to carry it out more effectively.

Written by Anne Garbutt

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INTRAC's Central Asia team from Oxford, Uzbekistan & Kyrgystan meeting in Tashkent, Kyrgystan

INTRAC People

Vicky Brehm, Researcher and *ontrac* Editor, started maternity leave in April. We would like to congratulate Vicky Brehm and her husband on the birth of their son, Elliott, in May. We hope that Vicky is enjoying her leave and that she will return invigorated in January 2003 to the INTRAC office. Emma Harris-Curtis, previously INTRAC's Information Officer,

is deputising as Researcher in Vicky's absence and Laura Jarvie, previously a Research Volunteer, is acting as Information Officer.

INTRAC had a major change in our Finance Department at the beginning of June with Fiona Shickle leaving INTRAC as Director of Finance and Administration. As Fiona has been with INTRAC for over five years she will be greatly missed. We are, however, very pleased to welcome Peter

end of capacity building news

Howlett as the new Director of Finance as Peter has knowledge of the NGO sector having worked both at Oxfam and as a consultant.

Lorraine Collett left her role as Office Manager at the end of June as she decided to pursue her career in teaching English as a second language.

Written by Natasha Thurlow

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countryfocus **India: Using The Red Cross Code for Programme Evaluation in Gujarat**

This article is a summary of the investigation of the use of the Red Cross Code in the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) evaluation of the response to the Gujarat earthquake of January 2001.

In the DEC evaluation the evaluators sought to reduce subjectivity to a minimum. In order to do this they considered two elements as essential; a set of values agreed by the participating agencies and a systematic method of analysing the views of those affected. Arguably, assessments of performance against the Code could have been made by the evaluators, but this would have been contrary to the Code itself that requires accountability both to donors and 'beneficiaries'.

The DEC had devised its own criteria of values for evaluations; **timeliness and appropriateness, cost effectiveness, impact, coverage, connectedness and coherence.**

The team felt these criteria too vague for use as evaluation tools and would do little to reduce the risk of subjective judgements. Furthermore, they gave no guidance on fundamental questions about the balance of relief and development and failed to answer the question 'in whose judgement?' Another weakness was that the six criteria were the DEC's own and might lack objectivity in an evaluation intended to give the donating public a chance to hold aid agencies accountable. In looking for an alternative the only real option was the Red Cross Code as it is a requirement of DEC membership for agencies to sign up to the Code.

In previous evaluations the process was generally unsystematic and given much less weight than the views of the evaluation team. So the team decided on a public opinion survey with researchers from the Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, as the solution. The survey was designed to incorporate key elements of the Red Cross Code. Such data formed the basis for measuring performance

against the Red Cross Code.

It appeared that none of the senior aid managers in the UK or in the field had read the Code recently and were not using it as a tool of programming or evaluation. It was no more than a 'rubber stamp' of respectability. This suggests little change since a similar finding in a DEC study of 1998. Interestingly, at a seminar held with agency representatives in Bhuj in the earthquake area, many aid managers admitted they were surprised at the validity of the Code.

The outcome of the evaluation, measured by a scoring system, is based on the collective performance of the eleven participating agencies against the ten Principles of the Red Cross Code:

Principle Number	Principle Description	Score
1.	Humanitarian imperative comes first	5
2.	Aid is given regardless of race etc	8
3.	Religion and politics	9
4.	Independence from government policy	-
5.	Culture and custom	6
6.	Build on local capacities	5
7.	Involve beneficiaries	4
8.	Reduce future vulnerabilities	3
9a.	Accountable to beneficiaries	6
9b.	Accountable to donors	8
10.	Dignity in images	5
TOTAL		59

Dividing the total by ten criteria gives an overall rating for the DEC response of 5.9 for this disaster. The figure could be used to compare with DEC responses to other disasters, or those of other agencies.

The **conclusions** reached indicate there are many calls for accountabil-

ity in aid and highlight many interesting implications and recommendations that have arisen from the evaluation itself. The essential requirement is a common standard by which aid inputs can be measured. The DEC Gujarat evaluation shows that the Red Cross Code Principles are relevant, challenging and instructive and offer a means to draw comparisons between evaluations. In order to develop the code further, more evaluations need to be done. New innovations, such as the public surveys, and further development of indicators will strengthen the method. There is a tendency for aid agencies to question the Code, rather than their own performance against it. However, talk of changing the Code undermines the basis for common accountability. If aid agencies wish to develop the Code as a serious tool they need to do more to encourage staff awareness and to build its use into programming decisions.

Abridged from a paper written by Tony Vaux, *Humanitarian Initiatives*.

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Reference:

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discussion: A Question of Trust?

Welcome to a brief discussion of the issue of 'trust' that we are hearing so much of at the moment. Janet Townsend is working on the 'new managerialism' in aid issues, has researched NGOs and development for many years and is a long-term friend of INTRAC. She is based in the Department of Geography at Durham University.

The Problem

As an outsider, an academic, I was very much surprised in my current research with NGOs in Ghana, India, Mexico and Europe (Mawdsley *et al.* 2002) to hear so many people saying much the same things as I hear in my Department.

They (the donors) are not bothered about the fieldwork. They are bothered about reports, writing in a **professional** manner. The system has to be developed so that it can't be misused. Physical verification will reveal the real truth in the field.

(Dr Muniratnam, leader of a large, successful Indian NGO.)

We spend a great deal of time writing reports, and feel that activities not at our desks are invisible.

(Woman member of small, successful Mexican NGO acting as mentor for grassroots groups of poor, Nahuatl-speaking women, Mexico.)

We all feel that it is no longer the work we do that counts, let alone the difference we make, but the reports we write and the documentation we produce. On reading this up, I find that we are all suffering from the 'new public management revolution' and its 'auditing culture', which is also called the 'new managerialism'. This goes back to the 1980s when the UK, USA and other neo-liberal governments developed the 'new managerialism' to improve the effi-

ciency and transparency of the public sector and to limit costs. So teachers, nurses, the police and universities were all faced with demands to be transparent and accountable, and to prove their worth through performance indicators. Then these techniques were exported in the 1990s through foreign policies and aid. From Durham University to Kisumu in Ghana, the same managerial approaches were then readily extended from the public sector to NGOs funded by governments, multilateral agencies or foundations. NGO staff around the world (together with teachers, nurses and the police in the UK) are complaining of spending so much time filling in forms and writing reports that they have no time for their work. Our working contexts may be different, but the complaint is shared.

The Good News

The good news is that the attack is underway in the UK, spearheaded by a Cambridge Professor of Philosophy, Onora O'Neill. She gave a series of radio lectures that are really making people think, entitled 'A question of trust'. Much of what she says would appeal to so many people who talked to me, especially those from the South. O'Neill argues that:

Perhaps the culture of accountability that we are relentlessly building for ourselves actually damages trust

rather than supporting it... The efforts to prevent abuse of trust are gigantic, relentless and expensive; and inevitably their results are always less than perfect.

Therefore, new instruments for control, regulation, monitoring and enforcement, 'Often obstruct the proper aims of professional practice...In the end, the new culture of accountability provides incentives for arbitrary and unprofessional choices.'

Many NGO staff who talked to me would agree with her, and would add that it also does little to prevent the misuse of resources, but diverts resources from the needs of the poor. We have built a culture of accountability that is centred on proving that the government, or donor, has done everything possible to prevent misuse of funds. As this must be proved, it puts a premium on documentation, on a 'paper trail', not on field visits to NGOs, or on sending inspectors to sit in my lectures. Resources are diverted from the real work to producing documentation.

O'Neill calls for 'intelligent accountability' and it is that which we must all seek in order to gain true accountability of the real work.

Written by Janet Townsend

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Synthesis of Literature on Trust and Accountability

The Reith lectures have indeed served as a catalyst for the debate on trust and accountability in numerous and diverse areas of civil society. In the NGO community trust is beginning to be explored in many contexts: the rights-based approach, monitoring and evaluation, funding relationships and codes of conduct. This synthesis of literature on trust

and accountability is here to help those of us with no time to find texts, but the interest to pursue this area of current inquiry.

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INTRAC Open Training

We are pleased to announce our programme of open training courses for the period from late September 2002 to March 2003.

For those needing an introductory overview our three day residential courses in London are available. A more profound understanding can be derived from our five day courses in Oxford.

Our training is participatory and uses a variety of methods based on action learning principles such as case studies, group work, role play and peer support. These are complemented by presentations on relevant theoretical frameworks and emergent thinking and trends that provide the participants with a reference point for their learning and an opportunity to locate their experiences within the wider body of thought.

Three-Day Non-Residential Courses:

POWER AND PARTNERSHIPS	10 - 12 Dec. 2002
SUPPORTING SOUTHERN ADVOCACY	29 - 31 Jan. 2003
CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING	24 - 26 Feb. 2003
IMPACT ASSESSMENT	24 - 26 March 2003

Cost: £340, includes course fees, lunch and refreshments.

Five-Day Residential Courses:

ADVOCACY AND POLICY INFLUENCING	23 - 27 Sept. 2002
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING	30 Sept. - 4 Oct. 2002
EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT	9 - 13 Dec. 2002
MANAGING A PARTICIPATIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS	13 - 17 Jan. 2003
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	10 - 14 Feb. 2003

Cost: £860, includes four nights accommodation, meals, refreshments and course fees - please note that there is a reduced price of £820 for early bookings.

For more information on any of the above courses, or to apply, please contact Rebecca Blackshaw at INTRAC. Email: r.blackshaw@intrac.org ■

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