

Newsletter

June 2017



A Macedonian actor (Gjorgji Neshkoski) reads picture books with young students as part of the Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia/USAID ‘Readers are Leaders’ project. © Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia.

Welcome to our June newsletter.

We are delighted to include an external contribution by Suzana Kirandziska and Ana Dimovska from the Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia. Suzana and Ana analyse the complex Macedonian context and how social media has helped their organisation communicate and engage with their beneficiaries in an effective way.

INTRAC Chief Executive, Helen Mealins, discusses governance, citizen participation and accountability, and shares her views on the recent UK election and its resonance with emerging findings from new research on local governance in Tanzania.

This month, we have continued with our action learning sets initiative in Central Asia to build a cohort of local trainers in the region. As part of the Training Providers Forum, we contributed to the workshop ‘Learning in the digital era’ in London, a unique opportunity for development and humanitarian training professionals to share their insights and experiences.

We also took the King Khalid Foundation on a tour to learn from major British development agencies about advocacy strategies; and we have made a lot of progress helping Terres des Hommes develop their theory of change.

So read on for more updates on recent conferences and events, upcoming training courses, and our latest publications and blogs, including a new Praxis Series Paper by Bethlehem Mengistu from WaterAid Ethiopia.

Viewpoint

Guest contribution

Our work

Events

Publications

& Blogs

Meet the team

Assume nothing!

I am just a few weeks into my new role as Chief Executive at INTRAC, an organisation whose reputation precedes it. Since announcing my appointment so many people have come forward and mentioned how they and their respective organisations have benefited professionally from INTRAC's research findings, training and consultancy support. I feel privileged to join a global network that shares INTRAC's mission – to strengthen the effectiveness of civil society to challenge poverty and inequality, empowering people to gain greater control over their own future.

Having relocated from Kampala to Oxford, I am working hard to get my bearings and adjust to a new set of political, personal and professional realities.

At the time of writing, the results of the UK general election have just become known. Political commentators, party leaders, and citizens up and down the country are celebrating and lamenting the result in equal measure. Analysts are having a field day reflecting on who voted, how they voted, and why. Voting patterns were discernibly different among the young and the old; the rich and the poor; and rural and urban based communities. And yet, as one BBC commentator¹ concluded "*the idea that the final electoral arithmetic gives effect to some silent national consensus on what Britain wants is just absurd...There was no definable message from the electorate...The nuanced opinions that the country and, indeed, every voter holds are impossible to explain from a simple 'X' in a single box.*"



Photo by [secretlondon123](#) via Flickr.

I have to concur. It wasn't clear to me whether votes (including my own) were cast in support of personalities, political ideologies or critical issues in the international, national, community or individual interest. The opaqueness and questionable credibility of the available information to allow voters (and in the case of Brexit negotiations, the negotiators) to take informed decisions about these critical issues, left many out or talking at cross purposes.

Conventional wisdom states that in order to have voice, citizens need effective language and channels through which to convey their views. It is assumed that governments will then respond to the needs and demands placed upon them. Improvements in public service delivery are expected to follow as a result of this voice and accountability exchange.

¹ "Has British Democracy let its people down?". Mark Easton BBC, Home Editor, 12 June 2017: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40245805>

² "Exploring the viability and value of creating a local governance performance index at the district level in Tanzania" is a research project funded by Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID). Led by University of Mzumbe, Tanzania, in partnership with the Foundation for Civil Society and INTRAC.

Reflecting this conventional wisdom back into a UK context gave pause for thought, and I found myself re-reading the initial findings from a three year ESRC/DFID funded research project concerned with local governance and service delivery in Tanzania² that I found in my in-tray on arrival, ahead of an [ODI-hosted panel discussion](#) on the 22 June.

Researchers at the University of Mzumbe, in partnership with the Foundation for Civil Society and INTRAC, found significant differences in perception and understanding about concepts in routine use, including terms such as “local development”; “accountability”; “responsibility”. It also found confusion among citizens and those holding public office about who was responsible for holding local government to account.

Notions of voice, governance and accountability are common currency in international development discourses. But just as UK voters were drowned in information but not necessarily *informed*, as development practitioners, are we too quick to assume we understand what is going on from another’s perspective?

As I read the [research briefing paper](#), it occurred to me that we don’t pause long enough to think or worry about whether (in human rights parlance) “duty bearers” and “rights holders” really understand each other. For citizens to engage effectively in civic life, to express preferences, secure their rights, make demands on the state in pursuit of better development outcomes, then an obvious starting point would be sharing a common language and understanding of the issues at hand, and using effective communication channels.



Duty bearers often make assumptions about what they believe rights holders are thinking (and vice versa). In light of the research findings in Tanzania, and the UK election result, where each side spectacularly misunderstood the other, the thought that occurs, and guiding principle that results is: assume nothing!

With so much to learn as I settle into my new role I am planning to assume nothing, question everything, and listen effectively to multiple viewpoints.

I look forward to working with many of you soon.



Helen Mealins joined INTRAC as Chief Executive in June 2017. She brings with her over 20 years’ experience of working with politicians, government officials, civil society practitioners and private sector executives in a variety of leadership and consultancy roles. Helen is a politically savvy governance adviser and institutional development practitioner, who specialises in corporate strategy and planning.

Educating children, strengthening professionals, building the future.

It has been 27 years of turbulent democratic and economic transition for the Republic of Macedonia since it peacefully gained its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. Although a European Union candidate since 2005, the country still faces challenges, including overcoming the political crisis, resolving disputes with neighbouring countries, multi-ethnic disturbances, and stimulating economic growth and development.

Hopefully, the beginning of the end of the crisis seems to be around the corner with a new government in place: in May 2017, a coalition led by the Social Democrats was elected and it has pledged greater cooperation with local CSOs and their inclusion in policy making.

The Step by Step approach: democratising child-centred education

In 1994, the Open Society Foundations (OSF) introduced the Step by Step Programme, an early childhood education reform initiative in 15 countries in Central Europe and Eurasia. The programme was established to introduce child-centered and family-based approaches to early education through a series of pilot programmes in government kindergartens.



Lower primary students from Macedonia exploring in a science corner established in their classroom according to the Step by Step educational methodology. © Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia.

In Macedonia, it originally started as a two-year pilot in 10 kindergartens, with 500 more educators from all kindergartens joining in the following year. In 1996, the methodology was introduced in 10 primary schools, and every other year more educators were getting involved.

Five years into the programme, in 1996, OSF began a process of supporting the Step by Step country teams to improve the sustainability and independence of the initiative. In 2001, the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step – Macedonia was officially established as a nongovernmental organisation.

Using social media to improve our reach and support

To implement the child-centred methodology in preschool and primary schools, Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia facilitates a series of trainings covering topics such as active learning methods, thematic teaching, how to stimulate a learning environment, parents' involvement, and critical thinking and social justice, to name a few. A number of other activities have followed through the years, such as publishing children's books, establishing the Children's Creative Center, partnerships with teacher training faculties, and programmes for children from socially disadvantaged families.

The digital era and social media now offer new exciting opportunities for us to successfully communicate with our community of supporters and stakeholders. Although television is still the dominant medium in the country, it is clear that the path toward digitalisation is being paved with great speed as currently 70% of citizens use the internet and 50% have a Facebook profile. The majority of local NGOs use social media (mostly Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter) as affordable, yet efficient tools, to interact and engage with their target audiences.

In December 2016, we organized a Facebook campaign to motivate parents and other family members to **read with their children for at least 20 minutes per day!** It was part of the USAID funded 'Readers are Leaders' project that the Foundation is implementing in all public primary schools in the country

since 2013. The project aims to assess early grade reading and numeracy, strengthen teacher's pedagogical skills, as well as increase community recognition of reading and numeracy skills.

With the support of the Macedonian illustrator Aleksandar Sotirovski, we created a campaign mascot, Dr. Čitko (Macedonian for Doctor Read), who was regularly sharing tips, ideas and resources to help parents create healthy reading habits with the youngest in a series of Facebook posts. The campaign also included a photo challenge, with all the participants receiving a free children's book as a prize for their contribution.

The Facebook campaign caused great stir in primary schools, local libraries, and the media. However, we believe that even greater outreach could have been achieved if it was combined with offline and outdoor promotion, such as billboards and flyers or by allying with local celebrities that can act as campaign ambassadors.

Moving forward

Social media remain a significant hub for public debate and social activism among individuals, non-registered groups or civil society organisations in Macedonia. Its bloom during the last few years has proved its effectiveness in mobilising the public around relevant political, social, ecological and educational challenges in the society.

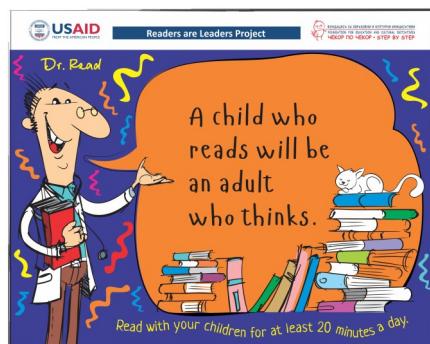
Foundation Step by Step will also continue to use social media for awareness raising on the mission that we have worked for the past 23 years: the democratisation of the process of education and creating possibilities for children to achieve their full potential through education. Following the success of the trending Campaign for Healthy Reading Habits, we currently have an online initiative 'I want to...' where we use social media to share individual messages collected from Roma children. For more information on this, as well as other past and ongoing activities, please visit: www.stepbystep.org.mk.

With funding from the Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood Programme, from 2013-18, INTRAC is providing support to strengthening the organisational and financial sustainability of International Step by Step Association member NGOs in 19 countries in central Eastern Europe, including the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step – Macedonia. To find out more, see: <https://www.intrac.org/projects/building-sustainability-step-step-network/>



Suzana Kirandziska is Executive Director of the Foundation Step by Step - Macedonia. She has an extensive experience in the education sector as co-author of manuals and training modules. She has been involved in policy work for preschool and primary education, including the preparation of the 'National Strategy for Preschool Education in Macedonia 2005-15'.

Ana Dimovska is part of the Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia team where she oversees all communication activities in order to ensure visibility in traditional and new media and greater outreach to target audiences. She also coordinates activities for inclusion of family and community members in school activities and is responsible for events and campaigns.



Dr. Čitko's most viral post reached up to 26,000 Facebook users. © Foundation Step by Step – Macedonia.





Our work

Exposing the King Khalid Foundation to advocacy strategies in the UK

INTRAC organised a five-day study visit in Britain for the King Khalid Foundation (KKF), Saudi Arabia, during May. The purpose of the visit was to learn from major British development agencies how they plan and implement their advocacy strategies and how evidence-based research supports them in this.

They discussed strategic planning and different approaches to advocacy with Oxfam and Save the Children International, the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, the Centre for Charity Effectiveness (CASS Business School, City University of London), NESTA, the Policy Lab at the Cabinet Office, NCVO and ODI. The KKF is a grant-making charitable foundation, which has previously led a campaign about domestic violence and has also produced policy papers on poverty and inequality in Saudi Arabia.

The three-member KKF delegation, which made the visit from 15-19 May, included the general secretary of the KKF, Princess Banderi A.R. Al-Faisal, Ms Rahaf Al-Sanosi and Mr Osamah Alhenaki, both advisers of the KKF policy design unit.

Terres des Hommes update: an organisation-wide theory of change

Elanor Jackson and Alison Napier keep working with Terres des Hommes to develop a theory of change (ToC) for the whole organisation. After establishing an initial country programme ToC for the Jordan delegation in March, they facilitated two-hour webinars in English, Spanish and French to introduce the concept of ToC to Terres des Hommes' programme and project staff around the world. These were held in April, with the support of Terre des Hommes' staff leading the ToC process internally, in order to ensure a participative process and approach.

Alison and Elanor are now working with programme-level working groups across Terres des Hommes' six thematic programmes to develop draft programme level ToCs. Each programme working group has been doing some preparatory analysis, which was used during a series of workshops in Lausanne in mid-June to further develop the draft ToCs.

Following the June workshops, the INTRAC Consultants, in collaboration with Terres des Hommes headquarters, will start to draw together the programme level ToCs into an organisational level ToC.



Developing a programme level theory of change in Switzerland.
@ INTRAC 2017.

Using action learning sets in Central Asia to build the local trainers base

In March 2017, INTRAC Central Asia started its action learning sets (ALS) initiative, which provides participants with new self-education tools for their professional growth. ALS participants are activists of the previous GIZ project ‘Civil Society Support Foundation’ (2015-16) selected on a competitive basis: local trainers, and leaders of NGOs and civil society organisations (CSO).

The main goal of the activities is to contribute to the development of short-term courses for CSOs and further support local trainers. In order to achieve the goal in the regions (Jalalabad, Issyk-Kul, Naryn oblast), action learning groups of 4-6 participants were created to work on their project ideas.

The ALS is set to finish by the end of June and INTRAC expects the following outcomes from activities of the action learning groups:

- Strengthened skills of local trainers to develop training courses and conduct them;
- A set of new short-term training courses based on ideas and materials presented in four manuals developed under the GIZ project in 2016: 1) organisational development; 2) financial management, 3) communication and partnership, 4) development of a social enterprise;
- Support for cooperation between civil society and local self-governments in the field of social and economic development.



Action learning group discusses way forward at a meeting in Bishkek. © INTRAC 2017.

‘Learning in the digital era’: annual workshop with the Training Providers Forum

Is e-learning effective? What’s available, what works for which needs? The Training Providers Forum organised a workshop in London on 12 June which allowed some 30 development and humanitarian training professionals to share their experience in the matter.

Hosted by RedR, the event was an excellent opportunity to exchange with e-learning experts, training providers who have been delivering e-learning for a long time, and those who are just beginning the journey.

INTRAC is one of the founding members of the Training Providers Forum, along with Bioforce, Bond, Mango, People In Aid, and RedR.

The Forum aims to improve access to, and the quality of, training in the international development and humanitarian sector through greater collaboration between training providers, sharing learning and good practice, and advocating the importance of training in the sector.



Image via Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria's twitter (@iecah).

Conferences

Civil society and peacebuilding processes in Syria and Lybia

On 16 May the British Council hosted an event aimed at exploring the roles of civil society in peace building in both conflict contexts. It also provided the platform for the launch of the [British Council-INTRAC Policy Brief on 'Building civil society capacity in fragile and conflict affected states'](#) written by INTRAC Associate Didi Alayli, and to discuss a Durham University research report, produced in collaboration with the British Council's Syria and Libya team.

After the research presentation, separate country-specific discussions followed. INTRAC Principal Consultant, Rod Macleod, who has previously worked with Libyan civil society, took part in the Libya panel together with the British Council Libya office. An underlying question was 'What is Libya? (and the associated question: 'What does it mean to be Libyan?') at a time when the country is conflict-ridden and threatened with fragmentation.

In the parallel Syria session, there was a presentation of the work of the [Mobaderoon](#) civil society peacebuilding network in Syria by Ghada Al Rifai, one of the organisation's co-founders. Ghada stressed the values-based nature of the group, with its counter-sectarian mission of 'peaceful co-existence' and the sense of agency, empowerment and hope which it gave to many of its young members. This was followed by a presentation by Rana Khalaf, a UK-based researcher with specific expertise in local governance forms in Syria, who brought in a wider picture of Syrian civil society. The final intervention was made by Didi Alayli, who spoke about both the challenges and importance of working to build Syrian civil society capacity, based on the experience of leading [INTRAC's mixed methods evaluation of Mobaderoon's work in 2015-16](#).

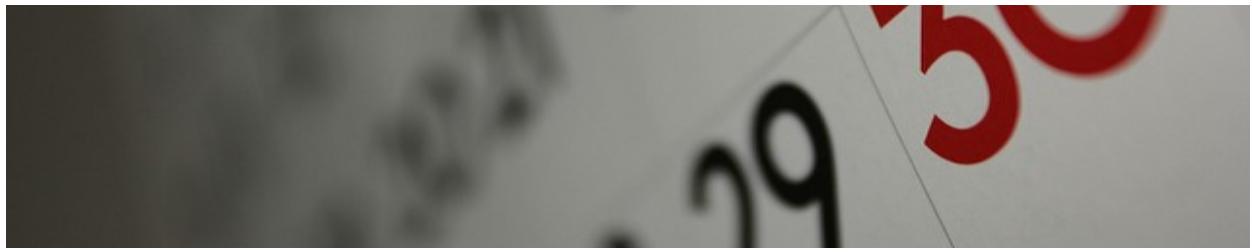
Decolonising development: Whose Voice, Whose Agenda?

Over three days (22 – 24 May 2017), more than 200 researchers, civil society actors and consultants from all over the world came together for an online conference hosted by the Centre for Global Development (CGD) at Leeds University. All contributions were in the form of written summaries, with live written commentary around a core agenda, and opportunities for participants to post their thoughts and reflections at any time over the three days. INTRAC partnered with academics from CGD to shape the agenda and chair discussions.

Under the overarching theme of Decolonising Development, we explored three main topics: Power, Voice and Inclusion; Accountability, Evidence and Impact; Partnership and Capacity Building. We covered a huge range of issues and themes, from theoretical debates on neoliberal hegemony, underdevelopment and post-colonialism to inspiring examples of practical and innovative approaches to tackling real-world social problems. The frankness in what were often highly critical discussions was refreshing.

At a time when funding for blue-skies thinking and learning within many organisations is squeezed, this format offered a privileged space to reflect and share, and more importantly challenge our own thinking about development and capacity building. INTRAC's call for more 'soul' in consultancy, research and partnership, drawing on the core principles of our [Consultants for Change programme](#), resonated strongly with many participants.

A [summary of discussions](#) from each day of the conference is available on CGD's website.



Upcoming events

INTRAC training

Advanced monitoring and evaluation

11 – 15 September 2017,

20 – 24 November 2017, Oxford

This course builds on participants' understanding and skills of how to develop sustainable and cost effective monitoring and evaluation processes and practices within their own projects, programmes and organisations.



Advocacy planning, monitoring and evaluation

20 – 22 September 2017, Oxford

Building on INTRAC's extensive experience in both monitoring and evaluating (M&E) and in advocacy, this course will support practitioners with how to ensure M&E is integrated into both planning advocacy initiatives and feeding into organisational learning and accountability.

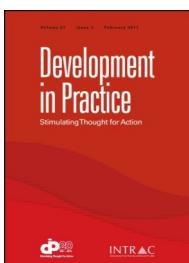
Theory of change for planning and impact assessment

2 – 6 October 2017, Oxford

This course introduces the elements of theory of change and offers the opportunity for participants to apply and experiment with the key ideas and processes using their own case studies, as well as illustrative examples presented by the course facilitator.



Publications and blogs



Explore the latest issues of Development in Practice!

Issue 27.3 (May) covers topics ranging from sanitation, food security, livelihoods development of peri-urban farmers and female entrepreneurs, to the legacy of civil war in northern Uganda. The article on the roles of community seed banks in climate change adaption is available to [freely download](#).

Articles in issue 27.4 (June) continue on the theme of climate change adaptation, and also cover collaboration in international development, aid effectiveness principles, and the rights-based approach to development. You can [download the article](#) on universities, NGOs, and civil society sustainability: preliminary lessons from Ecuador for free.

Explore all issues here: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdip20/current>

Praxis Series Paper 4. From an implementing partnership with local NGOs to partnering with local government: Sharing WaterAid Ethiopia's transition



In this paper, Bethlehem Mengistu provides critical insights from WaterAid Ethiopia's experience of changing its approach from working in partnership with local NGOs towards working directly with governments to enable service delivery and strengthen the systems for a sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene sector.

Bethlehem discusses the three phases of the exit process (completion, sustainability and phase out) and reflects on key lessons for ensuring smooth phase out and sustainability in dynamic contexts.

Download your free copy here: <https://www.intrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Praxis-Series-4.-From-an-implementing-partnership-with-local-NGOs-to-partnering-with-local-government.pdf>

Report back on the UK Evaluation Society conference 2017

In our latest blog, INTRAC Principal Consultant, Alison Napier, shares her thoughts on the recent UK Evaluation Society conference 2017 held in London on 10 May. This year's conference focussed on the use and usability of evaluations. INTRAC, along with Bond, TripleLine and Islamic Relief, was part of a session on utilisation focussed evaluation.

Read all the details here: <https://www.intrac.org/report-back-uk-evaluation-society-conference-2017/>

Meet the team

Didi Alayli, INTRAC Associate

Didi Alayli is a capacity building specialist with a long experience of civil society advocacy and policy development work in the Middle East and North Africa region. She has expertise in NGO regulation, a field she worked in as Regional Manager for the Gulf and Middle East for the Charity Commission's International Programme, designing and delivering technical assistance programmes to improve regulation and support NGO good governance.

Didi previously worked as INTRAC Principal Consultant in the Middle East North Africa, leading the mixed methods evaluation of the Syrian Active Citizens Programme with the British Council.



The policy brief '[Building civil society capacity in fragile and conflict affected states](#)' drawing on learning and evidence from the is now available at INTRAC website as a free downloadable PDF. The policy brief was published by the British Council in partnership with INTRAC and argues that the growing challenges of working in fragile and conflict-affected states, which defy conventional interventions, necessitate a broader commitment to capacity development on the part of the international development community.

Learn more about Didi: <https://www.intrac.org/our-people/didi-alayli/>

News from Routledge Taylor & Francis Group



**Classic Papers in Context:
A commemorative Virtual Special Issue to mark 40 years of influential research from *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.**



As Publishers and Editors of Ethnic and Racial Studies, we are very proud of the journal's historic and current role in helping to provide a forum for high-quality research and scholarship in this evolving field.

To celebrate our 40th anniversary, we have compiled a commemorative [Virtual Special Issue](#) comprising of 11 classic papers from our archive together with a commentary on each paper and a response by the original author. The commentaries and responses are also available in our [anniversary issue](#).



Oxbridge Court, Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1865 201851
Fax: +44 (0)1865 201852

info@intrac.org
www.intrac.org



INTRAC is a company limited by guarantee No.2663769,
Registered in England; Registered Charity No. 1016676