Welcome to our May 2018 newsletter.

As we celebrate some very welcome sunshine in the UK after a long and cold winter (by our standards), we bring you the latest updates from INTRAC. It’s been a busy period for us, with lots of new projects and programmes starting up; and with new Trustees joining our Board.

As many will be aware from an influx of emails and letters, the 25th of May sees the introduction of new European data protection rules—the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Please make sure that you ‘opt-in’ to receive future newsletters and information from INTRAC by responding to the email you should already have received, or by re-signing up via our website.

In this issue, Helen Mealins reflects on the role of international gatherings for fostering change based on her experiences during the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London. Bruce Britton and Jitske Hoogenboom share lessons from an action learning programme in the Dutch-based peace organisation PAX.

Learn about our new capacity building programmes with Malala Fund and Rakeen in Saudi Arabia in Our Work, as we also present the final publications from the Consultants for Change programme (see Publications).

Read on to find out more about our work with a range of organisations, as well as information on the latest training courses, events and publications.

Finally, we also say a fond farewell to our former Trustee, Bruce Coles, who passed away earlier this month.
How political embarrassment can trigger action

In April 2018, the UK hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London. I was fortunate to secure a place at the Commonwealth Women’s Forum which, alongside the People’s Forum, Youth Forum, and Business Forum, brought representatives from civil society, the private sector and public service together to discuss how the Commonwealth can contribute to a future which is fairer, more sustainable, secure and prosperous.

I confess to initially feeling a bit indignant about being locked into a programme attended largely by women, restricted in scope to considering an “Empowered Future for Women and Girls.” It did not make sense to me that women and youth and their concerns were being addressed in parallel, rather than as part of mainstream deliberations by civil society (the People’s Forum) and business leaders. So much for inclusion and leaving no one behind!

My concerns were allayed, however. Delegates attending all fora were privy to presentations and exposure to the opinions of a diverse group of human rights activists, CSO practitioners, industry leaders, academicians, policy makers, politicians, prime ministers and presidents, and royalty. There was room for delegates to exchange views across narrowly defined sectoral lines.

The Women’s Forum contemplated what getting the policy environment right for women’s economic empowerment should look like. Business Forum
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.

Delegates discussed how business, society and government might align to help fund the Sustainable Development Goals, and also invest in youth employment. The People’s Forum tackled the topic of institutional racism, and considered how civil society and policy makers can work together to reform colonial laws.

While the collective spirit of the conference was overwhelmingly positive and forward looking, I sensed an undercurrent of disquiet. There were frequent digs from Commonwealth Member States at the UK’s colonial legacy. Colonial laws on statute books across the Commonwealth were in the dock for holding back women’s sexual, economic and political empowerment. The ongoing criminalisation of homosexuality in 37 of 53 Commonwealth countries was also attributed to unchanged historic statutes with Westminster origins. All this left me feeling decidedly uncomfortable about the UK’s political past.

I imagine my discomfort was insignificant in comparison to the embarrassment felt by the UK government concerning its appalling mistreatment of the UK’s “Windrush generation” (people who arrived in the UK from the Caribbean between 1948 and 1971). While Theresa May (UK’s Prime Minister) and Andrew Holness (Jamaica’s Prime Minister) were exchanging pointed but polite diplomatic comments about UK migrant rights in plenary within the conference hall, civil society activists, the UK press and Commonwealth Heads of Government were whipping up a political storm that culminated in the resignation of UK Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, and most importantly, recompense for those who had been living with the threat of deportation since 2014.

And isn’t this where the utility of international political gatherings such as CHOGM come to the fore? They provide an opportunity for civil society activists to “speak truth to power.” And if, as a tactic, political embarrassment triggers positive change, so much the better.
Remembering Bruce Coles

It is with great sadness we inform you that Bruce Coles, former INTRAC Trustee, has passed away.

Bruce served two three-year terms as an INTRAC trustee. Throughout that time, as well as providing general advice, he was our resident expert on matters related to charity law. Bruce stepped down from the Board in December 2017, delivering a stirring farewell speech to Trustees and staff at his final meeting, in which he drew out in the most eloquent terms the importance of INTRAC, its values and its mission.

In his professional life Bruce qualified in law in Australia before coming to the UK where he was a barrister, QC and judge. Bruce was a also trustee at Oxfam for 12 years between 1985 and 1998. Bruce played a crucial role in the last Charity Commission Inquiry in 1990 when his knowledge of charity law was particularly helpful to the Chair, Council and Oxfam at that time.

Here are some reflections from INTRAC Trustees, past and present:

“Bruce was very committed to INTRAC. He made a refreshingly different and valuable contribution by asking those incisive questions which made us stop and challenge our assumptions. Bruce was a very engaging member of the team. He was very supportive when I started as Chair and this continued throughout his tenure. We need to make sure we continue that critical thinking he pushed us towards.”  Carolyn Miller, INTRAC Board Chair

“I did not get to know Bruce well, but what always struck me about him was his sense of decency and his – despite his illustrious law career – humility”  Phil Vernon, INTRAC Deputy Board Chair

“Like others, I remember Bruce’s comments and questions as clear and insightful with probably his sharpest views helping INTRAC through the difficult times.”  Tom Travers, INTRAC Trustee and Treasurer

“This is really sad news. Having sat across the table from Bruce for about 5 years, I came to respect him for his gentle but incisive approach and his willingness to speak up if he didn’t understand something; plus, of course, a great sense of humour.”  George Gelber, INTRAC Trustee

“Bruce joined the Board when I was Chair. I strongly valued his contribution and his ethics and values. I was keen to recruit him because we needed his talent and experience to keep us compatible with the Charity Commission in our activities. But he made a broader reflective contribution to the principles of INTRAC’s mission. My condolences to his wife. Such a distinguished career.”  Geof Wood, former INTRAC Board Chair

“I was very sorry to hear the sad news of Bruce. I knew him as kind, generous, with a great sense of humour and justice. I enjoyed his unfailing confidence to ask the fundamental questions. The small part of his life that I’m aware of was his deep love of family and many outdoor pursuits, as well as his professional gravitas. Clearly there was much more.”  Sue Weaver, former INTRAC Trustee

“Bruce was a pleasure to work with and very gentle but authoritative with his questions and opinions.”  Nazneen Kanji, former INTRAC Trustee

From all the INTRAC staff, a heartfelt thank you to Bruce for his contributions over the years. Our thoughts are with his friends and family.
PAX for Peace action learning cycle

What is the best way to engage highly motivated and busy peace workers in a learning process? We - PAX policy advisor for learning Jitske Hoogenboom and INTRAC consultant Bruce Britton - pondered this over the course of 2017 during the implementation of an action learning program for PAX programme staff. As part of a wider effort to strengthen learning in PAX, 16 staff participants worked in two action learning sets - one about evidence-based advocacy (part of PAX’s intervention strategy) and the other concerning community-based security (a PAX thematic area of work).

After a shared introductory workshop, each set met for a full day on four occasions between April and November 2017. Both groups got together for an evaluation workshop in January 2018. The sets were designed to examine learning at three levels – individual, collective and organisational – and used learning questions and rich pictures to help participants clearly articulate their practice challenge, focus reflection, and make the learning relevant.

The action learning sets provided a new perspective on learning to most participants. About half considered it a very relevant learning experience and participated in the full process, becoming advocates of reflective learning within PAX. Among the others, some considered it an experience that, whilst relevant to others, was not for them. Others told us that they had not devoted sufficient time to fully benefit from the process. When comparing the two groups, we drew out a few lessons for future action learning processes.

The learning question really matters. The best learning questions were directly relevant to day-to-day work, generated useful insights, included a personal challenge, and provided a focus on the “I” in learning. Participants who had formulated a good question were often surprised by the power of simply having a learning question constantly in the back of their mind.

Even though we made some variations in the set-up of meetings, mostly we maintained a strict discipline: giving advice was not allowed, nor was interrupting, or sliding into an argument. Participants were expected to really listen to each other and ask questions that were intended to help the presenter. This was hard for everyone, especially at the start, and was different to what participants expected. Indeed not everyone considered it worthwhile to make the effort. But the discipline provided a reflective space and a way of listening that felt liberating, safe and welcome to those who were positive about the experience. In future action learning, it may be helpful to make an even stronger effort to ensure that participants know what the process will involve.

Addressing the ‘action’ part of action learning between set meetings was another challenge. For some participants this was as simple as having a coffee with a colleague to discuss issues that had arisen during the set meeting. Others used their insights to help them plan events or re-think their approach to their work. We realise that participants need examples of what they can do between set meetings and support in developing a few practical ‘To Dos’.

A useful innovation was an online ‘sharespace’ for blog updates by all participants on their learning process. Making an effort to write about doubts, insights, questions, and answers in an informal way reinforced the learning as it ensured that implicit insights were made explicit and helped to track changes in thinking. It also provided a space for active exchanges through commentary on each other’s blogs. To strengthen engagement with the full process, we will consider how to better help people use the sharespace for reflection and learning.

Action learning has been a relevant method for reflective learning within PAX; and we will learn from the experience ourselves to increase its impact in the future.

To share the PAX experience more widely and describe in more depth the lessons that PAX will take into account when designing future action learning cycles, Bruce and Jitske will publish an INTRAC Praxis paper later this year.
Senad Programme, Rakeen

Saudi Arabia is undergoing major changes at the moment, not least in third sector. The number of Not-for-Profit Organisations (NPOs) has multiplied in recent years and further dramatic growth is expected as part of the government’s Vision 2030. But this rapidly increasing sector is also faced with issues of quality. New and expanding organisations need to define their missions, set strategies and carry out effective programmes.

The Senad Programme being implemented by Rakeen (funded by the Salem Bin Mahfouz Foundation) aims to address this by developing 27 consultants, who are equipped to support NPOs throughout the Kingdom. This is the first intervention of its kind in Saudi Arabia.

INTRAC has been brought in by Rakeen to help in the delivery of this programme, building on our earlier experience with Consultants 4 Change. Phase 1 had a focus on ‘how to be a consultant’ with trainings in Jeddah on: understanding CSOs and consulting, facilitating capacity assessment and facilitating capacity development. Later in 2018, Phase 2 trainings will enable consultants to work on governance, strategic planning, programme design and monitoring and evaluation.

In addition, participants have been carrying out practical work, facilitating capacity self-assessments and then supporting capacity development with Saudi NPOs.
INTRAC to develop new capacity building programme for Malala Fund

INTRAC is excited to announce that we will be working with Malala Fund to support their Gulmakai Network Initiative.

The Gulmakai Network supports the work of education champions in developing countries and speeds up progress towards girls’ secondary education around the world. These women and men often lack the funding, support networks and opportunities to collaborate that can increase their impact. Malala Fund is seeking to fill this gap by investing in and connecting girls’ education advocates and educators to each other and to the tools, training and partners to spark social and systemic change.

Malala Fund selected INTRAC to design and implement a professional development programme for the Gulmakai Network Champions to address these challenges. We will be providing a holistic capacity-building programme including a flexible mix of online and face-to-face training, mentoring and in-country support tailored to the needs of local girls’ education advocates working in Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and with Syrian refuges in Turkey and Lebanon.

Over three years, each Gulmakai Champion will undergo a journey of individualised professional and personal growth in support of the Gulmakai Network’s goals to achieve greater and faster progress on girls’ secondary education.

We are looking forward to meeting all the Champions in July this year when we will be kicking off the programme with a one-week intensive face-to-face training.

News from INTRAC’s Central Asia office

In March INTRAC’s Bishkek team completed its study on social enterprise in Kyrgyzstan, funded by the British Council with expert support from the association Social Enterprise UK. This sector is being led by CSOs in Kyrgyzstan, including several disabled peoples organisations. Headlines from the study include:

- More than 50% of leaders of social enterprises in Kyrgyzstan are women
- Social enterprises are now active in most sectors of the economy in Kyrgyzstan: education, social care, food & drink, agriculture, retail, textiles and so on
- Respondents in the study identified as key objectives: improving their community, creating employment, supporting women, promotion of renewable energy, etc.
- Most social enterprises are small units but more than three-quarters expect to grow next year, increasing sales to existing customers but also accessing new markets
- Almost all social enterprises experience difficulties in getting access to affordable finance. Hence there is a need to work with business and development agencies to create support mechanisms.

The full report will be published by the British Council as part of its international series of reports on social enterprise development. INTRAC will continue to network with social enterprises and is now working on a shorter Russian and Kyrgyz language version of the report.
Developing principles for fair and equitable research partnerships

The UK government is channelling significant new resources to academic research into global development challenges. To strengthen impact and deliver highly relevant and useful findings, funding schemes recommend partnerships with academic institutions in the global south and with non-academic partners.

The Rethinking Research Collaborative is being supported by UK Research and Innovation to present fresh evidence on experiences of participation in academic research studies from the partner perspective with two objectives in mind. Firstly, we seek to influence the government, funding bodies, UK-based academics and actual or prospective research partners to promote best practice and tackle existing obstacles to fair and equitable partnerships. Secondly, we will produce practical resources to facilitate research partnerships, building out from existing resources and a toolkit published in 2017.

Preliminary findings from data collected from southern-based academics, civil society practitioners, international NGOs, research intermediary bodies and capacity development providers were presented to UK stakeholders at a workshop in London on 27th April. Recommendations and further materials will follow.

Supporting monitoring and learning for the PPIMA project in Rwanda

The Public Policy and Information Monitoring and Advocacy (PPIMA) project brings together 15 national and district-level civil society organisations and umbrella networks in Rwanda, all working to strengthen the role of Rwandan citizens and CSOs in public policy processes. The project, coordinated by Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) Rwanda and funded by DFID and Sida, is now in its third phase. It is making a critical contribution to building trust and dialogue between Rwandan citizens and the state.

Actions by the CSOs involved in the project include: implementing a Community Score Card model to influence planning and decision-making at the district level; engaging in national debates and dialogues to influence legislation and policies affecting civil society; and media activities to strengthen communication between government officials and citizens. Crucially, the individual CSOs and networks involved in the project are coming together to tackle common concerns. As the project enters the final year of its current phase, INTRAC has been brought in to help strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and learning system. Over the coming months, we will provide targeted capacity development to the PPIMA team and project partners to improve learning, reporting and advocacy.
Implementing the SDGs in Qatar: what role for civil society?

From 26 to 27 March 2018, Qatar University held a conference to explore the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their achievement in Qatar in line with the state development vision. Over the two days academics, government officials, students, and representatives of international organisations and civil society considered efforts to strengthen food security in a state that depends greatly on food imports, the use of renewable energy in a fuel-exporting state, and placing sustainability at the heart of urban development as Qatar prepares to host the football World Cup in 2022.

INTRAC was invited to speak about the role of civil society in developing, monitoring and implementing the SDGs, an intriguing brief given the limited space for civil society in Qatar and the rarity of organisations that INTRAC might consider as independent CSOs. Not-for-profit organisations exist, but they tend to be closely aligned with state institutions or connected with foundations sponsored by the royal family. Their emphasis is on social development, supporting inclusion and welfare of vulnerable populations through service delivery, and the promotion of volunteering and family values.

We look forward to seeing more applied research on civil society in Qatar, and on the role of students and citizens in promoting sustainable development in the region. A future special issue of Development in Practice will bring together many papers from the conference.

Trocaire research strategy and guidelines

Trócaire has a strong track record of using research to inform its programmes, policy and advocacy, producing a range of research studies with partners and academic institutions at the country, regional and international levels.

Following a review of its research portfolio and approaches, Trócaire is now working with INTRAC to develop an organisation-level Research Strategy, as well as practical guidelines to help staff to manage and deliver high quality and impact-oriented research.

Trócaire’s commitment to taking a more strategic approach to research reflects an emerging trend amongst many international NGOs, who are looking more closely at their research practices and at the cross-organisational connections between M&E, learning and research (a theme picked up in Nigel Simister’s new blog series on Adaptive Management).
How to respect communities in International Development work: Languages and cultural understanding

27th June 2018, Senate House, University of London

A free event organised by the Universities of Reading and Portsmouth, with the support of INTRAC and the Institute for Modern Languages Research (IMLR).

This conference explores how languages and cultural understanding affect International Development, and help to respect communities. The programme includes contributions from:

- Key speakers from Malawi, Kyrgyzstan and Peru, including NGO representatives and interpreters.
- Representatives from Christian Aid, Save the Children, the Stars Foundation, and Tearfund.
- Contributions from International Relations, Development Studies, Modern Languages and Translation Studies.

After sharing perspectives from communities in Malawi, Kyrgyzstan and Peru, this event will aim to reflect on next steps for INGOs, donors and academic research.

Attendance is free, but registration is required for this event. Keep track of updates on the full programme and register your place on our Eventbrite page.

Funding and partners
This conference is the final event of The Listening Zones of NGOs: Languages and Cultural Knowledge in Development Programmes (2015-2018), a 3-year research project conducted by the University of Reading, the University of Portsmouth, and INTRAC. It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The Listening Zones is an active partnership between academics and practitioners.

Recent project activities include a presentation of the Listening Zones’ findings and recommendations on 15th May to the UK Government’s All Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages. To keep up to date with the project’s outputs, join the mailing list by emailing Wine Tesseur at w.tesseur@reading.ac.uk

GDPR
At INTRAC we are working to ensure we are compliant with the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation that will take effect from 25 May 2018. GDPR will strengthen data protection for people within the EU. The main change to existing law is that consent to receive communication must be "freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous." Importantly, there must be a positive opt-in as opposed to an opt-out. If you wish to continue to receive our newsletter, and have not already updated your preferences, please click here. We will keep your personal information private and secure and will only contact you about the topics you’ve opted to receive information about. More details are in our privacy policy.
The Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation course is INTRAC’s best-known course and runs several times a year. This 5-day course is intended for practitioners with previous experience in managing and designing monitoring and evaluation systems. It has been designed to build on and enhance participants’ skills and understanding of M&E and work through some of the complex challenges in doing M&E, alongside other experienced practitioners.

The Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation course aims to enable participants to develop sustainable and cost-effective monitoring and evaluation processes and practices within their own projects, programmes and organisations. It is also relevant for those trying to improve and enhance current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, or supporting partners to develop and implement effective M&E. The course provides an overview of all aspects of M&E from planning to M&E and impact assessment, with a focus on ensuring that M&E contributes towards improving organisational learning and accountability.

For more details and to apply for this course please click on one of the above dates. To download the full course profile click below, or look on our website.

Theory of Change for Planning and Impact Assessment

The course is designed for programme managers and those who are actively involved in planning, evaluating, and assessing the impact of programmes who have some experience of project cycle management and M&E. Those who are about to undertake a Theory of Change process or an impact assessment are welcome to bring their own case study to work on during the course. Those who are hoping to use Theory of Change approaches in the future will also find the content relevant. Some familiarity with Theory of Change approaches is beneficial though not essential.

Conceptually clear and very practical, this course will equip staff with the knowledge and skills to consider which elements of Theory of Change they can apply in their own organisational setting and how best to go about it. Hands on exercises will support participants to implement their learning during the course.

For more details and to apply for this course please click on the above date. To download the full course profile click below, or look on our website.
Development in Practice

The latest issue of Development in Practice, 28.4, is now available to browse online, with many of the articles focusing on gender aspects of development – including interventions on violence against women, women’s empowerment and wage equity in agriculture, and gender-equitable value chain development. Other articles look at changing perceptions of African indigenous vegetables, informal livelihoods in Kenya, and healthcare for the elderly in Bangladesh.

Read the editorial from Brian Pratt, Editor-in-Chief or download the full article of “Fit for purpose? A review of guides for gender-equitable value chain development.”

This issue also features a Practical Note from INTRAC’s Rick James on lessons from the Consultants for Change programme.

Visit http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdip20/current to find out more about submitting articles to Development in Practice. If you have any queries on what and how to submit, we’d be more than happy to help. Contact Adam Houlbrook, Deputy Editor, at ahoubrook@intrac.org.

You can also browse the whole back catalogue of open access articles from the journal here.

Praxis Series Paper No.5 - Strengthening civil society through training national consultants

Rachel Hayman and Nigel Simister present findings from the final evaluation of the Consultants for Change programme conducted in November and December 2017.


New blog series: The Evaluation of Complex Programmes

INTRAC has begun publishing a short blog series by Nigel Simister on adaptive management and the M&E of complex projects and programmes.

Catch-up on the latest post here, and watch out for two further blogs over the coming weeks: https://www.intrac.org/adaptive-management-challenging-monitoring-evaluation-complex-programmes/
Meet the team

Ana Filipa Fernandes, INTRAC Trustee

Ana Filipa Fernandes has over 15 years’ experience working on human resources management and development consultancies in international development, both in-country and at a global level.

Ana is based in Oxford and currently works with Oxford HR Consultants, an executive search specialised in international development. She leads on business development in Asia and Middle East regions, helping NGOs, amongst others, identify and appoint transformational leaders, who are inspired to help shape society for the better around the globe.

Sheila Ochugboju, INTRAC Trustee

Dr Sheila Ochugboju is an international development professional with over 15 years experience, working in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. She is also the co-founder and Director of a Knowledge Management and Media Consultancy called Africa Knows.

Sheila is currently based in the UK as a Specialist Facilitator on the Extreme Dialogue project, managed by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, which aims to build resilience to radicalisation among young people through a series of open-access educational resources and highly engaging short films that foster critical thinking and digital literacy skills.

Sue Turrell, INTRAC Trustee

Sue Turrell has over 30 years of experience of the international development sector. She spent over a decade living and working in Africa and the Middle East focusing on research, teaching and training projects. She has worked for a range of UK INGOs, managing programmes, leading programme quality improvements, institutional fundraising and improving impact in fragile states.

Sue is now the Operations Director at the Start Network, a humanitarian network of 42 INGOs, leading its reorganisation and growth.

NEW PARTNERSHIP

Practical Action Publishing have now partnered with INTRAC

Practical Action Publishing are now the exclusive European and North American co-publisher and distributor of INTRAC Publications. To celebrate this collaboration, an introductory discount offer of 15% is available across all INTRAC publications.

https://developmentbookshop.com/publishers/intrac

To find out more about Practical Action Publishing click here