

Newsletter

August 2018



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Welcome to our August 2018 newsletter.

Having enjoyed (or endured) an unexpectedly hot and dry summer in the United Kingdom, we are getting back into the usual busy swing of things at INTRAC. This includes coping with some staffing changes in our Training and M&E teams.

In her Guest Contribution, Órla Cronin gives you a trainer's insight into our popular online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) training course ahead of the next course which starts in October. You will also find information on all of our upcoming training courses.

We share information on a professional development programme that we are delivering this year with Oak Foundation. This is part of a portfolio of work at INTRAC in this field, where we are co-creating bespoke learning programmes with clients. These blend online learning with face-to-face elements, as well as mentoring and in-country support. Programmes like these recognise that it is passionate and committed individuals who build civil society. They may move around between institutions but these individuals provide the thinking that shapes the sector into the future. This is all the more important as pioneering leaders and activists in many parts of the world near retirement age, and as a younger generation emerges to take up their causes.

Alongside news of our wider work, we also hear from how the team in Bishkek are managing the closure of INTRAC's office in Central Asia, and their plans for the future.

In our publications section, you can read about the outputs from the Listening Zones research project which came to an end in July, as well as the latest articles in Development in Practice.

Guest contribution

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Catalysing learning

Since 2015, INTRAC has been offering an online Monitoring and Evaluation course – later renamed “Monitoring Evaluation and Learning” (MEL) to highlight INTRAC’s focus on ensuring that findings do not just end up in a report, but are actually used.

This course develops participants’ understanding of effective MEL and ensures that they become well equipped to tackle MEL-related challenges in their work. Structured over 5 weeks, the course includes 10 “real time” (“synchronous”) sessions (these are live, in that there is verbal and typed interaction among the whole group, conducted via an online meeting platform) as well as “asynchronous” activities to be completed in one’s own time, such as individual and group assignments or further readings made available on INTRAC’s learning platform. There is also an individual coaching session providing tailored advice on how to tackle a specific MEL-related challenge.

This course targets people who work (or volunteer) with NGOs and civil society organisations and who are relatively new to MEL, for instance those who have recently started in a new role that involves some responsibility to implement or oversee a MEL plan. People who would like to start a career in this field, whether as employees or as independent consultants, are also welcome to apply. At INTRAC, each training application is carefully assessed to ensure that the selected course meets the needs of the applicant, and occasionally more suitable training opportunities might be recommended instead. To ensure everyone’s needs are met, we usually limit the course to around 16 participants.

Órla Cronin, one of the trainers on this course, shares her feelings in anticipation of the next [online MEL course, taking place from 31 October to 13 December 2018](#):

“I’m always excited about the next round of INTRAC’s Online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) course. It was originally designed by INTRAC staff and it was then customised by myself, Alison Carney (INTRAC Associate) and Alison Napier (INTRAC Principal Consultant), so there’s been lots of thoughtful input into the content and the process over the past few years (because the course runs several times a year, we have ample opportunity to tweak it!). The culture at INTRAC is very much about catalysing learning, led by Aline Filion, the Training Manager and supported by Annalisa Addis. This translates into very diligent consideration of how we can make the live and asynchronous elements really support learning and meet the variety of participants’ needs and objectives.

Speaking of participants, the cohorts tend to be energetic, reflective and positive, with very varied experiences and trajectories: it continues to be an honour to support them on their journey. It is also really rewarding to see how much participants learn from and support each other, for example, in live breakout groups.

One of my favourite elements of the course is the hour of one-to-one mentoring which happens approximately half way through the course. This is an opportunity for the trainers to deeply engage with each student’s learning objectives, and it also enriches the second half of the course, as I find myself highlighting elements and finding additional resources which are focused on challenges and themes raised in the mentoring.

I’ve enjoyed transferring my virtual facilitation skills to a training environment, and taking my face-to-face MEL training into a global, virtual space. The course has also enriched my MEL consultancy: in addition to sharpening my own case studies and experience, our continual updating of resources to reflect current thinking, good practice and trends in MEL is of great benefit to me outside the training ‘room’. I believe that a trainer who isn’t continuously learning herself can’t be of best service to her students, and this course helps to keep me on my toes!”

Órla Cronin is an independent consultant, trainer and facilitator, working in the area of monitoring, evaluation, research and learning, as well as capacity development and strategic planning.



Our work



INTRAC's exit strategy in Central Asia



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It's sad but it had to happen one day. After almost 20 years of work in Central Asia, INTRAC will be closing its Bishkek office in December 2018. Regional representative Charlie Buxton and Accountant / Administrator Zarina Ibraimova are already preparing for the closure of the office, gradually informing our many friends and partners in the five countries of the region. A more formal set of meetings will take place in October during a visit by INTRAC Chief Executive Helen Mealins to Bishkek.

Our top priority in the time remaining is to hand over as many materials and resources as we can to NGO partners and activists; in fact, all of INTRAC's main capacity building methodologies have been translated into Russian and local trainers and experts have been delivering workshops and consultancies based on them for many years.

Meanwhile, we are in close contact with graduates from INTRAC's Consultants for Change (C4C) programme, which was funded by the Nama Foundation, and in June 2018 we published the book *Consulting for Change* in Russian. We continue work on an NGO-trade union project funded by Ebert Foundation and have just launched some small research studies into employment conditions for youth in the South of Kyrgyzstan. Our report on social enterprise in Kyrgyzstan, produced with the British Council, is being disseminated in Russian and Kyrgyz languages with local NGO partners. We plan to write learning papers on both these initiatives by the end of the year.

In June 2018, Zarina Ibraimova visited the Oxford office and discussed how INTRAC can work directly with local partners after December 2018. So although our office will close, INTRAC will maintain a presence and continue to work with practitioners in Central Asia.

Mid-term Review of Bridging the Gaps

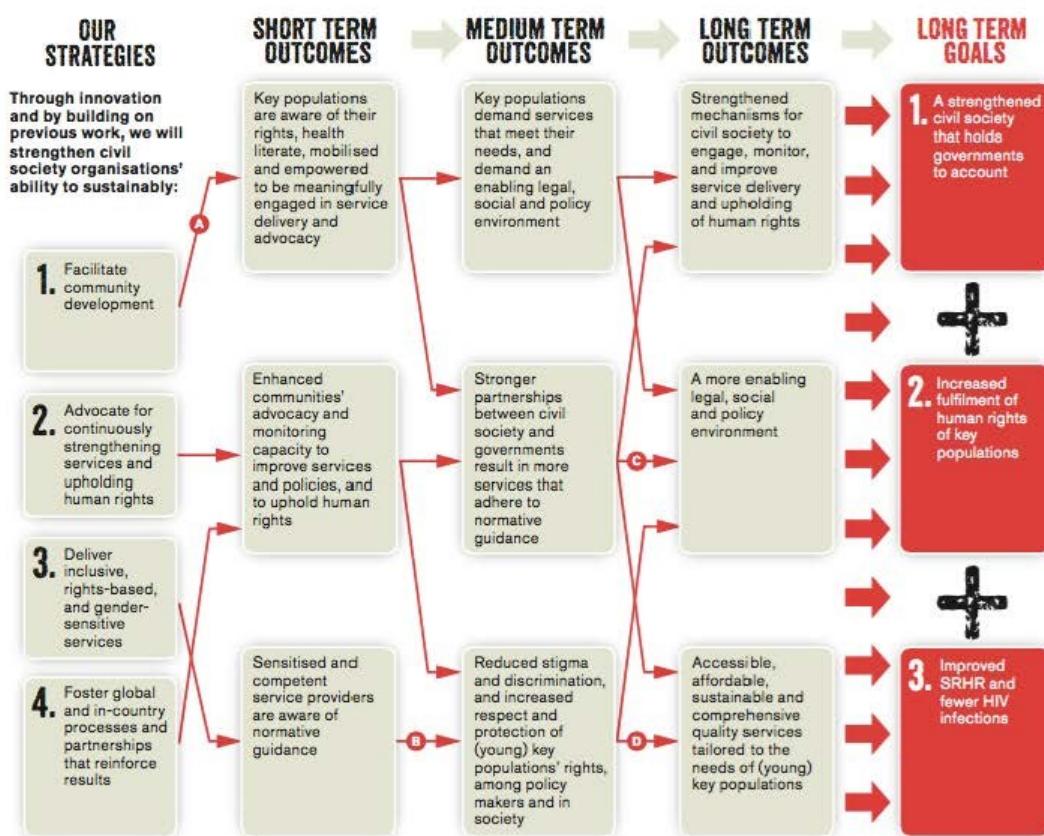
Launched in 2011, [Bridging the Gaps](#) is a key populations programme focused on the health and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, people who use drugs (PWUD), and sex workers worldwide (SW), including key populations living with HIV. The programme is implemented in 15 countries, by [nine alliance partners](#) and over 80 local and regional organisations.



INTRAC has been contracted by lead agency Aidsfonds to conduct a Mid-term Review (MTR) of Phase II of Bridging the Gaps (2016-2020). The goals of the MTR are:

1. '*prove*' - Objectively measuring the progress on outcomes: to what extent and in which ways is Bridging the Gaps achieving its objectives?
2. '*improve*' - Learn and adapt: what is going well, what needs improvement, and what are the urgent gaps to address?

The MTR process so far has included a survey of over 90 implementing partners, a workshop in Amsterdam with Alliance partners, and key informant interviews. The next stage is to develop five in-depth case studies, which will illustrate the programme's progress so far towards achieving its outcomes as described in the programme Theory of Change. Four of the in-depth case studies involve in-country research by local consultants in Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Vietnam. The report will highlight lessons for the Alliance and implementing partners that can be used to adapt and improve Bridging the Gaps in the remaining two years of the programme.



Building Sustainability of the Step by Step Network – final evaluation and lessons learned



Funded by the Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood Programme (ECP), INTRAC has been providing support over three phases from 2013-2018 to strengthen the organisational and financial sustainability of International Step by Step (SbS) Association member NGOs in 19 countries in central eastern Europe. The capacity strengthening support has been delivered through qualified national capacity building providers in each country, supported by a core team of INTRAC consultants specialised in organisational development and resource mobilisation.

The programme ends later this year and we are now conducting the final evaluation. This has involved conducting repeat organisational assessments with participating organisations across nine countries to explore changes in their capacity to mobilise resources, diversify funding sources, respond to changes in the external context (political, economic, funding), and to think about the future direction and structure of their organisations.

Learning from the programme will be captured in a final evaluation report and a separate paper for ECP, which draws on the learning from the programme and from INTRAC's wider body of research and evidence on civil society sustainability.

Enhancing phase-out and sustainability planning within Plan International Sweden's programmes



Over the last six months, INTRAC has been helping Plan International Sweden to assess and strengthen how it plans for phase-out and sustainability throughout the programme and grant cycle. Strengthening planning for the phase-out of support – whether that is from short- or long-term projects and programmes, from geographic areas within a country or from entire countries - should in turn enhance the prospects for Plan International Sweden to bring about lasting and deep-rooted change for children and young people.

Together we mapped experiences of different types of phase-out from across Plan International, bringing together guidance materials and examples of good practice from a range of countries, regions and programmes. These were then used to identify areas within Plan International Sweden's programme and grant management where planning for phase-out could be strengthened. They also provide a resource going forward for staff who are planning, implementing or evaluating phase-out processes.

Working with Oak Foundation's grant-making staff to improve partner capacity development



We are taking a blended learning approach with Oak Foundation. Oak asked INTRAC to help develop the knowledge and skills of their grant-making staff to engage constructively and creatively with capacity development of their partners. We are initially documenting case studies of some of the Foundation's own best and worst experiences of capacity development. We are then using their own experience to shape and enrich a one-day face-to-face introduction training in November and subsequent 8 week online learning process.

Through the process, staff will work on guidelines for their own practices with partners facing issues like leadership transition, governance, strategy and fundraising. Oak Foundation aims to sustain this learning process in 2019 through an internal community of practice.

Publications and blogs

The Listening Zones of NGOs: findings, resources and future activities

After three years of intensive research, we are delighted to share some of the emerging findings from the research project 'The Listening Zones of NGOs: Languages and Cultural Knowledge in Development Programmes', as well as links to resources and future activities.

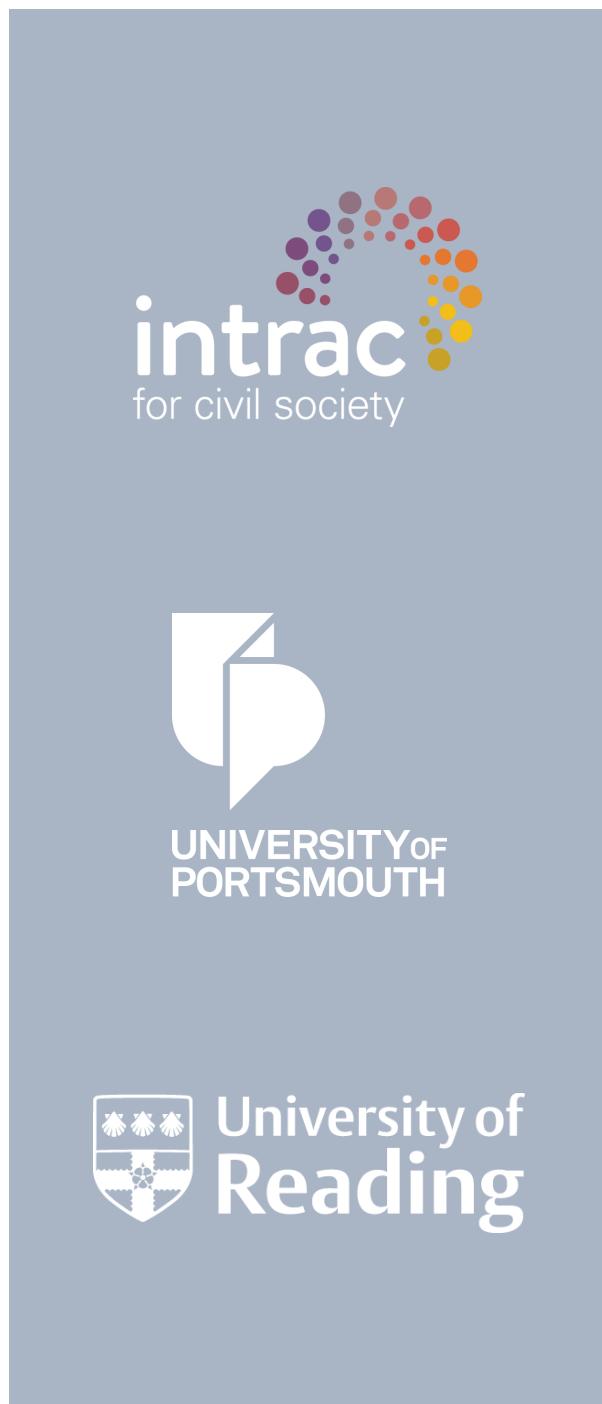
Listening Zones report and conference

The project report 'Respecting communities in International Development: languages and cultural understanding' is now available for download free of charge on the [project website](#). It summarises key findings from the research and contains a set of recommendations for international NGOs, donors and higher education on languages and cultural knowledge in international development. It is currently available in English, French, Russian and Spanish, and the research team is making arrangements for future translations into Chichewa, Kyrgyz and Quechua.

On 27 June, the Listening Zones final conference took place at the Institute for Modern Languages Research (IMLR), Senate House, London. During this stimulating day, international speakers from the NGO sector, academia and translators gave their views on Next Steps after the Listening Zones project report. The event was video recorded, and videos will be available in due course on the [YouTube channel of the IMLR](#). Make sure you don't miss the videos by keeping track of our Twitter handle @ListeningZones or our [Facebook group](#).

Interested in immediate follow-up?

Drawing on the Listening Zones final report and conference, Rachel Hayman, Vicky Brehm and Sarah Lewis have written a [blog post](#) with five arguments to help NGOs get buy-in for investment in languages. The blog has also been published via [Bond](#). Dr Angela Crack, Professor Hilary Footitt and Dr Wine Tesseur have published an article titled 'Many NGO workers on the ground don't speak the local language' in [The Conversation](#), and Dr Angela Crack's blog 'Translating Principles into Practice' is available on [Accountable Now's website](#).



In response to the project findings, INTRAC is exploring practical ways to take forward the recommendations with development practitioners. Ideas include a free open-access webinar to share learning and ideas, an Action Learning Set on languages in policy and practice (to be funded by participating organisations), and training for NGOs on languages, policy and practice (fee-paying). If you would like to discuss how you can get involved, please contact INTRAC's Research team: research@intrac.org

Keep in touch: Listening Zones Facebook Group

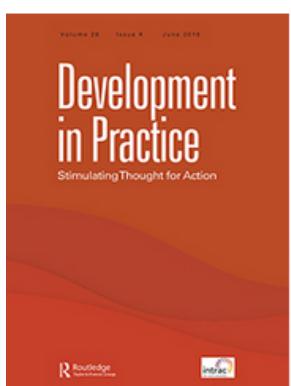
If you want to keep track of further publications, events, and future research plans, please join our [Facebook group](#), follow our Twitter handle @ListeningZones, and visit [INTRAC's webpage](#) which will remain active. The Principal and Co-Investigators can also be contacted for further information: Hilary Footitt (h.a.foot@reading.ac.uk), Angela Crack (angela.crack@port.ac.uk).

Funding and partners

The Listening Zones of NGOs: Languages and Cultural Knowledge in Development Programmes (2015-2018), was a 3-year research project conducted by the University of Reading, the University of Portsmouth, and INTRAC. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.



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Development in Practice

The latest *Development in Practice* issues, 28.5 and 28.6, are now available to browse [online](#).

Across the two issues, the articles cover a broad range of topics: on agricultural innovation and entrepreneurial development, food security, and research rural poverty; on women's empowerment, peer-to-peer training, land rights, and gender aspects of household shocks; methodological approaches to participatory development, surveys, and monitoring and evaluation; plus many more topics, with authors focusing on countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific region.

As always, articles from each issue are available to freely access and download. In 28.5, choose from '[A mixed-method pilot study to improve patient satisfaction in rural Uganda](#)' or '[Giant clam aquaculture in the Pacific region: perceptions of value and impact](#)'. For 28.6, you can read '[Investing in multi-stakeholder dialogue to address natural resource competition and conflict](#)'.

If you are interested in submitting articles to *Development in Practice*, visit <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdip20/current> to find out more. If you have any queries on what and how to submit, please contact Adam Houlbrook, Deputy Editor, at ahoulbrook@intrac.org

You can also browse the whole back catalogue of open access articles from the journal [here](#).



INTRAC training

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Online, 31 October - 13 December 2018

INTRAC's online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) course provides a sound foundation on MEL that is particularly suitable for early career practitioners or for those who have recently become responsible for implementing MEL plans. The course is designed in such a way to encourage interaction and peer learning, both during the live sessions and through INTRAC online learning platform. The course also includes an individual coaching session to help participants apply the learnings to their work.

[Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning course profile](#)

Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation

Oxford, 19 - 23 November 2018

The 5-day Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation course is probably INTRAC's best-known training course. The course's main aim is to enable participants to develop sustainable and cost effective monitoring and evaluation processes and practices within their own projects, programmes and organisations. As this is an advanced course, previous experience in monitoring and evaluation is required. Its target audience is M&E practitioners with several years of experience in managing and designing monitoring and evaluation systems, who have usually attended some formal training before. The course strikes a good balance between trainer's inputs and peer learning. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on and apply learning to a practical M&E challenge or issue they are facing, and to think through what needs to happen on their return to work, in order to build on the learning from the training.

[Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation course profile](#)

Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills

Oxford, 11-15 February 2019

This five-day course introduces participants to the core skills needed to influence powerful stakeholders and policy processes in a range of contexts. The course will cover tools for analysing where power lies on a specific issue, and who has a stake in it. Participants will learn how to develop a theory of change and how to tailor their advocacy to the interests of those they seek to influence. It also gives participants a thorough understanding of how to develop and monitor effective advocacy strategies, and enables them to explore and practise core advocacy skills.

[Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills course profile](#)

For more details and to apply for any of these courses please click on the date. To download the full course profile click the link below the description, or look on our website.



Meet the team

In a slight change to way we normally introduce you to members of staff and our network, in this issue we look at some of the recent changes within INTRAC.

Annalisa Addis, Training Coordinator



Following a recent restructuring of the Training team, we are very happy to announce that Annalisa has been promoted to the position of Training Coordinator. This follows the departure from INTRAC of Rachel Smith-Phiri, a long-standing member of the INTRAC training team who has moved on to an exciting new role with another organisation, where we wish her well.

Annalisa joined INTRAC in July 2017 as Training Assistant. She now coordinates INTRAC's Open Training programme in the UK and the new Open Training Overseas programme, as well as managing a number of tailor-made training courses for development organisations.

Prior to joining INTRAC, Annalisa worked in the field of international humanitarian and development assistance in various countries, most recently Papua New Guinea and the Philippines through the World Food Programme (WFP). Between 2008 and 2010, she worked with the Italian Development Cooperation Office in Mozambique in delivering health programmes. Annalisa is also passionate about volunteering and has been dedicating some of her time to charity engagement in Italy and in the UK.

Annalisa has a PhD in African and International Development Studies jointly awarded by the University of Cagliari (Italy) and by the Ruhr-University Bochum (Germany). Her research focused on the grey area between humanitarian relief and development interventions.

Anne Garbutt, INTRAC Associate

In one of the biggest changes to INTRAC's staff, Anne has decided to move from her role as an INTRAC staff member to become an independent Associate. After 21 years with INTRAC, during which time she filled numerous roles, this will be a new experience for Anne and for the organisation.



After joining INTRAC in 1997, Anne took the lead in developing an NGO strengthening programme in Central Asia and subsequently delivered on consultancies across the world in organisational development, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning and partner capacity building. She also developed and delivered on many INTRAC open training programmes. She has worked across Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Australia, North Africa, Europe, UK, Ireland and the Middle East.

She has published several papers and blogs with INTRAC—available through our Resources database—and was a key facilitator and speaker at many of our M&E conferences and workshops.

From August 2018 Anne moved to the role of INTRAC Associate. She will continue to work with INTRAC, but having recently celebrated her last day as an employee, Anne will hopefully also have more time to spend with her family and friends.



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