

Newsletter

November 2019



Welcome to our November 2019 newsletter.

November is here, and the fields around Osney Mead in Oxford, where INTRAC is located, are flooded – not an unusual occurrence for the UK at this time of year, but a stark reminder of how the climate affects us. INTRAC’s environmental footprint, as an organisation that is regularly flying people around the world, and what we can do to address this, was a topic of debate at our recent staff away days. Experimenting with more mixed virtual and face-to-face approaches in evaluations (see pg 4) and training offers food for thought on how we can reduce our footprint.

Time for learning and reflection is always at a premium in a small, busy organisation like INTRAC. But the last few months have offered spaces for us to think about our strategic direction – during a Board strategy day, staff away days, refreshed lunchtime seminars for staff and consultants, and participation in external events (see pg 10). Running through these discussions was recognition of a growing demand for change in the international system from people who are tackling poverty, injustice and discrimination everywhere in the world.

As we move forward with new staff (see pg 13), with a growing portfolio of programmes where INTRAC is an embedded partner (see pgs 5, 8 and 9) and some fresh perspectives on the impact of our training (see pgs 6-7), this is a good time for us to ask ourselves profound questions about whether INTRAC is really doing enough to change power dynamics through our actions. Read Jim’s introductory Viewpoint to see what he is thinking.

Viewpoint

Our work

Events

Publications
& Blogs

Training

Our People

www.intrac.org

Why INTRAC? Our new Chief Executive Jim Emerson on INTRAC's role in a changing aid sector



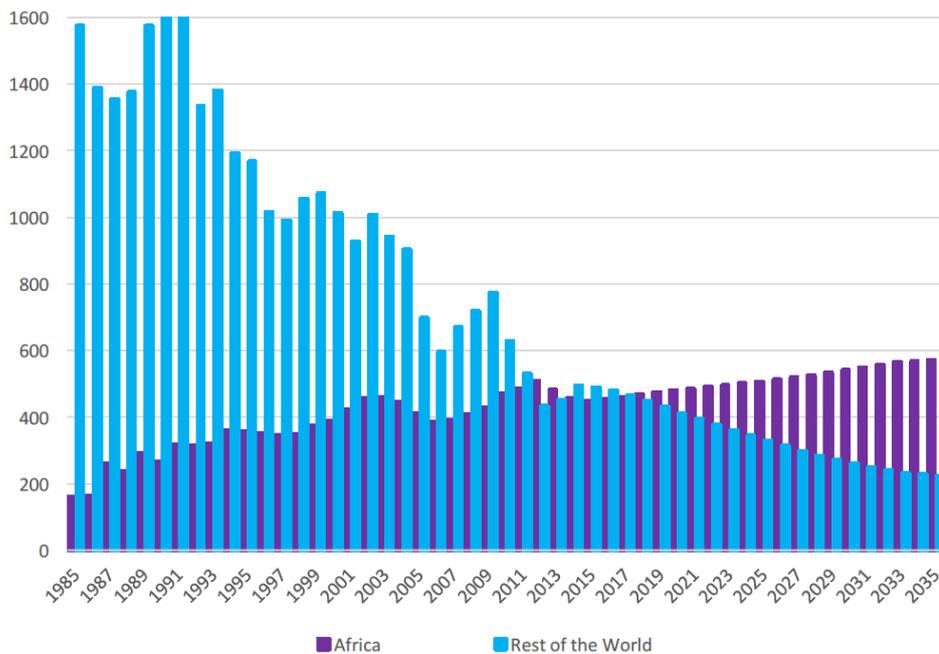
Jim (top right) with the majority of INTRAC's staff team during the October 2019 away days

Over recent weeks, as a newcomer to INTRAC, many people have asked why I chose to work with this organisation. For almost 40 years, I have worked with the large international NGOs designing and delivering complex programmes across Africa, Asia and the Americas. Having done so, why would I choose to work for this small organisation? Many clichés come to mind: “small is beautiful” and “size does not matter”. I’m sure you can think of more, but they do not explain my decision. Small can be beautiful, but it is not always so. Size sometimes does matter.

Let me try to explain “Why INTRAC?” In recent years, the aid world has been under increasing scrutiny. Critics have questioned its performance and legitimacy. This is especially so for the larger NGOs. The most pressing criticisms are those from the public and from civil society in the global south. Most recently, safeguarding has been a central target of this criticism, followed by the performance of the sector in delivering sustainable impact. The cost and efficiency of the large organisations is often called into question.

That the sector has “lost its soul” is a charge I have heard from time to time. The question recognises the moral dimension of the work we do. There has been much written on the ethics of aid and humanitarian action, and in a short introduction like this I cannot do justice to this topic. In trying to answer to the question - “why INTRAC?” - I will focus on one aspect of this: the quandary of the end justifying the means. INTRAC does not have a solution for this, but it can help with the means to a solution. As a recognised leader in monitoring and evaluation, INTRAC works with many organisations to strengthen this critical area. Good M&E requires good planning and design, which in turn requires a good understanding of the situation and its complex mix of issues, culture, challenges, constraints, and opportunities. We hope that this, in turn, leads to learning.

Reflecting on this I start to ask what is the “end” that we aspire to? When is it an end and when is it a means to an end? For example, in the Sahel, there is a complex mix of ends (including poverty alleviation, peace and security, climate adaptation, democracy, sustainable economies and safe migration). This sometimes makes it hard to distinguish the end from the means. Is a sustainable economy a means to ending poverty, or vice versa? The problems of the Sahel (and elsewhere) are a complex mix of interdependent aims and activities in unpredictable environments.



People living in extreme poverty (millions), Africa and the rest of the world, 1985—2035 (using a five-year moving average)

Source: IFS v 7.27

Funding proposals require detailed plans with milestones and commitments to meet over a short period; something that is hard (and sometimes irresponsible) to do.

Meanwhile, the sector has prepared and delivered many such proposals over the past four decades in the Sahel. As a result, many more children survive and go to school, and infrastructure has improved. But the share of poor people in sub-Saharan Africa more than doubled from 11% in 1981 to 28% in 2005; and it continues to increase. Taking into account the impact of climate change and of insecurity, it becomes clear that life for the poorest in Africa is likely to get worse.

Where INTRAC fits in

INTRAC’s network of relationships and associates means it has access to local, regional and global resources. It can draw on a broad range of technical expertise informed by solid practical experience. INTRAC looks at issues from a holistic perspective and creates linkages across organisations. This ensures that our training and convening capacity draws on and enhances the learning from individuals and organisations, and facilitates cross-learning and collaboration. Our training offer, especially the Consultants for Change (C4C) programme, brings INTRAC’s network and expertise closer to the emerging organisations of the South. In this way, we help to put ownership and leadership for change in the hands of communities.

This is why I joined INTRAC. We may be small but we have the potential through collaborative relationships and rigorous reflection to help civil society design sustainable solutions to today’s complex development and humanitarian challenges.

Jim Emerson became INTRAC Chief Executive in October 2019. He is a senior international development and humanitarian executive with experience across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.



Our work



Evaluating influencing strategies for Norwegian People's Aid



Norwegian People's Aid

Between July and October this year, INTRAC has been carrying out a mixed methods evaluation on the influencing strategies of partners of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) programme '*Partnership for democratization and just distribution of resources*' (2016-19). The purpose of the evaluation was '*to learn from the work NPA has engaged in supporting partners' work to influence political decision-making*' (ToR).

We adopted an Outcome Harvesting and theory-based approach and compared findings from qualitative methods with those from a survey of NPA partners. We validated 12 influencing outcomes in six countries through internal and external sources (key informants and documents) and presented these as case studies. But we also investigated another 5 outcomes through internal sources only.

We explored questions around what strategies worked, what did not work, and why, what successes and challenges partners had experienced, how NPA had contributed to its partners' influencing outcomes, how influencing strategies had improved during the period under review, and how strategies of people's organisations (i.e. membership organisations) compared with those of NGOs.

The evaluation examined the experience of 16 NPA programmes funded by Norad – the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, which is under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – at three levels of investigation + a survey. We evaluated three countries (Ecuador, the Kurdish Region of Iraq and South Africa) through field visits where we conducted interviews and Focus Group Discussions with internal key informants (NPA staff and partners) and external key informants, who were independent of the partners' projects. We evaluated another three countries remotely (Cambodia, El Salvador and South Sudan) with Skype or WhatsApp interviews of internal and external key informants. At the third level, we investigated ten country programmes through a document review and remote interviews with programme staff. The survey of partners' views on influencing strategies, outcomes and NPA's support to them had a high response – 121 respondents out of 152 partners.

The evaluation was conducted by Floresca Karanàsou, INTRAC's MENA Principal Consultant, Brenda Lipson, INTRAC Associate and Alison Napier, INTRAC's M&E Principal Consultant.

Working with C&A Foundation to help promote capacity development on three continents

C&A Foundation



INTRAC has been working to support the programme staff of the C&A Foundation across three continents. In particular, the emphasis has been on how foundation staff can support the capacity development of their grantees (or partners).

C&A Foundation 'is a corporate foundation, affiliated to the global retailer C&A, here to transform the apparel industry. They work with change-makers all over the world, offering financial support, expertise and networks to make the industry work better for every person it touches'.

It achieves this through five key programmes:

- Sustainable cotton
- Working conditions
- Forced and child labour eradication
- Circular fashion - looking at new business models and accelerator programmes
- Strengthening communities

The foundation works in over 13 countries, including Brazil, India, Mexico, Netherlands, Switzerland, Bangladesh (where it has offices) and the United Kingdom, Turkey, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, China and Tanzania (where it has partners but no office).

C&A Foundation is a grant maker, but also supports the capacity development of grantees. As a relatively young foundation, C&A Foundation wanted to strengthen the ability of its staff who interface with partners (Programme Managers) to understand capacity development and how they might more effectively promote it with their grantees (who are NGOs and private sector organisations).

To this end, three workshops were held in September and October in Sao Paulo, Delhi and Amsterdam with groups of C&A Foundation staff from each region. INTRAC personnel (Rod MacLeod, Bill Crooks and Rick James) facilitated half of the workshop related to 'one-to-one' partnership relations, while another consultant (Leda Stott) facilitated the other half, which related to supporting multi-stakeholder initiatives.

This was the first step in supporting C&A Foundation, and other future steps will include a series of webinars on specific topics to be explored in more depth.

This is part of a growing body of work that INTRAC is carrying out with foundations. It builds on another programme of support with Oak Foundation, who recommended INTRAC to C&A Foundation. Such foundations are of particular interest in that they are not under the same constraints as other (e.g. government) donors. As such they have the potential to provide more flexible, open-ended support that is more likely to reap positive results in the longer run.

Monitoring and Evaluation training for CTA: a participant's perspective

In late August 2019, INTRAC delivered a monitoring and evaluation training course for the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) in the Netherlands. INTRAC Principal Consultant Catherine Allen delivered the training, her first since joining us in July. To get a participant's perspective on the course, INTRAC spoke to Oluwaseun Adedeji.

What is your role for CTA, and where are you based?

I work with CTA as a Junior consultant in the Agribusiness and Value-Chains department. I was based in the Netherlands but recently moved to Belgium.

What difference has the training you received made to you and your organisation?

The training has helped to improve my support to programme management and implementation, especially in terms of working with partners to ensure corporate and project level objectives are achieved.

How have you got on putting your learning into practice?

By virtue of my involvement in four project portfolios implemented across Africa, the learning finds immediate relevance as it is being incorporated into routine activities of reporting, assessing partner reports, interpreting log frames, identifying output and outcome elements, source verification and overall project monitoring.

Was there anything you found out in the training that surprised you?

I was particularly enthused about how seemingly complex concepts of monitoring and evaluation were demystified. The understanding of the basic principles of M&E is of great advantage to my career pursuits in the development industry. I am grateful to CTA for organizing this training and to INTRAC for a wonderful facilitation.



Oluwaseun receives her certificate from Catherine

Big wins from minimal support - IMANEH Switzerland

IAMANEH Switzerland is a small NGO, with 10 staff members, focused on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Gender-based Violence. INTRAC consultant Maureen O'Flynn has helped IAMANEH through a change process aimed at rethinking how to develop a new international programme for 2021-24. Central to this was forming a clear and coherent Theory of Change based on an already available strategy and pre-defined fields of intervention. The team requested "hand holding" guidance through this process, rather than training and/or lead facilitation — Maureen provided only 2.5 days of consultancy. They have now developed a draft Theory of Change and M&E framework, which shows just how much an organisation can achieve with short but targeted support.

Looking ahead to Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation training: a Q&A with Zinthy Ganeshpanchan

INTRAC's latest Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation course took place in Oxford during the week of November 18th to 22nd. Zinthy Ganeshpanchan received a bursary to enable her to attend the training. She aims to take new M&E skills back to her organisation based in Leicestershire. Ahead of the course, INTRAC caught up with Zinthy to find out more about her NGO, its work, and how she hoped the course would benefit both her own and other organisations.



Zinthy Ganeshpanchan

Can you tell us a bit about your organisation, and what it does?

The Zinthy Trust support disadvantaged women and families in Leicester and Leicestershire to be free from poverty and abuse. In order to achieve these aims we provide a range of support services including one to one advice to women and girls fleeing violence, provide advice on money, debt and fuel poverty, provide skills development and emolument opportunities for young people and practical support such as emergency food parcels, sanitary products and school uniforms.

How will the bursary and the training course benefit you and your organisation?

As a small charity we know that we provide high quality support that is aimed at changing the lives of our beneficiaries. We also know that we are making a real difference in our communities, However, if we are to become sustainable we need to measure our impact and communicate this impact to our funders and supporters. Therefore, I believe that the training course will help me to develop my skills which will enable me not only to develop good M&E systems but also build the capacity of other staff in our organisation to be effective. However, I would have not been able to participate in the course if I did not receive the bursary. I am extremely grateful to INTRAC for providing me with this support.

How do you plan to put into practice the things that you will learn?

I am looking forward to use the knowledge I gain to introduce new M&E systems but also to strengthen the existing systems. Furthermore, I will use this training not only for the benefit of our organisation but also to the benefit other community groups that I support.

Developing a theory of change for a major research programme

The GCRF Water Security and Sustainable Development Hub is a five-year research project improving water security for a resilient future. The Hub is funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), part of the UK's Official



Development Assistance (ODA) commitment. Tackling water security issues in four countries - Colombia, Ethiopia, India, and Malaysia - the Hub facilitates research and engagement among a broad range of academics, from social scientists to hydrologists, economists to microbiologists, as well as key partners from business & industry, non-profits and public administration.

Kicking off our 5-year programme of work, this summer INTRAC was commissioned to lead the revision of the Hub's theory of change (ToC). We worked intensively with UK based academics and research partners from across the four countries through a series of surveys, focus group discussions and in-country workshops. Not only were workshops essential to our understanding of water security problems and the broader context for change, they served as a way to ensure active participation of local researchers in the project planning process – one of the Hub's core values.

What have we learned?

- Communicating a theory of change that captures the complexity of a systems-scale research programme working across multiple country contexts comes with many challenges. Rather than trying to visualise the many different aspects of complexity we opted for a simple flow diagram to depict the core logic, adding in contextual information and core assumptions, and ensuring this is easily relatable to the ToC narrative (where we were able to get into the complexities in more detail).
- Impact-focused planning: envisioning and documenting the potential impact of research is a relatively new practice for many academics (in the UK and overseas). We needed to remind academics that research plans should be based on the impact they hope to see in the world, and then help them to understand that ToC is both a process for mapping out the impact of their work and a product that serves to communicate this to others.
- Finding a common language: development practitioners and academics have different understandings of key terminology, i.e. 'impact', 'pathways to impact', 'theory' of change... For example, 'impact' is understood as 'the (non-academic) good that researchers can do in the world'. Impact is essentially a catch-all term for the effects of the research project's core activities, be those outputs, outcomes or impacts more commonly understood in development circles. And 'pathways to impact' are understood as the activities that link research to impact (not the causal linkages understood within development circles).

Lucy Gray is a facilitator and trainer who is currently Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Adviser for the GCRF Water Security and Sustainable Development Hub, led by Newcastle University.



Participants at the Development Alternative inception workshop in Kampala, Uganda—September 2019

Launching the Development Alternative



After a co-creation phase that began in August 2018, we officially started The Development Alternative programme in August this year. INTRAC was involved in an inception workshop taking place from 7 to 11 October in Kampala, Uganda. This workshop involved colleagues from Uganda, Madagascar, Iraq and Lebanon; four of the eight countries where the programme will eventually be implemented. While a lot of our work with the consortium partners is online, there is no substitute to meeting face to face and interacting across cultures.

The Development Alternative programme involves young people monitoring a range of livelihoods projects, implemented by third parties, which affect their lives and those of their communities. These projects will be monitored through an app, the Development Check, which allows for real-time accountability mechanisms. The programme will also be working to support youth civil society organisations to strengthen their role in representing young people and contributing to development.

After fruitful planning, group work and discussions during the inception workshop, we are now underway with programme implementation. Over the course of November, a group of youth volunteers have been trained and have selected projects to monitor in Uganda and Madagascar. Next month they will begin monitoring development projects that affect their communities. Throughout this first implementation phase, INTRAC will be leading the M&E component to assess whether open, real-time accountability will support dynamic accountability – not just enabling young people to give feedback about development projects that affect their lives, but holding them to account for responding to that feedback in meaningful ways.

Ultimately we hope that development actors will change the way they work with young people and their communities, and that they will become more responsive to feedback which will eventually result in improved relevance and effectiveness of their work.

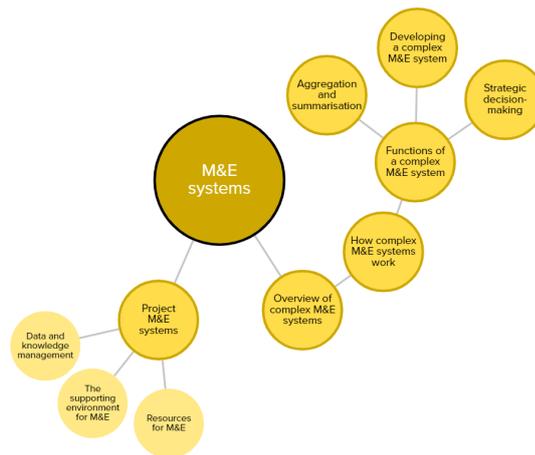


80+ practitioners join webinar on new M&E Universe papers

On September 19th, over 80 M&E practitioners from around the world joined a webinar to explore the [M&E Universe](#). There was a focus on its latest set of papers, on the subject of M&E Systems.

Dan James and Nigel Simister hosted the event, which was recorded and is [now available online](#).

Two further sections of the Universe, on M&E debates and M&E of approaches, will launch in 2020.



Pathways to Power and Facilitating Financial Sustainability

In the last few weeks, we've attended two events on issues that are central to INTRAC's thinking. On 6-7 November 2019, Peace Direct and LINC hosted a 2-day workshop to share the latest findings from their [Facilitating Financial Sustainability](#) research and other related research initiatives around [exit planning](#) and [localisation](#). The small but focused group included representatives from CSOs, INGOs and support providers working across the peace-building, humanitarian and development space, all with a common interest in strengthening local organisations.

A couple of people from that workshop were also at the [Pathways to Power symposium](#), on 18-19 November, demonstrating the growth and interconnections between people and organisations that are thinking seriously about how to get from rhetorical commitments to do things differently to actually changing ways of thinking and operating in international collaboration. Designed to take forward [#ShiftThePower](#), over 100 extremely diverse people came together to find ways to tackle embedded colonialism, racism and inequality in the philanthropic and traditional aid systems.

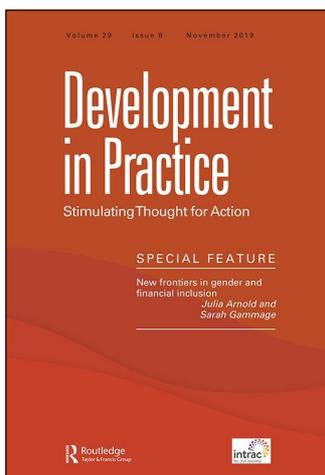
Both events – very different in scale and ambition – reflect the growing demand for change in the international system from people who are tackling poverty, injustice and discrimination everywhere in the world. These are issues that have [long concerned INTRAC](#), and we look forward to engaging with new partners and old friends to take this forward.

“Talking about power isn't the same as shifting it.”

Jenny Hodgson, Global Fund for Community Foundations



Development in Practice issue 29.8: “New Frontiers in Gender and Financial Inclusion” special feature



The latest issue of Development in Practice has a special feature on ‘new frontiers in gender and financial inclusion’, guest-edited by Julia Arnold and Sarah Gammage from the International Center for Research on Women.

It draws on four projects funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation under the Women and Girls at the Center of Development (WGCD) Grand Challenge, as well as other initiatives that critically explore financial inclusion from a development practitioner’s perspective.

All the articles in the special feature are freely available to download, [so start reading now!](#)

Development in Practice issues 29.6 and 29.7



Development in Practice issues [29.6](#) and [29.7](#) have also been published since our last newsletter, and cover a broad range of development topics from across the world. A number of articles are open access, available to freely read and download. These include:

- ‘Using “theory of change” to improve agricultural research: recent experience from Tanzania’
- ‘Women’s time use and implications for [participation in cacao value chains](#): evidence from VRAEM, Peru’
- ‘Child safeguarding in a peacekeeping context: [lessons from Liberia](#)’

You can also browse the whole *Development in Practice* back catalogue of open access articles.

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

INTRAC training

Online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Online, January to February 2020

Course fee: £675

Our popular online course is designed for people who are relatively new to Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), whether they are early career professionals, or more experienced practitioners who are switching careers or have never received formal training in this field. The course covers the whole MEL cycle, from clarifying the purposes of MEL to planning and selecting the most appropriate indicators and objectives, to collecting data, analysing it, reporting and - last but not least! - learning.

Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills

Oxford, 17 to 21 February 2020

Course fee: £1,615 (residential), £1,215 (non-residential)

Learn how to influence powerful stakeholders and policy processes in a range of contexts. This course will help you understand how to develop and monitor effective advocacy strategies. You will explore tools for analysing where power lies on your issue and who has a stake in it. You will learn how to develop a Theory of Change and how to tailor your advocacy to the interests of those you seek to influence. You will also learn skills in communicating an advocacy message, face-to-face influencing techniques, using the media, public campaigning, and research for advocacy purposes.

Online Consultants for Change (C4C)

Online, 21 January to 10 March 2020

Course fee: £825

C4C is an innovative professional development programme for those starting out in international development consultancy work or for more experienced consultants. The course aims to deepen your understanding of the processes of consultancy, good practices, as well as the qualities of a good consultant. It will equip you with a core understanding of how change happens and how to enable organisations and their staff to own and drive this change themselves. These soft skills can be applied to a whole range of interventions, from fundraising to project evaluation, and ensure that whatever intervention is done, it is done in a way that empowers people and ensures the change is sustained.

Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation

Oxford, 27 to 31 January 2020

Course fee: £1,360 (non-residential), £1,770 (residential)

Are you an experienced M&E practitioner facing complex challenges in your work? This 5-day face-to-face participatory course uses case studies and practical examples from the trainers and participants to illustrate and explore issues and build on your and other participants' knowledge. All participants will have previous experience in designing and managing M&E systems.

To find out more about our other upcoming courses, please make sure to check our [website](#). For further information, please email us at training@intrac.org.



Jim Emerson, Chief Executive

Jim is a senior international development and humanitarian executive with experience across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. He joined INTRAC in October 2019. Previously he held senior governance and leadership roles in several complex global and local NGOs working as CEO, CFO, COO, Program Director, Regional and Country Director. He has led operations at local, national and regional levels, overseeing strategy and programme development, policy and advocacy, and humanitarian interventions in challenging and dangerous contexts. He has lived in developing countries for over 25 years: in urban slums, remote villages, and in disaster and conflict areas.

Jim recently completed an MSc in International Strategy and Diplomacy at LSE IDEAS. Previously he studied Public Health, Development Policy, Philosophy and Theology.



Willemijn de Bruin, Research and Programme Coordinator

Willemijn joined INTRAC in October 2019. She holds an MSc degree in Management, Policy Analysis & Entrepreneurship in Health & Life Sciences, specialising in International Public Health with distinction. Before joining INTRAC, Willemijn worked as a project coordinator and researcher at the Edgar Diabetes and Obesity Research Centre at the University of Otago in New Zealand. Prior to that she was employed as a junior consultant at AMPC International Health Consultants in the Netherlands. She has also been a fairly hands-on board member for the African Woman Foundation, a Tanzanian NGO aiming to improve maternal health services.

Willemijn is INTRAC's Programme Coordinator for The Development Alternative. She also undertakes in-house research on INTRAC's strategic themes and outreach ideas, and provides support to the consultancy team.



Andy Johnson, Digital Communications and Marketing Officer

Andy joined INTRAC in September 2019. Previously he was Marketing and Communications Officer for Cecily's Fund, a UK NGO which works to support orphaned and vulnerable children in Zambia. Prior to that, he was a communications intern for a multi-agency humanitarian initiative, the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project. Through the Project, six agencies collaborated to build the capacity of their national staff. During this time he was based at the offices of Oxfam GB.

Andy studied at Keele University, where he earned a BA in Politics and International Relations (2010) and an MA in Diplomatic Studies (2011). His MA dissertation focused on the negotiations which resulted in the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.



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