

Newsletter

May 2020



Photo: Thomas de Luze

Welcome to our May 2020 newsletter.

Like everyone, everywhere, these months have been dominated by [responding to the upheavals caused by COVID-19](#). We've temporarily closed our office, made sure that consultants working on projects with us around the world firstly got home safely and were then able to continue their assignments from home, and we've built on our experience in online working to adapt.

Much of this newsletter therefore explores how we've been rethinking activities, and coping with the major changes in our personal lives and our work.

Our trustees are monitoring the implications of the pandemic for INTRAC, with regular reviews of staff welfare, finances, strategy and prospects. We are - for now - in a reasonably good position, delivering on existing initiatives and starting new ones in ways that continue to provide high quality support to civil society.

We are regularly connecting with colleagues and friends in many different countries. We're exploring together the implications of the pandemic for organisations in our contexts, and considering how capacity strengthening consultants, researchers and trainers can ensure that civil society remains resilient, continues to hold those with political and economic power to account, and provides essential support to those in desperate need.

The picture looks pretty bleak right now as social fractures deepen and trust erodes, but as Bev Jones writes in the Guest Contribution, we have to fight for the radical shifts we want, hold tight to the many positives, and continue to reimagine a better world beyond this 'critical juncture'.

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Joining INTRAC, under lockdown

“What’s it like to join a new organisation during lockdown?” I’ve been asked this many times since 1 April 2020, when I started working with INTRAC as a Principal Consultant with a focus on Organisational Development issues.

One positive of joining during lockdown is that because staff are working from home, it’s easier to quickly move beyond physical factors such as the office environment to focus on organisational values, identities and beliefs and how they play out. Also, while a new job can be a mixture of emotions like excitement and awkwardness, having inductions under these circumstances reduces some of the usual formalities, because everyone is slightly out of their comfort zone. It’s difficult not to be authentic when toddlers participate in Zoom calls too...

My past work has involved helping Caritas members and Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies to increase their capacity to provide services to vulnerable populations in some of the most extreme environments in the world. Possibly the most humbling part of the lockdown experience for me personally has been greater empathy with many people all over the world, who effectively live in lockdown as a result of conflict for many months at a time - minus the privileges of being an expatriate INGO staff member.

Another regular question is “how’s INTRAC adapting to COVID-19?”. Internally we’ve been shifting to remote working, building on our experience with online collaboration tools and setting up new online systems and processes. Just as importantly, INTRAC has been adapting its external engagements too:

Firstly, INTRAC has run a series of online workshops which I have helped to facilitate involving discussions with staff, network consultants, and partners to discuss the impact on different country contexts and organisations, gaps and exploration of [joint next steps](#).

Secondly, we have been working with colleagues to adapt existing programmes and advance new activities. Notably I have co-designed a new online course on [Partner Capacity Strengthening](#) and am engaging on how to support INGOs with [responsible exit and transition](#).

Thirdly, INTRAC continues to contribute to external initiatives which are fundamental to achieving our mission—for example, I have been engaged in a project on [‘Reinventing INGO Systems’](#).

INTRAC’s mission is to empower people to gain greater control over their own future, by strengthening the effectiveness of civil society to challenge poverty and inequality. The pandemic is severely impacting many civil society organisations just as those on the front line are busier than ever. Organisations providing training/advocacy work have had to postpone plans, enter hibernation or adapt to an online delivery model. Without new funding, the survival of many CSOs is in doubt.

In an era of mutual aid and support, we can all be helpers and we all need help sometimes. Starting a new role at INTRAC at this time has given me new insights into the interconnectedness of global civil society, and how INTRAC will be receiving and giving help wherever we can.

Lucy Morris is an organisational change specialist with more than 20 years experience of working in humanitarian and development contexts both in the UK and overseas. She has worked with the Overseas Development Institute, the UN, the Red Cross, and organisations in the UK, Africa, Asia and Central Europe.



Are you “pixilated”? Rethinking technology in our COVID19 world

“Television allows thousands of people to watch the same programme at the same time, yet remain alone.” Discuss. The only O-level English exam task I remember from 40 years ago expressed, then, a concern about technology, communities and isolation. For those of us with space, equipment and data to work from home during lockdown, the title tells us how much has changed since the late 1970s. Now screens – and so many of them - enable us to talk, plan, write and be together because we need to be physically apart. But too much visual pixelation is also playing havoc with our energy levels and sleep patterns.

Much has been talked about of the Critical Juncture that COVID-19 represents – a gear change in how the world works and how we live and work within it. The acceleration of technology is only one of many areas making exponential leaps into new ways of being, and making us be. [Duncan Green’s paper on the subject looks back at previous pandemics](#), exhorting us to hold lightly our assumptions about the future – being bold but also careful to experiment, rather than backing a few things that seem certain now, but may evaporate suddenly. The post COVID-19 ‘goods’ ([to use Heather Marquette’s phrase](#) in her model for planning forward), are not givens – they require human agency, in the same way as preventing a return to pre-COVID-19 ‘bads’. If we want a radical shift towards empowered localisation of action, processes and expertise, we need to fight for it. If we want to maintain at least some of the improved air quality, or sustain beyond COVID-19 the civic energy emerging from new communities of action, we need to fight for these too. And we need to be on the look-out for the not-yet-known dimensions of this period – such as what these fluid communities mean for the creation of new insiders and outsiders.

A cacophony of entrepreneurial virtue-branding of commercial companies purport to offer public goods for free. Yet we know, even as we click, *“if you’re not paying for the product, you are the product”*. Can INTRAC find a way to mobilise technology in the delivery of that radical shift and build on the positive gains of the pandemic while helping people to be wary of the costs and risk: shoring up commercial companies, unwittingly colluding with surveillance or generating new causes of mental ill-health? Perhaps more proactive collaboration with not-for-profit technology is one way to walk the fine line between INTRAC’s commercial practice and its mission to promote independent and healthy civil society.

Visual pixelation is not the only pitfall in this era. In the 1936 film *Mr Deeds Goes To Town*, Mr Deeds is described by two witnesses as ‘pixilated’. The judge looks bemused. A helpful lawyer explains that it’s an early American expression meaning ‘The pixies have got him’ or ‘he’s barmy’. Perhaps we all feel a little bit pixilated these days. So while we wrestle with how to make technology work for us, rather than the other way round, don’t forget to give yourself plenty of breaks from those screens!



A Social Development and Governance advisor, **Bev Jones** has been an independent consultant since 2008 and an INTRAC associate since 2010. She has worked for Christian Aid and CAFOD and with INTRAC has been involved in numerous projects including the Civil Society Support Programme in Ethiopia.



Our work

As with all civil society organisations around the world, INTRAC is having to work differently to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions in particular have prompted INTRAC's consultants to lean into their experience of working remotely. This section includes some examples of how specific work is being done differently.

Online outcome harvesting for Aidsfonds' Bridging the Gaps end evaluation

In February, INTRAC had just begun the implementation phase of the final evaluation of the **Bridging the Gaps (BtG)** programme. Bridging the Gaps works towards a world where sex workers, people who use drugs and men who have sex with men, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people can enjoy their human rights and access quality HIV prevention, treatment and care. The evaluation includes an outcome harvesting approach for which a series of workshops were planned with the programme's in-country partners in four locations: Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya and Indonesia.

The first workshop was scheduled early March in Ukraine, but had to be cancelled even before official COVID-19 travel restrictions were implemented. Due to the implementation of lockdown, INTRAC and Aidsfonds' M&E team and external reference group had to come up with alternative approaches to the workshops that could not be held in person.

The Bridging the Gaps Alliance Partners have worked directly with their in-country partners to write up outcomes that display the programme's achievements of the past five years, followed by a round of feedback and revisions of these outcomes over the course of March and April. Zoom webinars were held at the end of April, one in English and Bahasa with partners from Kenya and Indonesia, and one in Russian with partners from Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan – which were attended by a total of around 60 participants. During these webinars staff worked on identifying additional joint outcomes at a country level, and unexpected outcomes that provide a learning opportunity for future programmes. Sessions were made as lively and interactive as possible using features such as breakout activities, online polls, simultaneous interpretation and translation, and group work via Google Docs. Country partners met again a week later for additional group work on Zoom. Although there were challenges, the webinars were a good opportunity for partners to become more comfortable with using the technology.

INTRAC has now started analysing the outcomes in relation to the evaluation key questions, and will select a sample to explore in more detail, including gathering evidence about the role of BtG in contributing to the changes reported. INTRAC will facilitate another round of webinars with the BtG Alliance and in-country partners in early July, to review the outcomes harvested and plan next steps.

For more information about the Bridging the Gaps programme you can visit <https://hivgaps.org>



Adapted strategy review for the Development Alternative

The Development Alternative is a programme that aims to put young people at the centre of development, through a youth-led accountability approach where volunteers monitor projects affecting their communities, and by supporting and strengthening youth-led civil society organisations in the global south.

Six months after kicking off The Development Alternative programme in four countries (Uganda, Madagascar, Iraq and Lebanon), the consortium was gearing up for a face to face strategy review workshop in Oxford from 11-15 May to be facilitated by INTRAC as part of an approach to adaptive programming. The strategy review is a moment for the consortium to ask ourselves the question: “are we doing the right things?” and use learning to inform adaptations to the programme’s strategy. By bringing all seven consortium partners together, we aim to identify priority issues for strategic learning, to review MEL learning and share experiential learning from the first four months of monitoring development projects, and to come to an agreement on programme adaptations for the next test cycle of monitoring before we plan to scale the programme up in size and expand to another four countries in 2021.

As a result of the COVID-19 travel restrictions and lockdown rules we were unable to bring around 30 participants from seven different countries together in Oxford, and moved the strategy review sessions online. We faced a challenge in enabling participation from across the consortium and across countries, while ensuring we actually tackled issues in sufficient depth to inform potential strategy changes. We broke the planned workshop into bite-size chunks over the course of May. INTRAC hosted a series of 16 webinars and learning calls where we brought consortium partners, work streams, country teams, working groups and the steering committee together to reflect on our strategy for change. We found that it was essential to have a clear overall structure and to communicate where we were in the process in each call. We divided the month into two phases, with the first two weeks focussed on consolidating our learning to date, and the next two moving the group forward to consider adaptations. It was also helpful to mix up the sessions with different groups of participants coming together to keep things fresh.

Being adaptive is at the core of The Development Alternative programme, and will be key to unleashing the potential of young people – even when they are (temporarily) stuck at home.

To find out more about The Development Alternative, visit <https://www.intrac.org/projects/development-alternative/>

Evaluation of Freedom from Fear Alliance's programme



INTRAC consultants **Floresca Karanasou** and **Rod MacLeod** have been carrying out an evaluation of the Freedom from Fear (FFF) Alliance's (comprising PAX and Amnesty International Netherlands) programme. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributed €59.5 million as part of the Dialogue and Dissent Strategic Partnership with the FFF Alliance for the period 2016-20.

The aim of the programme has been to contribute to transformative change in fragile and conflict-affected situations. There are five thematic programmes: Community-Based Security & Citizens' Rights; Dealing with the Past; Protection of Civilians; Natural Resources, Conflict & Human Rights; and Humanitarian Disarmament. The Alliance implements programmes at an international level and in 25 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

This evaluation's purposes are to:

- Learn about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme.
- Account for outcomes achieved and the contribution of the FFF Alliance and partners.
- Provide lessons on the relevance of the five thematic Theories of Change that underpin each thematic programme, and to test their assumptions.
- Provide input for future joint programming and mutual learning with partners

INTRAC completed two field visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan before the COVID-19 lockdown began. In addition to an extensive literature review, we carried out remote interviews with four other country programmes (Cameroon, Mali, Syria and Uganda), as well as with staff engaged in international advocacy, senior management staff and other key informants such as staff from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The principal emphasis of the evaluation was on learning, so throughout the process we facilitated discussions on different elements of the country and thematic programmes to draw out issues and provide opportunities for feedback on emerging findings. One key finding was that a great deal can be achieved by supporting dynamic local CSOs, which have motivation and capacity, but lack resources. Supportive accompaniment was found to be a key component in successful capacity development. We are currently completing the final report which aims to highlight the most important learnings and how the Alliance will act on the recommendations that they accept.

Rachel Hayman of INTRAC has contributed to the newly published book, *Transforming International Cooperation: Thoughts and Perspectives on Moving Beyond Aid*. Her contribution focuses on civil society and ODA graduation. An e-book of the volume, which is coordinated by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is [freely available now](#).



Building capacity for change with Rainforest Alliance

Almost 50 million male and female smallholder farmers worldwide are reliant on coffee, cocoa or tea crops for their livelihood, with many millions more relying on the sector for wage employment. Over the past 15 years, UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance have

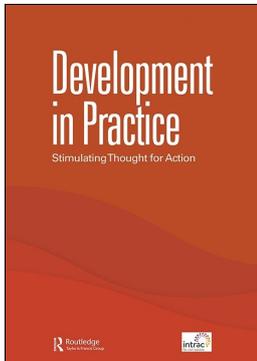


built leading certification schemes that help enable actors in the supply chain to move towards sustainable sourcing. However, there are some challenges that certification alone cannot address. Starting in 2016, the “**Sector Partnerships Program**” (SPP) has been strengthening the capacity of farmers—especially smallholders and women farmers—and civil society organizations in producing countries to work with governments and companies to tackle issues that go beyond certification and require a ‘sector wide’ approach. These include issues such as child labour, living wage, deforestation, climate change resilience, and more. In 2018, Rainforest Alliance merged with UTZ; offering a unique opportunity to review its certification programme, and build on the synergies between their joint networks, both with industry and civil society.

In November 2019, INTRAC staff member **Catherine Allen** began working with Rainforest Alliance to lead the final evaluation of the Sector Partnership Programme. This €18 million, 5-year, initiative is being funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the ‘Dialogue and Dissent’ Policy framework (DDP), which aims to create strategic partnerships that strengthen southern Civil Society Organisations’ capacity for ‘lobbying and advocacy’. By the end of 2019, SPP has worked with 137 partners and implemented between 123 projects in 9 different countries across Asia Pacific, Africa and Latin America. We are using a mixed methods, theory-based approach to evaluate this complex programme that will compare findings from qualitative data with those reported by Rainforest Alliance and its partners. As part of the process, we are collaborating with INTRAC associates **Albert Arhin** and **Ibnu Mundzir**, to carry out two detailed country studies. While the evaluation process has been affected by COVID-19, it is currently on track to conclude in September 2020.

Evaluating the Voice for Change Partnership

Civil society organisations (CSOs) represent the interests of groups and communities such as pastoralists, female entrepreneurs, and small-holder farmers. Through the 5-year ‘Voice for Change Partnership’ (V4CP), SNV, together with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), is working to strengthen these organisations in their role as advocates and lobbyists. Focusing on four sectors – food and nutrition security, resilience, renewable energy and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) - the programme supports CSOs to foster collaboration among relevant stakeholders, influence agenda-setting and hold the government and private sector accountable for their promises and actions. The programme is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the ‘Dialogue and Dissent’ Policy framework (DDP). INTRAC associate **Brian Pratt** and INTRAC staff member **Catherine Allen** have been leading a collaborative final evaluation of the V4CP since October 2019. As part of this process, we are working with three members of INTRAC’s wider network - **Patrick Osodo**, **Julius Namanya** and **Ibnu Mundzir** - to carry out three detailed country studies. The evaluation process has been affected by COVID-19, but we have maintained momentum and engagement despite these challenges, and will conclude the study within the original timeframe.



Development in Practice

Looking for a new Editor-in-Chief

Just a reminder that Brian Pratt is stepping down as Editor-in-Chief of the journal, and Taylor & Francis is recruiting a new Editor to start in January 2021. For more details about the application process visit: <http://bit.ly/37W7eNh>

Since our last newsletter, *Development in Practice* [Issue 30.2 of 2020](#) has been published, with articles on a wide range of development topics from across the world. Three articles from the issue are open access, available to freely read:

- ['Youth perceptions of agriculture: influence of cognitive processes on participation in agripreneurship'](#)
- ['Outcome mapping and research into use: analysing monitoring data for effective strategies'](#)
- ['Seeing empowerment as relational: lessons from women participating in development'](#)

We have also recently published two other open access articles around gender issues, so check out:

- ['From complexity to simplicity – how chasing success stories affects gendered NGO practices'](#)
- ['Making room for manoeuvre: addressing gender norms to strengthen the enabling environment for agricultural innovation'](#)

Two recent INTRAC blogs



In his recent blog for the INTRAC website, **Rod MacLeod** has written on ["how timely organisational support could help civil society in the South survive COVID-19"](#).

Recognising how critical CSOs are to pandemic response, the blog argues that guarantees of necessary financial support, the provision of mentoring and coaching for senior staff, and assistance with creative, safe and effective programming could help them remain viable.



In her own blog titled ["Proud to be a part of the INTRAC collective"](#), **Rachel Hayman** reflects on beginning her 10th year with INTRAC during a period of lockdown. In it, Rachel looks at the values that underpin INTRAC's work, and how by refocusing on our commitment to them we can best support civil society around the world. This is especially vital because "we are only just at the start of the short-term impacts, let alone the medium- and long-term changes."

INTRAC training

As part of INTRAC's COVID-19 adaptation, we have adjusted our training offer to meet a changing demand. We have strengthened our online offer to increase access to training while travel is restricted, and are also preparing to resume our face-to-face training when it will be safe to do so. Our upcoming courses are listed on page 10, including new courses **Online Partner Capacity Strengthening** and **Online Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills**.

How we are providing rich online learning opportunities



In expanding our online training, INTRAC aims to do more than just transfer face-to-face capacity development into the online environment. We work to maximise the opportunities that self-paced and facilitated online experiences offer participants in their learning journey. We draw on rich experience in this area, having offered online training since 2012.

For INTRAC, online training is much more than just PowerPoints presented in webinars. Scheduled live sessions are complemented by independent learning activities such as forums, quizzes, collaborative mind maps, readings and videos—all accessible via our eLearning platform. Our trainers are not only experts in their fields, but also have extensive online facilitation skills. Courses are supported by an eLearning “producer”, responsible for curating the eLearning platform, assisting the trainer during live sessions, and supporting participants throughout the learning process.

Participatory approaches remain at the heart of our approach. We consider learner needs, limitations of bandwidth and data consumption in the design and development of media for online courses. Ultimately, we want to make sure that participants on our online courses have the same high quality training experience as those who attend our face-to-face courses.

Face-to-face courses: safety first

As the situation is evolving, we are monitoring official guidelines on social gatherings and international travel, and we hope to be able to resume face-to-face courses from September onwards. We are already accepting applications for the **Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation** course scheduled for 7-11 September, and we are working towards making the experience as safe as possible for everyone in attendance.

For more information on how INTRAC is adapting its training provision—including further details on plans for face-to-face courses and how we can work with you to provide online, bespoke, in-house training, see our [news story](#) on the INTRAC website.

Online Partner Capacity Strengthening - **NEW!**

Online, 24 June—18 July 2020

Course fee: £695

This new online course will cover all of the core skills needed to support a partner through an organisational change process. It is ideal for programme staff with some experience in capacity strengthening and/or organisational development support work with international partners, or those who intend to engage with this kind of work in the near future.

Advanced Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Face to face, Oxford, 7—11 September 2020

Course fee: £1,395 non-residential

£1,795 residential

Our most popular face-to-face course, it has been specifically designed for experienced practitioners (all applicants will have to demonstrate prior M&E experience to be accepted on the course). The course builds on and enhances participant's skills and understanding of M&E, and works through some of the complex challenges in doing M&E work.

Online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Online, 15 September—23 October 2020

Course fee: £695

The most successful of our online courses to date, having run multiple times a year since 2017. Designed for anyone needing some formal MEL training - from newbies to more experienced staff who had to learn-by-doing - this course covers all the key elements, from jargon-busting to choosing indicators, collecting and analysing data, as well as reporting and learning.

Online Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills - **NEW!**

Online, 21 September—13 November 2020

Course fee: £695

A brand new online course that builds on contents and insights from the face-to-face course of the same name. The course will cover the skills needed to influence powerful stakeholders and policy processes in a range of contexts, and give participants the tools to develop and monitor effective advocacy strategies. Participants do not need to work in an advocacy/policy role, but those who do will be encouraged to build on their existing experience.

Online Consultants for Change (C4C)

Online, 12 October—4 December 2020

Course fee: £825

This online course builds on INTRAC's [C4C programme](#), and is an innovative professional development training course for those starting out in international development consultancy work, or for more experienced consultants. The course follows the "Mountain of Change" model developed by [Dr Rick James](#), and aims to deepen participants' understanding of the processes of consultancy, good practices, as well as the qualities of a good consultant.



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