Donors or governments often choose to channel funds through large non-governmental organisations (NGOs) because of their perceived added-value. However, NGOs have not always been very good at monitoring and evaluating added-value work. Consequently, NGOs risk losing sight of the specific contribution they make to change within poor and disadvantaged communities.

The term ‘added-value’ – sometimes called ‘value-added’ – is used in many contexts. However, there is no widely accepted definition. It is most commonly used in two different circumstances:

- to describe the contribution an International non-governmental organisation (INGO) or large, Southern-based NGO makes to development within the aid chain (see diagram below); or
- to describe the contribution an organisation makes within a programme to ensure that the programme is more than just the sum of its parts.

Added-value activities can cover many types of work. Some of the more common are listed in the box opposite. In this context, ‘partners’ either means organisations supported further down the aid chain, or partners engaged within a programme of work, often implementing projects within that programme.

**Added-value within the aid chain**

One of the main reasons why donors or governments choose to channel funds through large NGOs, or sometimes private sector management companies, rather than giving money directly to smaller CSOs based in the South, is their perceived added-value.

However, in spite of this, large NGOs have not always been very good at monitoring and evaluating added-value work.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some common types of added-value work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Providing formal or informal capacity strengthening support to partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Facilitating synergies and cross learning within and between programmes, partners or sectors</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Supporting networking between partners and/or other organisations at local, national and/or international levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Linking advocacy work between local, national and international levels, or across programmes</td>
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<td>- Strengthening partners’ presence at national or international events, or supporting them to access national and international spaces</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Producing, disseminating, or supporting research</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Developing, supporting, testing and scaling pilot projects or innovation studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Developing and testing tools, methodologies and new practices</td>
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<td>- Incorporating global best practice into partners’ ways of working</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Providing advice and support on agendas or approaches (such as the human rights based approach or gender-sensitive approaches)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Helping partners identify new sources of funding or leverage funding streams (including facilitating access to donors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Supporting partners to manage grant and/or compliance requirements, including conforming to approved humanitarian standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Enabling protection from threats or intimidation, or helping to minimise risks in difficult situations</td>
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This is often because they (and their donors) have preferred to assess change at the level of poor and disadvantaged communities. One risk in doing this is that NGOs not working directly with communities lose sight of their specific contribution to this change. Another is that important changes required for sustainability, such as the enhanced capacity of Southern partners, may be ignored.

A lot depends on the mission and mandate of an NGO, and whether added-value activities are carried out as part of its core work, or are only carried out as additional work in some circumstances. For example, if a key objective of an NGO is to provide capacity strengthening support to partners then it would be expected to monitor and evaluate capacity strengthening as a core piece of work. On the other hand, if capacity strengthening is only carried out in certain circumstances – perhaps to facilitate better programming in areas where partners are perceived to be weak – then it would be more likely to be monitored and evaluated as a piece of added-value work.

If added-value work is not part of an NGO’s core mission or mandate, then it needs to decide how much effort to invest in monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Clearly, it would be impractical for an NGO to monitor and evaluate all the different pieces of added-value work it carries out to the same degree. Two methods that are commonly used instead are partner surveys and individual or group interviews.

**Partner surveys** can be used to solicit the views of a large number of supported partners. They may focus just on added-value work, but often include other issues such as partner satisfaction as well. A partner survey may seek to assess how far partners feel an NGO adds value in specific areas of support, and/or what extra added-value support partners would like to receive.

A question from a survey designed to assess the added-value of Danish NGOs to their Southern partners is shown in the diagram below. This survey mostly used closed questions. This means the potential areas of added-value were developed beforehand. It is also possible to ask more open-ended questions, such as ‘how does [the NGO] most add value to your work?’ However, when using open-ended questions in this way it is important to define what is meant by the term ‘added-value’ as it can mean different things to different people.

Individual or group interviews may also be used with partners, or small groups of partners, to explore added-value issues. Some NGOs do this regularly in workshop settings. Interviews are often aimed at trying to find out how NGOs contribute to change within supported communities above and beyond the money they pass on to partners. This can be used to gain an understanding of how NGOs add value to development efforts. Interviewing partners as a group may mean they are more likely to provide honest opinions.

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**Added-value**

Q14. In addition to any funding provided, to what extent do you feel your Danish partner(s) add value (or have added value) to your work in the following areas?

(Please tick one circle in each row)

- Not at all
- A small amount
- A moderate amount
- A lot
- Don’t know or Not applicable

- Enhancing your capacity through formal capacity building support (e.g. training, technical assistance)
- Facilitating synergies and cross learning with other agencies or networks
- Linking your advocacy work to the work of others at local, national and/or international levels
- Strengthening your presence at national or international events
- Introducing you to new research tools, methodologies or ways of working
- Supporting you to adopt best global practice
- Providing you with protection from threats or intimidation
- Helping you identify new sources of funding and/or providing access to donors
- Other (please specify)
Sometimes interviews reveal issues that would be hard to uncover through a survey. For example, the survey referenced on the previous page focused mostly on tangible added-value areas such as capacity development, linking advocacy work at different levels, and joint learning. However, individual interviews with partners revealed that what they often valued the most was the sense of solidarity with their Danish partners, knowing that organisations across the world were thinking of them, caring about them, and (within faith-based organisations) praying for them. These kind of opinions would be very hard to acquire through a survey.

**Added-value within a programme**

Added-value is often considered within specific programmes of work. Many programmes comprise multiple projects, which contribute to the overall programme goals. The organisation or organisations managing the programme carry out added-value activities that seek to ensure that the programme is more than just the sum of its parts. In other words, they seek to ensure that the programme’s impact is not just the total impact of the individual projects, but is boosted by added-value activities that help create synergies between different parts of the programme.

As with the previous section, some forms of added-value work may be intrinsic to a programme, and therefore need to be monitored and evaluated as core aspects of the programme. For example, a capacity strengthening programme would normally be expected to use a range of formal methodologies to assess changes in the capacity of supported partners. However, a programme aimed at supporting better health in communities, containing a few elements of technical capacity development, may have a much lighter-touch system.

Within many programmes, interviews or group discussions with partners are routinely used to work backwards from programme changes and discuss how those changes came about. This helps to explore the contribution of the NGO (or NGOs) managing the programme, above and beyond the funding it provides to partners.

Some NGOs also use qualitative M&E methods such as outcome harvesting or the most significant change (MSC) technique. These are designed to collect evidence of changes within identified areas of work. Areas of work could be defined to include changes resulting from added-value work, such as changes in partners’ capacity, or changes in the way their work is linked to the advocacy work of other agencies.

Surveys, on the other hand, are rarely used to assess added-value within programmes. This is because there are usually only a few partners, and it is not worth the effort of designing and implementing a survey. It is usually quicker and easier to interview partners individually or as a group.

In some circumstances, NGOs managing programmes develop results frameworks to capture added-value activities and changes, although this does not happen as often as it should. A typical programme may have a programmatic framework, and then a series of project results frameworks, often developed and managed by individual partners running projects (see diagram below).

Sometimes this means added-value activities, and resulting changes, are missed out because they do not appear either in the project results frameworks or in the programmatic results framework, which only looks at the ultimate changes designed to be addressed by the programme. A solution is to develop some simple indicators (or questions) to capture added-value work. These can either be placed in the programmatic results framework, or in a results framework specifically designed to address added-value elements of the programme.

Activity or output indicators for added-value work are easy to develop. They are also very useful, because they help NGOs and partners think through what added-value work is being undertaken.

**Added-value within a programme**

Typically, each project has its own results framework, which is managed by an implementing partner. There is also a programme-level results framework.

Often this results in a ‘missing’ results framework, as the activities and results of added-value work are not adequately captured. A solution is to develop some simple indicators to capture both added-value activities (A) and some of the initial changes resulting from these activities (B).

The trick when developing indicators of change is to capture changes that are more than just the activities carried out or outputs delivered, but represent intermediate changes that are not indistinguishable from the indicators used to capture the overall programmatic change.
Indicators of change at outcome (or impact level) may be a bit harder, as the ultimate indicators of added-value work are often the same as the programmatic indicators. For example, in a programme dealing with conflict resolution, the ultimate aim of encouraging partners to coordinate on advocacy work will be the same as the aim of the programme – to resolve conflicts. The trick therefore is to seek to develop indicators that can show the emerging changes resulting from added-value work which are the direct results of that work. Some simple examples are provided in the table above.

None of the different methods mentioned in this section are mutually exclusive. However, NGOs often have few resources to commit to monitoring and evaluating added-value work, and this needs to be recognised when planning an appropriate M&E approach.

### Partners’ added-value

Added-value, of course, does not work in one direction only. It can be useful (and also polite) to ask partners how they add value to the work of larger NGOs implementing programmes, or funding them through the aid chain. This is not a complicated exercise, and can be done via separate questions in a survey, or through interviews and discussions. However, it can be a genuine source of learning and inspiration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of added-value work</th>
<th>Possible indicators of change (outcomes)</th>
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| Facilitating synergies and cross learning within and between programmes or sectors | • # and description of lessons shared and/or applied with the programme  
• Extent to which lessons have been learned from outside the programme |
| Supporting networking between partners and/or other organisations at local, national, regional and international levels | • # of partners supported to join networks of like-minded organisations  
• Specific benefits partners have gained from engagement in new networks |
| Linking advocacy work between local, national and international levels, or across geographies | • # of times advocacy messages from local levels have been used to promote wider advocacy messages  
• # and description of cases where examples from projects have been used to promote wider advocacy efforts |
| Strengthening partners’ presence at national or international events, or supporting them to access national and international spaces in which [INGOs] work | • # of times partners are supported to attend and/or speak at national or international events or platforms  
• # and description of new spaces or events where partners have been included |
| Incorporating global best practice, such as new tools, approaches, methodologies, research or ways of working | • # and description of new or revised tools, approaches, methodologies or research used by partners  
• # and description of cases where adoption of new or revised tools, approaches or methodologies have led to improvements in the lives of supported communities (e.g. new approach to tackling malnutrition) |
| Resource mobilisation (e.g. helping partners identify new sources of funding or leverage existing funding streams) | • Amount of new funding leveraged by partners with a contribution from [NGO]  
• # of cases where partners have been invited to discuss potential funding with new donors or have adopted new sources of income. |
| Providing a degree of protection from threats or intimidation, or minimising risks. | • # and description of cases where partners have been supported to minimise risks or withstand threats / intimidation  
• Extent to which partners feel less threatened or more secure because of support provided by [NGO] |

For example, in the evaluation of Danish support to civil society mentioned previously, Southern partners were asked an open-ended question about how they added-value to the work of their Danish partners. The most common responses included:

- providing updated information on beneficiaries, areas of intervention and context situations;
- contributing to Danish NGOs’ institutional or strategic objectives;
- generating mutually beneficial learning and knowledge sharing;
- connecting Danish NGOs with other local organisations or networks through contacts and social networks;
- providing stories for fundraising (or for development education in Denmark);
- providing visibility and communication for Danish NGOs in-country;
- providing evidence for advocacy work or influencing international decision-making;
- piloting innovations to serve as a basis for learning and scaling up, or scaling out to other locations; and
- acting as an advocate or mediator for Danish NGOs with local communities.
Further reading and resources
Some of the methodologies used to monitor and evaluate different types of added-value work can be found by clicking on the links below.

M&E of capacity strengthening
M&E of advocacy
M&E of network development
M&E of research
M&E of pilot projects
M&E of training

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INTRAC is a specialist capacity building institution for organisations involved in international relief and development. Since 1992, INTRAC has contributed significantly to the body of knowledge on monitoring and evaluation. Our approach to M&E is practical and founded on core principles. We encourage appropriate M&E, based on understanding what works in different contexts, and we work with people to develop their own M&E approaches and tools, based on their needs.