

# Newsletter

August 2021



## Welcome to our August 2021 newsletter

In wealthy countries, the thoughts of many people are increasingly turning to a time beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. While numbers of cases and deaths continue to be troubling, successful vaccination programmes raise the possibility of a return to relative normality in countries like the UK. However, it is vital that we remember the terrible impact that the pandemic continues to have around the world. In many countries in the global South, vaccination rates are extremely low and an end to this disruption seems distant.

Given the enormous challenges posed by the pandemic, and by deeply concerning situations in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Hong Kong - to name just a few - the role of civil society is as vital as ever.

As INTRAC continues to work to support civil society in these challenging times, we have recently welcomed five new members to our Board of Trustees. The board will not only support the achievement of our priorities but also help us to address the cross-cutting question of diversity in our programme content, and this is the subject of our viewpoint article in this issue (page 2). In it, new board member Smruti Patel and our Training and E-Learning Officer Liezel Longboan discuss what INTRAC is doing to promote diversity and inclusion. You can read more about Smruti, and our other new Board members, in the Our People section (pages 8 and 9).

Elsewhere in this issue, Jeremy Astill-Brown provides a guest contribution on the challenge and privilege of undertaking a developmental evaluation (page 3), we provide updates on four recent pieces of work (pages 4 and 5), and we share new publications, including new Praxis Series and M&E Universe papers (page 6).

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## Reflecting on INTRAC's efforts on diversity and inclusion

Our lived experiences as women of colour and immigrants from Asia to the UK and working in the sector shapes our world view and interactions. Our commitment, contribution and efforts on improving inclusion and diversity in INTRAC and our wider work in strengthening civil society globally comes from those lived experiences. We strongly believe that voice, participation and power matter. Since its founding almost 30 years ago, INTRAC's mission has been to facilitate positive change through strengthening civil society by way of research, consultancy and training. We champion local organisations in the global South while working closely with Northern-based INGOs and donors. As we work externally with diverse groups of people and organisations, INTRAC have made early efforts internally to support diversity and inclusion through policies relating to Equal Opportunity and Dignity at Work.

A stronger commitment towards these values have become more pressing for the sector in recent years. The Back Lives Matter movement and calls to decolonise the aid sector present new opportunities to assess our priorities, to tackle racial inequality, our power dynamics and how we impact the sector and ultimately strengthen civil society globally. These far-reaching developments have made an impact among INTRAC staff and leadership this year. We started by actively reflecting on our own staff and governance structure.

In April, INTRAC's first ever Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working group was formed. In June, the staff undertook a process to reflect on our organisational values and identified diversity and inclusion as being one of those values. Our first EDI workshop made it clear that we are diverse as an organisation in terms of nationality, age and gender but that we are not diverse enough in terms of class, ethnic background or disability status. Reflecting on this, we have decided to do more to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation: by targeting more diverse demographics in recruiting staff; by including EDI within INTRAC's vision, mission and values, and by using more inclusive employment practices.

We recognise that governing boards also hold the power to influence the organisational mission, strategic directions, public image, and how funds are raised and allocated. Increasing diversity at the strategic level is advantageous for organisational decision making. We know that tone at the top matters, and that having a diverse and inclusive board also reflects the values we want to live by as an organisation.

This led to recently welcoming five new board members to reflect the diversity at the top, bringing in more diverse views and thinking. We know that it takes deliberate intention if we are to make progress on these issues. As the focus deepens from EDI to discussions of power in the aid sector, greater reflection and understanding of our power and privilege and an intersectional approach to dealing with equity, diversity, and inclusion is essential to make progress.

We are just at the beginning of a crucial process in our EDI efforts, but we feel energised by colleagues' openness to engage in difficult conversations. We look forward to the coming weeks and months ahead as we attempt to put into concrete action our EDI priorities. We are excited at the first steps that have already been taken by INTRAC but recognise that there is still a way to go.



**Smruti Patel** is a member of INTRAC's Board of Trustees. She joined the board in July 2020. [Find out more about Smruti here.](#)

**Liesel Longboan** is INTRAC's Training and E-learning Officer. She joined INTRAC in April 2019. [Find out more about Liesel here.](#)



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## Why it is a challenge and a privilege to undertake a developmental evaluation

I am part of an INTRAC team delivering an evaluation of a government donor grant to a faith-based development organisation. We proposed a “developmental evaluation” designed to help the organisation better understand their results and to maximise their effect. A developmental evaluation is primarily designed to support learning and management decision-making; and is particularly appropriate for projects or programmes working in complex or uncertain environments.

Two things about the process have been fascinating. One is how far outside the “normal” experience of evaluations our developmental approach has been for some, and the other is the role of politics. Politics conditions what people do, why they do it and how. Politics both sets up and removes the obstacles to progress that projects and programmes seek to tackle. To the extent that evaluations take politics into account, they usually focus on how programmes and projects have altered the incentives for good or bad behaviour. Both programme design and evaluations alike too often appear to assume that only the political landscape ahead of a programme counts. They rarely consider the view in the political rear-view mirror; the perceptions of the implementor (tending to assume that these are neutral); and almost never consider the political objectives of the donor.

This failure to think and act politically sets up a rather perverse incentive. Even in contexts widely acknowledged to be complex or challenging, programmes often see politics as something which gets in the way, rather than the bread and butter of everyday programmatic life. In pursuit of being apolitical, such programmes actually become sterile. All too often, programmes – and hence evaluations – do not explore how to shift the political dial to support positive change. Politics tends to be seen in the risk matrix rather than as an opportunity. Yet in seeking change in complex environments, decision makers and influencers are primary stakeholders. Strategies to engage them are just as important as strategies to represent the view and aspirations of the people and communities who are traditionally the focus of such programmes.

This raises questions about the nature of a developmental evaluation. Should it be a purely technical process, or should it represent a fusion of political and technical approaches? Is the purpose of such an evaluation to mark the implementing partners’ homework, or to help them better achieve their goals?

Without really intending this to be the case, we have found that our developmental evaluation has been – almost necessarily – “disruptive”. We have asked questions which have made people uncomfortable and questioned sacred cows across the board – often without even meaning to. We have been struck by how easily people can lose sight of why they do what they do. Seemingly straightforward questions about the nature of the problem, for whom it is an issue, why and what value the partnership offers to addressing it have left people feeling that we are criticising them, their choices and their actions. All of this is necessary, and – arrogantly – we think that donor and implementor alike will thank us in the end.

A developmental evaluation is not a licence to wreck and humiliate. It is an opportunity to be a critical friend and to help partners think through, understand and be able clearly to project their ambitions, choices and actions. The privilege of being allowed to conduct a developmental evaluation must be paid for with an approach which puts a human face on otherwise remote processes, and which builds a trusting relationship between evaluator and evaluated.



**Jeremy Astill-Brown** is part of INTRAC’s network of independent consultants. A former UK diplomat specialising in security and development issues, he is increasingly focussed on helping projects and programmes operating in politically complex and/or insecure environments generate and use evidence of the changes which they support in order to demonstrate their value.

# Our work



## Strategy Development for the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims



Rod MacLeod is supporting the [Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims \(KRCT\)](#) to develop its new strategic plan. KRCT was founded in 1999 with the mission to provide treatment and rehabilitation for Kosova torture victims following the Kosovo war (1998-1999). It has grown significantly in recent years, both in programmes and staffing.

KRCT now stands at a crossroads. There are different directions it can take to achieve its mission. There is also a sense that now is a good time to make strategic choices, driven not by a crisis, but by a range of opportunities that are presented and the evolving context. There is an appetite to make the changes necessary in order to take KRCT to the next level.

The strategic planning process has started with initial consultations and a survey of staff and board members. It will be followed by individual interviews, leading into workshops to define KRCT's immediate and longer-term trajectory as an organisation, agree the main elements of the new strategy and set out an operational plan.

This will feed into another consultancy (being facilitated by another consultant), which will look at structural questions.

## Providing monitoring and evaluation support to the Atlas Alliance

INTRAC have recently started an M&E support contract with [The Atlas Alliance](#). The Atlas Alliance is an umbrella organisation consisting of Norwegian organisations of people with disabilities, parents and patients that are involved in international work. INTRAC is providing support to their Together for Inclusion (TOFI) programme, a four-year programme implemented by a consortia of Norwegian INGOs with a focus on five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRAC's role will see them guiding and supporting Atlas' M&E staff over the next nine months to roll out a monitoring and learning system for the TOFI programme. So far INTRAC have helped Atlas' staff to conduct a needs assessment of programme partners' monitoring knowledge and needs, to develop training videos on the monitoring process and tools and to respond to partners' questions on the monitoring system.

In the next 6 months INTRAC will give further support and guidance on data analysis and learning, disaggregation of data and specific tailored support to the different programme country teams. INTRAC's work will be led by Senior MEL Consultant Richard Ponsford.



the  
**atlas**  
alliance

global support to  
disabled people

## Discussing how to increase the effectiveness of partner capacity strengthening during a Bond Partnership Approaches Group meeting

Invest more vs. let go: what works when it comes to partner capacity strengthening? This was the topic for the most recent [Bond Partnership Approaches Learning Group](#) meeting which was co-facilitated by Lucy Morris from INTRAC and Ian de Villiers from World Vision, and took place in April 2021.

The meeting featured presentations from Concern Pakistan and Toybox about their experiences, as well as peer inputs from approximately 35 INGO staff.

Suggestions from participants to improve the quality of partner capacity strengthening, included:

- More advocacy to institutional donors about the impact of passing risks down to partners, as this results in compliance requirements dominating ‘capacity strengthening’ agendas
- External advocacy with donors and supporters, and internal advocacy with leadership of INGOs on the value of capacity development support, and communicating this more clearly
- Disconnecting partner capacity strengthening support from short-term project funding, recognising that the timeframe for organisational change requires a longer-term approach
- Instead of either a) investing more time and resources in capacity strengthening or b) disengaging in order to enable partners to set their own agenda and pace for organisational change, to do both e.g. to invest more over a longer period of time and be willing to let go of control and of setting the agenda for change for national partners.

Lucy has now stepped back as co-chair for the group after five years, having supported its transition from a small DFID-funded PPA Partnership Learning Group with around 30 members, to a Bond Partnership Learning Group of 370 members and rising. Lucy is excited to see the group continue to grow in the safe hands of co-chair Brian Standley at CAFOD, and a newly reinvigorated Steering Group!

## Preparing for the early closure of The Development Alternative



DEVELOPMENT  
ALTERNATIVE

The Development Alternative (TDA) programme uses new approaches to strengthen the role of young people in development processes. It does this through a youth-led accountability model, as well as support to youth civil society organisations.

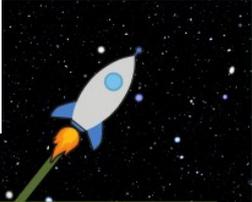
The Development Alternative is funded under the FCDO’s UK Aid Connect funding stream. Unfortunately, it was one of the many programmes affected by the recent cuts to UK aid budgets. As a result the programme will be coming to an early close in December 2021.

In our role as the MEL partner within the TDA consortium, INTRAC is leading an exit strategy process. This has involved holding two workshops and a interviews with each consortium member organisation and the in-country delivery teams. Through these we have captured the varying priorities and perspectives on how the programme should close responsibly, what we would like to sustain, and what we need to implement to achieve that. INTRAC has also put its [previous work on responsible exit](#) to good use, drawing upon experiences and processes to facilitate the development of exit principles and longer-term sustainability plans.

Though there is of course sadness among the TDA team about the withdrawal of funding, there remains much optimism about what can be sustained, learned, and shared over the final few months.

# Publications and blogs

## New M&E Universe papers on research, pilot projects and added value



### M&E OF ADDED-VALUE

Donors or governments often choose to channel funds through large non-governmental organisations (NGOs) because of their perceived added value. However, NGOs tend 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.

**Key messages from this research paper**

- To describe the contribution of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to development work in the aid chain (see diagram below)
- To describe the contribution of international NGOs to development work in the aid chain

**Added value within the aid chain**

One of the main reasons why donors or governments choose to channel funds through large NGOs, or associated private sector management companies, rather than going

### M&E OF RESEARCH

Social development research is often designed to influence organisational policies or practices, or contribute to changed behaviour. It is assessed according to different criteria than academic research. In larger research projects and programmes, monitoring and evaluation needs to cover multiple levels from research management and governance through to uptake, usage and impact.

**Key messages from this research paper**

- Research is included in evaluation when it is a project or programme, or part of a broader activity. It is included in the scope of communication and organisational monitoring and evaluation when it is designed to influence organisational policies or practices, or contribute to changed behaviour.
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### M&E OF PILOT PROJECTS

NGOs often carry out pilot projects to test new approaches, or see whether they work in new contexts. Projects are closely monitored and evaluated in order to adjust, replicate and/or scale up work later on. Monitoring and evaluation is conducted very differently at different stages of a pilot project. CDDs that specialise in supporting innovation need M&E systems that are capable of tracking multiple pilot projects.

**Key messages from this paper**

- Pilot projects are designed to test out whether or not something works, or whether it can be applied to a new context. They aim to replicate or scale up work at a later stage. These projects are sometimes about pilot projects or pilot studies, but there is no widespread agreement on the precise terminology used. Some of the terms used within this paper are explained in the Appendix (Appendix 1 from 20th June 2021).
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In July 2021, INTRAC added a further three papers to the M&E Universe - our free, online resource for monitoring and evaluation practitioners. The new papers form a part of the M&E of Development Approaches sub-section, and focus on the M&E of research, pilot projects, and added value. The papers were written by Nigel Simister, together with Rachel Hayman and Dan James and with input from Alison Napier, Anne Garbutt, and Rod MacLeod. Specific credits and further information about the contents of the papers can be [found in our news story](#). With these additions, the total number of papers in the M&E Universe stands at 116, with another small batch of papers to be added later in 2021.

If you are new to the M&E Universe, the [project page on the INTRAC website](#) provides a quick-start guide.

Praxis Series Paper No. 13  
June 2021

Lucy Morris  
With Beena George, Cuthbert Gondwe, Rick James, Robin Mauney and Deepak D Tamang

**intrac**  
for civil society

**EveryChild.**

Is there lasting change, five years after EveryChild's exit?

Lessons in designing programmes for lasting impact

## Praxis Series Paper No. 13: Is there lasting change, five years after EveryChild's exit?

In the latest instalment in INTRAC's long-running Praxis Series of papers, Lucy Morris and co-authors Beena George, Cuthbert Gondwe, Rick James, Robin Mauney and Deepak D Tamang assess the situation five years after EveryChild closed down and exited from all of their international partnerships.

Praxis Series Paper No. 13 summarises and analyses the situation in four countries (Cambodia, India, Malawi and Nepal) five years after exit, and provides glimpses of EveryChild's lasting legacy as well as exploring implications for other international development actors wanting to design programmes that have a lasting impact following a responsible exit.

The paper is [available to download now](#), as is the recent Praxis Series Paper No. 12 - written by Rick James and focused [on leadership succession with an emphasis on Ethiopia](#).

# INTRAC training

INTRAC is currently accepting applications for three upcoming online courses. Remember that employees of eligible organisations can apply to take advantage of our Training Access Scholarship.

## Online Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Online, 22 September - 28 October 2021

Course fee: £750

INTRAC's most popular online course to date, this course will guide you through the key aspects of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), helping you to build effective MEL practices into your work. Designed for those new to the field as well as for more experienced staff who had to learn by doing, this course covers all the basics of M&E, from jargon busting to choosing indicators, collecting and analysing data, as well as reporting and learning.

*"A comprehensive MEL course conducted by pleasant and professional MEL practitioners! I also found the peer-to-peer learning during the activities highly rewarding. Overall, an excellent course!"*

– Participant feedback from the June 2021 course

## Online Advocacy Strategy and Influencing Skills

Online, 19 October - 7 December 2021

Course fee: £750

This course will introduce participants to the core skills needed to influence powerful stakeholders and policy processes in a range of contexts. It also gives participants a thorough understanding of how to develop and monitor effective advocacy strategies, from power analysis through to developing a theory of change for advocacy, planning the advocacy cycle, and working on key advocacy-related skills. The course has 8 weekly modules, combining 6 live sessions with independent learning.

*"This is probably the best professional development course I have ever done. The quality of Helen's teaching was outstanding, and she engaged us throughout the course."*

– Participant feedback from the January 2021 course

## Online Monitoring and Evaluation Systems (Advanced)

Online, 10 November - 1 December 2021

Course fee: £550

Designed for more experienced M&E professionals, this advanced course aims to provide you with the knowledge and skills to help you develop an effective M&E system for your project, programme or organisation. The course will set out the key components of an M&E system, how to make decisions on what information to collect, how to summarise and aggregate that information, and how M&E systems differ for projects, complex programmes and organisations.

*"I think this course really filled the void in the MEAL sector, to support people in the hard task of developing organizational M&E system. I appreciated the mix of individual assignments, working groups (triads), live sessions and mentoring."*

– Participant feedback from the January 2021 course



## INTRAC brings new voices to its Board

In July 2021, INTRAC welcomed five new trustees who joined our Board. These experienced individuals bring valuable perspectives from global civil society to INTRAC as we adapt our strategy and ways of working to achieve greater local leadership. Our current board members and staff look forward to working closely with them.

As INTRAC approaches its 30th anniversary later in 2021, and as the civil society sector continues to experience an unprecedented period of upheaval and change, our Board of Trustees will be critical in ensuring we are agile and adaptive in the evolving context.

In addition to their critical role in achieving INTRAC's operational priorities in 2021-22, our Board will also help us to address the cross-cutting questions of diversity in our programme content and our role in the shift the power movement within development.



[Alfred Brian Agaba](#) currently serves as Managing Director and Managing Consultant of ACLAIM Africa Limited, based in Kampala, Uganda. He has a profound enthusiasm for diagnosing leadership and management challenges in organisations and professionally guiding them to a desired future.

*“What an exciting moment to be joining the INTRAC Board of Trustees! The mission of strengthening the civil society, especially in the global South, coupled with the people-centred solutions facilitated by INTRAC using collaborative approaches fully resonate with my personal aspirations and philosophy.”*



[Suzanne Hammad](#) a British-Palestinian and has lived and worked in Jordan, Jerusalem, Egypt, the UK, and is currently based in Qatar. She has over 20 years' experience across several countries of the Middle East and North Africa region conceptualizing and leading on social and policy research, programme evaluations, and community empowerment projects. She is currently an Independent Consultant and Adjunct Lecturer of Sociology.

*“Civil society is thriving and re-examining its role and power in the MENA region and elsewhere, increasingly unafraid to speak truth to power and taking on a stronger role. It is indeed an honour to have been appointed to serve on INTRAC's board – an organization I hold with much respect.”*



[Lily Maćków-McGuire](#) has worked in international development for five years. She specialises in designing, delivering, and scaling government-funded, multi-million-pound programmes that aim to readdress power imbalance within the development sector. Since 2019, she has led the implementation of Restless Development's flagship youth programme, the Development Alternative.

*“It is a privilege to join the INTRAC board at this critical juncture within the sector, where power dynamics, neo-colonialism and racism are more apparent than ever. I look forward to working with INTRAC and tackling these challenges head on.”*



**Smruti Patel** has ten years of management experience from the business sector and has been working in the humanitarian and development sector for 25 years. Currently she is the Co-Director of Global Mentoring Initiative. She is involved in co-creating spaces to accompany international organisations and donors in the change processes for better partnering and collaborations.

*“It is a pleasure to join the INTRAC board and work with other trustees and staff to increase its reach to support local and national organisations.”*



**Charles Kojo Vandyck** is a social justice activist and thought leader with experience in strengthening civil society resilience, sustainability, and civic leadership. He serves as the head of the Capacity Development Unit at the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) in Accra, Ghana.

*“It will be a pleasure to contribute my experience, thought leadership and networks to position INTRAC as a responsive and nurturing global civil society resource in this rapidly changing world.”*

**INTRAC’s interim Chief Executive, Peter Sargent**, says of the new appointments: “INTRAC has always played the role as a catalyst of change for civil society. The combined background and experience of INTRAC trustees represents a significant step forward in helping INTRAC to deliver our mission of influencing positive change for civil society and to work in solidarity with all stakeholders, particularly in the South, to overcome poverty and injustice.”

**Carolyn Miller, Chair of the Board of Trustees**, says: “Our new trustees have already made a significant contribution to INTRAC. It was inspiring and enjoyable to chair the recent meeting of our expanded board. We all benefitted from fresh thinking which will help the board team become more effective as we steer INTRAC forwards.”

## **INTRAC is recruiting: Director – Consultancy, Impact and Influence**

An exciting opportunity to join the INTRAC team has opened up. INTRAC is seeking to recruit for the role of **Director - Consultancy, Impact and Influence**. The closing date for applications to this role is Sunday, 5 September 2021.

The purpose of the role is to provide strategic leadership, management and development of INTRAC’s consultancy & research services to deliver positive impact for civil society organisations, in line with INTRAC’s strategic priorities. This is a permanent role, subject to a six-month probationary period.

For more information on this role including a full job description and details on the application process, [please see our recruitment notice on the INTRAC website](#).



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