Toward an Integral Monitoring and Evaluation

Finding Ways to Assess Interior and Exterior Change in Sustainable Development in a Case Study in Cusco, Peru.

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Part Two: Integral Action Research in Peru
**Background**

As mentioned in Part One, the trends in capacity development in the larger field of international development depict a story of the maturing of experience towards more complex, comprehensive modes of developing capacity. Recent initiatives in capacity development seek to include a focus on both individuals and organizations, as well as the “soft” and “hard” capacities associated with sustainable development work. In particular, the Canadian NGO One Sky-The Canadian Institute for Sustainable Living has used an Integral Approach to capacity development in their three-year CIDA Voluntary Sector Fund project in Peru, with a capacity development focus on the Peruvian partner organization, *Asociacion para la Conservacion de la Cuenca Amazonica* (ACCA). One Sky’s baseline assessment oriented their Integral capacity development approach in four quadrants, each with one or two areas of focus. These are depicted in the figure 7.

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Figure 7: An Integral Approach to capacity development includes both the soft (interior) and hard (exterior) capacities of individuals and organizations that contribute to self change, behaviour change, cultural change, and systems change. These “four quadrants” are described theoretically in Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory and were applied to capacity development in One Sky baseline needs assessment and subsequent capacity development initiatives.

As the One Sky-ACCA Peru Project began, researchers at Drishti - Centre for Integral Action questioned what type of Monitoring and Evaluation would best be put in place to adequately and rigorously measure and assess change in “all quadrants.” While it is fairly easy to measure objective, observable changes, such as changes in skills, behaviours, and systems functions, the subjective changes are less easily measured. However, this does not mean that those interior changes cannot be measured, but that to do so requires drawing on the insights and research from different disciplines, such as from developmental psychology and social psychology. Many of these have their own
sets of methodologies and validity claims that do indeed provide for rigorous assessment.

The general premise behind our thinking was that, if practitioners in the field of international sustainable development engage subjective, interior domains of change, such as shifts in awareness, values, and worldviews, in addition to other objective, exterior changes, they will increasingly need rigorous and accessible ways to monitor and evaluate both these interior and exterior changes.

Using the Peru Project of One Sky and ACCA as a case study, the Drishti research team combined participatory action research with Integral Research to identify what array of methodologies would be need to capture subjective, inter-subjective and objective evidence for monitoring and evaluating capacity development. A key part of this included identifying criteria and indicators for Integral capacity development. These will be used to evaluate and monitor the One Sky-ACCA Integral capacity development approach currently being used to support and enhance interventions for environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods in Peru.

The Drishti research team sees that without an M&E framework that is congruent with the integral capacity development approach being used, little can be rigorously known about the effectiveness of the approach being taken by partners of the Peru Project. Both the selection of criteria and indicators as well as the methodologies used to assess and evaluate these, need to be reflective of both the soft and hard capacities sought in this approach. In other words, the capacity development that engages interior capacities or aptitudes in individuals and organizations requires assessment methodologies that somehow capture and measure those interior aspects. Similarly, the capacity development that fosters exterior changes such as new practical skills and technical know-how requires assessment methodologies that capture and reflect those exterior aspects. Thus, the project focused on:

1. Identifying what criteria and indicators are needed for assessing the impact of this integral capacity development approach, as well as
2. Identifying what methodologies need to therefore be integrated in the assessment itself.

Through this work, we developed an Integral Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, that we field-tested in Peru and which is included in Part Three. This Part Two focuses in detail on the research itself, particularly on the methodological design and research findings. For those less interested in this research, please skip to Part Three.

Drishti was well situated to carry out this project, with its background in integral community development, research, and writing, and its previous experience with IDRC-funded projects. Drishti’s two primary researchers, Gail Hochachka and Sandra Thomson, have extensive work experience in Latin America and are both fluent in Spanish. Over the year of the project, we often found this to be a challenging research question. However, on numerous occasions we also reflected on how it has been exhilarating to be able to contribute something that we feel is meaningful to the fields of sustainable development, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation, and Integral Theory.
Research Objectives

The three central research objectives were:

1. To use action research to identify criteria and indicators, and a methodological framework to assess, evaluate and monitor an Integral Capacity Development approach using the Peru Project as a case study.

2. To carry out three workshops with partner organizations in Peru about these criteria and indicators, and to begin to collaboratively design an assessment and evaluation plan for the Mapacho River Watershed.

3. To synthesize the results of the project to share with project partners and to disseminate widely with other development organizations.

Activities of the project included:

1. Assessing current capacity development approaches for how they include both the “hard” capacities of technical, educational, practical and economic skills as well as the “soft” capacities of ethics, interpersonal, and emotional intelligences that are increasingly necessarily in a complex, dynamic development context.

2. Identifying criteria and indicators for the various scales, components and timeframes to assess an integral capacity development approach over the three-years of the Peru Mapacho River Watershed Environmental Capacity Development Project.

3. Delivering three workshops with ACCA and One Sky field staff and community leaders on these criteria and indicators of integral capacity development, and how to assess, evaluate and monitor over time.

4. Compiling and synthesizing research results for electronic dissemination over the internet to other development practitioners and organizations.

Methodological Design

Two general streams of research inquiry framed the research methodology, namely, action research and integral research. Action research (Reason and Bradbury, 2001) approaches research in a way that includes those who implement the study as well as those put the results of the study into action. This places research in service of practical use, and it is often used in international development. Integral research (Wilber, 2000; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2006; Hochachka, 2008) is a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to investigating phenomena, that draws on at least six lines of inquiry. (See Journal of Integral Theory and Practice, 2008, (3)1 and (3)2 for more details and examples of Integral Research). These two research approaches oriented how we selected our specific methodologies and also reflected our assumptions about research in international development. Two such assumptions are: that research should be for action and that the most useful research is as comprehensive as possible, thus inspiring us to use mixed methods. In other words, the action research oriented our stance to how, why, and for what we engage research, and integral research provided a comprehensive framework of six lines of inquiry.
These “lines of inquiry” that we engaged in the project explore the four key domains of capacity development described above (i.e., systemic change, behavioral change, cultural change, and personal change):

1. *reflective inquiry* (which relates with self-reflection and interior dynamics)
2. *developmental inquiry* (which relates with values, attitudes, and self-identity)
3. *interpretive inquiry* (which relates with participation, local meaning, and cultural relevance)
4. *ethno-methodological inquiry* (which relates with social dynamics, social discourse and worldviews)
5. *empirical inquiry* (which relates with behavioral change and change in land use practices)
6. *systems inquiry* (which relates to ecosystems, socio-political systems, economic systems, communications systems)

We focused more on the four lines of inquiry that particularly sought to understand cultural and personal change (numbers 3-6 listed above), since our research objective was to investigate how development practitioners can rigorously monitor and evaluate interior changes, in addition to exterior changes that tend to be easier to measure. Our research question carried the assumption that there is sufficient capacity already in international development to measure exterior (behavioural and systems) change using empirical, observation techniques for M&E (numbers 1 and 2 above). Perhaps further refinement of skills to do so are needed, but in general that is less a burning question at present. Our methodology made room for the empirical and systems inquiry, as we do see these to be crucially important, but we did focus our efforts more in the last four lines of inquiry directed towards assessing interior changes.

These lines of inquiry are depicted in figure 8. In the following section, each line of inquiry, their specific methodologies, and the particular validity claims for each are described in detail.
By including in one’s focus these three domains of reality, and drawing upon as many forms of research inquiry as possible, a more complete and balanced understanding of the research topic emerges. Here, our question focused on how organizations can measure effectiveness of integral capacity development.

Figure 8: Domains and Forms of Inquiry included in Integral Research. This figure explains the refinement of previous integral research (see Hochachka, 2005, 2008), that combined methodologies from Personal, Interpersonal, and Practical domains of community development, to here draw upon six different forms of research inquiry each disclosing unique and nuanced information about these three domains of reality. With more domains included in the focus, and with more forms of inquiry employed, a more complete and balanced understanding of the research topic emerges.
Key Overall Characteristics

There are some key overall characteristics to our research methods and analytical techniques worth mentioning here.

First, we intentionally employed the very methodologies we sought to include in our Integral Monitoring and Evaluation framework, to field-test these methods and also model their use with One Sky-ACCA. As a result, every methodology we used was later explicated into a larger framework for Integral M&E, and each person involved in the action research had had a chance to see these methodologies used in practice. This was a central aspect to our methodological design.

Secondly, as figure 8 and 9 suggest, it will become evident that our methodological approach sought to include first-person perspectives (via reflective exercises), second-person perspectives (through dialogue, focus groups and interviews), and third-person perspectives (with observation techniques). We see this to be a strength of mixed methods approaches to research.

Another key aspect of this methodological design sought to debunk the myth that subjective changes cannot be empirically measured, when in fact that is precisely how psychologists, for example, carry out assessments. While we did employ reflective methods for subjective assessment, we also sought to use more empirical, observational methodologies to assess subjectivity (that is, using third-person perspectives to understand the first-person experience). This is drawn from psychology’s approaches to measure these interior dimensions of human experience. We did this both in our use of developmental assessments used to assess individuals’ meaning-making, as well as the five-diagram assessment of organizational culture. While we did not heavily use the developmental assessment of individuals’ meaning-making (since that requires more intensive education on developmental psychology), we did use the five-diagram organizational assessment in every focus group. We found that, even though this is obviously one of the more complex aspects of this project, every focus group readily understood the five-diagram assessment tool and were able to assess the organization based on these five stages of participation.

An associated aspect of this included finding a balance and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. For example, our focus groups drew heavily on qualitative methodology, yet our analysis was both qualitative and quantitative. We mined through...
the transcriptions, drew out quotations, coded themes, and quantified the most important themes. This enables us to draw from these focus groups excellent qualitative anecdotes as well as hard numbers on what themes were most attended to in the course of discussion.

Below, we provide a more detailed description of the methods used and the validity they brought to the study, examples of what the research activities included, and a discussion about what found.

**Zone 1—Experiential or Reflective Inquiry**

Various Zone 1 techniques are used by both researchers to access our own interior experience and understanding of the research topic. This included practicing mindfulness and reflection. This also included a perspective-taking practice, journaling, and meditative inquiry.

For example, Gail Hochachka explains, “Prior to, after, and during research activities, I try to practice self-inquiry, to notice what is arising in my experience, to reveal assumptions I am holding, and to settle into mindfulness. I then journal or mentally-note my findings. Usually this influences the research process I am engaged in, helping me to ask questions in a new way or to access a new perspective on the research.”

This type of self-inquiry becomes a “bearing in mind” of the research questions, such that information on the questions can come forth through reflection. An example of this is how, as both researchers engaged in reflective inquiry during informal moments such as going for walks or having coffee, new insights arose on which direction to take the research.

Sandra Thomson gives a more comprehensive explanation of this process:

> At any given time during the research process, I moved in and out of different scales and "views" related to the project. These are:

1) Always trying to see the situation as it truly is on all levels, not as I'd like it to be (which was one of the biggest challenges with our IDRC "agenda"/needs versus ACCA's needs); constantly asking "what would be of most service here at this time?" Where is ACCA at, what would most serve them right now? Where am I/are we pushing versus allowing?

2) Inquiring into the moment by questioning: How can I check to make sure what is arising is not simply meeting my own egoic needs? Holding the long view and the meta picture, while recognizing the need for solid first baby steps.

3) Constantly moving between what's arising for me (small self Sandra), bigger Sandra in service; what's arising for Gail (small and big), what was in Mike's view (as the Project Manager holding a different perspective), what was required by CIDA, what was in Ronald's view (both as the holder of ACCA's vision and needs and expectations, as well as in his relationship to the project, his role), other ACCA employees in their roles; and
4) Observing and reflecting on the tangible dynamics between all of these scales, views and people, as well as the subtle energetics.

In terms of how she accesses and captures the data from this reflective inquiry, she explains:

I capture thoughts sometimes in a journal (this tends to be more personal related to the various dimensions of myself and how I’m engaging, where and why am I triggered, how might I do/be things differently). During interviews, I hold attention when it is my turn, such that I remain very aware that the person being interviewed so that he/she feels attended to and heard by one of use at least, and really energetically hold them in high esteem. I also write down thoughts, reflections, notes and ideas, suggestions, further questions that arise during any activity, and then I will bring them up later in the interview or discuss them later with the research team.

The validity that these methodologies bring to the research include surfacing assumptions, identifying biases, sourcing qualitative (or “thick”) descriptions, and accessing intuitive ways of knowing (that are then triangulated by methodologies from other zones). This type of inquiry assists in “studying the ways in which things appear to consciousness and, therefore, also the way in which consciousness is structured such that things appear to it in the ways that they do” (Husserl). Finally, research that is paying attention to subjective experience also illuminates a key aspect of this study, namely: through what eyes do I see; through what consciousness-lens do I engage in these lines of inquiry? In this way, this inquiry helped the researchers to identify what was challenging about the project and to notice when their own frustrations with coordinating between several organizations were occluding the research process.

**Zone 2 – Developmental Inquiry**

This line of inquiry was used to better understand the individual’s interior, such as worldviews, morals, self-identity, and meaning-making, drawing upon research regarding stages of developmental psychology (Piaget, Kegan, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Cook-Greuter, to name a few). Wilber has integrated the research findings of many of these researchers, and uses the term “altitude” as a general marker for level of consciousness, where “stage” is used by the individual researchers in reference to a particular aspect of consciousness under study (such as moral, cognitive, or ego development).

We did not use the formal and advanced methodologies, such as Cook-Greuter’s Sentence Completion Test (SCT) or Kegan’s Subject-Object Interview. Rather used a field-based, informal developmental inquiry, such as noticing certain comments and statements and the possible meaning-making systems that gave rise to them. This is more akin to the research strategy outlined by Thomas Jordan (1998). For example, we noted during interviews how certain statements suggested a modern, worldcentric worldview, or rational level of consciousness (orange altitude, in Integral Theory), and later triangulated this between researchers and other individuals associated with the project. This was essentially the use of critical subjectivity; that is, noticing patterns in
how people responded as they did and tracking the use of certain phrases and sentences.

A key component of this is noticing and questioning interviewees on how they came to their responses. For example, by asking the question, “why do you believe that?” can produce a chain of justifications that helped to elucidate the subject’s meaning-making about how he or she arrives at his or her response. Often, we asked a question in a different way, or included content in our questions that are developmentally-informed, so to help to confirm or reject our initial suppositions. For example, at times we reoriented questions to the interviewee such that he/she has to adjust his/her personal perspective to take the role of other or to put themselves in a different context, and then the interviewers would track his or her ability to do so. For example, in some cases, we would present both sides of an either/or dilemma in the question, to see which side of the dilemma the interviewee would rest, or to see if the interviewee could hold a both/and perspective. In other situations, in order to crosscheck an initial felt-sense of an individual’s altitude, we asked a question that would be an evident “cold button” for that particular altitude, and then tracked how his or her response reacted to or transcended/included that statement.

This developmental inquiry helps us to understand very generally the altitudes that individuals and the social group were coming from. By two or more researchers implementing this development inquiry, we are able to triangulate together and also go over recorded and transcribed interviews with a view to meaning-making structures.

It was in using a zone four, *ethnomethodological inquiry*, in the focus groups we managed to identify the social center of gravity of various operations of the organization, which is described below.

The validity of this developmental inquiry includes the depth of understanding of where individuals were coming from, a clearer sense of the individuals’ center of gravity (even in very approximate and general sense) that helped to situate people’s statements appropriately and tailor our subsequent engagement with those individuals to be in more resonance with these perspectives.

**Zone 3—Interpretative Inquiry**

In the research, we drew heavily off an interpretive inquiry, employing zone 3 methodologies including focus groups and key informant interviews.

We conducted four focus groups with the key teams within ACCA, namely: 1) the technical workers (reforestation, microenterprise, agronomists); 2) conservation staff (working directly in communities); 3) key coordinators (Program Coordinator and Communications Coordinator); and 4) leaders (Director and Executive Director). We tailored the questions posed in the focus groups to be relevant to their focus and tasks, yet all focus group questions followed this general line of questioning:

- What is your work? What is your particular vantage point in the organization?
- What domains of change does it involve? (referring to the quadrants)
- How do you know you are effecting change in that domain?
- What criteria and indicators might be useful in that? Specifically:
  - How is your work going in participation with communities?
o How does your work influence interior changes in individuals, such as values, worldviews, motivation, and consciousness.

For these latter two specific questions, that follow up on previous capacity building process initiated in September 2007, we framed the focus group discussion around five diagrams of triangles representing the ways the organization engages the community in participation. This used a third-person tool to assess interior cultural dynamics of the organization, and we have included a discussion on this in the next section. It was a methodology used that included both zone 3 and 4; that is, both a third-person tool to look at the culture of the organization, as well as a second-person process to discuss and interpret this as a group. See below for more details.

All focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded for main themes, and analyzed. Notes from interviews and focus group sessions were also later analyzed. Using an excel spreadsheet we could extricate key quotes from the main themes, as well as quantify which themes were most pertinent to the research. This use and analysis of focus groups demonstrated how this type of methodology can be used to generate both qualitative and quantitative data.

The validity brought to the project from this set of methodologies is that they give voice to the people working in these organizations and communities, interpretative discussion can also contribute to emancipation (e.g. naming the world is to engage in it), mutual understanding, and “buy-in” from participants.

**Zone 4—Ethno-methodological Inquiry**

The two methodologies, discussed in turn below, used for this ethnomethodological inquiry included participant-observation and notably a tool to assess social development, or more specifically the social center of gravity. This was a method that engaged a third-person perspective by ACCA personnel to view ACCA’s social center of gravity in relation to how the organization participates with communities.

For those unfamiliar with the term social center of gravity, this comes from the discipline of social and cultural psychology in which researchers seek to understand how a group’s social discourse changes over time. Unlike self-development, which has been found to occur in sequential stages that cannot be skipped (i.e. you cannot become a physicist before learning how to talk), social center of gravity can skip stages. Usually the social center of gravity follows the average stage of self-development of the individuals that make up that social group, which is why it can look like the social group develops through stages. However, this is really only true across historical time, such as studied by Gebser (1985) in *The Ever-present Origin* and Wilber (1981) in *Up From Eden*. In our research, we referred to these as stages of social discourse. These stages generally follow the average level of consciousness of the individuals in the group, but we were actually measuring the way that consciousness influences the social discourse, which is why we opted for that term. (See Wilber’s Excerpt D (2002) for more information on this.)

Using participant-observer methodology allows a view and insight into important processes for understanding both the context of sustainable development and the
receptivity to capacity building, which may not necessarily be arrived at by the other methodologies. The research team was intimately woven with One Sky and ACCA, attending various meetings, strategic planning, and field activities. Notes from participant-observation activities were reviewed and analyzed, and findings drawn into the research process.

During our first phase of fieldwork, our research team and associates developed a third-person tool of assessing social center of gravity. It is based on our collective field experience of working with NGOs and communities over 10-15 years, as well as roughly based on a theory of participation types. The five diagram in figure 10 were created to represent five ways that an organization participates with communities, based on five stages of social discourse ranging from magic (red altitude), mythic (amber altitude), rational (orange altitude), pluralistic (green altitude), to integral (teal altitude). This is also loosely framed on participation typologies listed here: passive participation; participation in information giving; participation by consultation; participation for material incentives; functional participation; interaction participation; self-mobilization (Source: Pretty (1994) adapted from Adnan et al (1992)).

This five-diagram model was used in the focus groups to engage a discussion on stages of participation and social discourse of ACCA in relation to participation in communities, as well as to try out this as an evaluation methodology.

We found that across each of the four focus groups, the participants of each focus group

Figure 10: These triangles depict five developmental stages of social discourse (coming from different worldviews, or altitudes of consciousness) regarding participation between the organization (triangle 1) and the community (triangle 2). We presented these as horizontal types, although through the discussion participants themselves often said that they were in fact developmental stages. From left to right, following the colors Wilber uses for altitudes, each is described by a sample quote that might issue from that stage: magic worldview/red altitude (“my agenda/organization is the only one that counts”), mythic worldview/amber altitude (“our organization has the right way of doing things, but we’ll give hand-outs to the community”); rational worldview/orange altitude (“we can consider and appreciate the community has its own agenda, and we’ll engage in participation, but it is more consultation, since we really don’t give up much of our agenda, being as it is based on true expertise”); pluralistic worldview/green altitude (“we so consider and appreciate the community’s agenda that we’ll give up our own; in fact, that itself becomes our agenda which is often implicitly imposed on the community”); integral worldview/teal altitude (“we see that both the organization and the community have an agenda/perspective that is valid and that the shared terrain (small overlapping triangle) does not have to be the lowest common denominator, rather a wider, deeper perspective co-arises that neither individual entity can see on its own.”) This set of five diagrams was created by the Drishti research team and One Sky partners in a meeting in Cusco. It is based on our collective field experience as well as roughly based on a theory of types of participation. The typologies are listed here, with their links to our triangle model: passive participation (amber); participation in information giving (early orange); participation by consultation (orange); participation for material incentives (orange); functional participation (mature orange); interaction participation (green); self-mobilization (mature green) (Source: Pretty (1994) adapted from Adnan et al (1992)).
independently arrived at the same conclusion: that ACCA’s current way of engaging the community centered around the third diagram (reflecting an orange altitude, early worldcentric worldview, and likely some combination “participation by consultation”, “participation for material incentives”, and “functional participation”). Also congruent across the focus groups was the conclusion that previously ACCA exhibited a way of engaging in participation that was more similar to the first or second diagram, and that the organization had a vision of the fifth diagram working with the communities.

The validity gained from this group of methodologies include the inter-subjective discourse and observation of group dynamics over a developmental spectrum. Engaging this as a discussion gave us the ability to check the meanings of people’s comments and to demonstrate a way to measure and assess interior changes in the social discourse and culture of an organization over time. It helped us to make explicit and measurable what is arising in the group dynamic, such as the implicit rules, norms, social discourse, politics, beliefs, cultural traits that are at play.

**Zone 6 and 8—Empirical Inquiry and Systems Inquiry**

While we drew upon various observational techniques, this research did not strongly emphasize zones 6 and 8, for the reason that this project sought to identify and field-test the Left-hand quadrants methodologies for M&E. However, *empirical and systems inquiry* is vitally important for M&E and includes observation reports, mapping, meta-analysis, organizational analysis and/or assessment, library research of previous studies, and occasional use of Likert scales to rank systems functioning.

We did draw upon empirical and systems inquiry to research the prior documentation on M&E, including a review of the previous and existing M&E frameworks in international development, comprehensively inquiring into the strengths and weakness of these approaches. This contributed a meta-analysis that was useful to better understand the larger contexts in which M&E is carried out and the various historical developments within the field of M&E.

As mentioned, these zones include many more methodologies but since this research project was more oriented to understand the interior dimensions and processes that relate with capacity building and criteria and indicators of change, zone 6 and 8 take up less emphasis than do zones 1-4 in this project. This quantitative analysis can be carried out as pre/during/post measurement that ranks certain behaviors or systems performance from 1-10 and can compare/contrast to later assessment, after which time that data can be analyzed using quantitative methods to create graphs and figures of what percentage of behaviors changed through the lifetime of the project.

That said, these zones offer a particular validity to the research, namely, repeatable, verifiable, and empirical validity to the research, and assist in understanding the functional fit of the organization and its’ processes in the larger systems at play.
Results and Discussion

In this section, some of the results are shared, including some immediate project outputs and some larger project outcomes, with a brief discussion on lessons learned. We have kept this brief, since many of the research findings are synthesized into the Integral Monitoring and Evaluation Framework described in Part Three.

From the One Sky-ACCA integral baselines assessment, and then through the focus groups, seven objectives for integral capacity development were identified and to which the Peru Project has oriented its interventions. These included:

1. Improve internal organizational dynamics, internal communication, and reflective processes within ACCA. Identified by ACCA

2. Engender great trust and improve ACCA’s image with communities and the public. Identified by ACCA

3. Better understanding worldviews and engaging interior changes (such as awareness, attitudes, empowerment, sense of ownership, knowledge, values, and motivation). Identified by ACCA and One Sky

4. Strengthen participation with communities and other actors, learning new social methodologies. Identified by ACCA and One Sky

5. Develop gender awareness, and build capacity for Gender Mainstreaming across the organization and in programming with communities and the public. Identified by One Sky

6. Improve capacity for networking with other organizations (locally, regionally, internationally). Identified by One Sky

7. Improve capacity for strategic planning

In figure 11a-g below, sample criteria and indicators are given for each objective, taking each quadrant into account. These come directly from the focus group and key informant interviews, with some additions from the Drishti researchers.
Discussion on Project Outcomes

The main outcome of the project was a new sense of what is possible in terms of Monitoring and Evaluation. Rather than simply carrying out what is minimally required by donors, M&E was brought alive into a way of working that helps to orient the entire flow of a project to the particular objectives sought. Much like a river flowing to the sea requires banks in order to maintain its route and to arrive at its goal, participants and end-users of this research gained understanding that an M&E process has a similarly exciting role in setting and holding a frame for transformational change. This indeed will be of important use for donors, but it also helps practitioners to know if and how they need to refine their approach as they go along, as well as to be able to assess what changes occurred.

These changes are not confined to (what we call) “numbers of” data that tends to be the easiest to observe and thus objectively measure, and also include interior changes (subjective and inter-subjective). For example, while numbers of women present at community meetings is often used as an indicator of increases in gender equality, an Integral M&E Framework also seeks to know the quality of contributions made by those women, how their sense of self and confidence has changed over the course of the project, to what extent women are involved in decision-making and policy influence, and how they value larger issues of diversity, equality, and conservation. As discussed in Part Two, due to the often elusive nature of subjective changes and a general lack of familiarity with methodologies to assess these, added to pressing work-loads and complicated reporting mechanisms, often development organizations can rely too much on empirical “numbers of” data, even though they intuitively know that all these changes are critically important for, in this example, increased gender equality.

Throughout both organizations—ACCA and One Sky—there was an increased understanding of how M&E could find C&Is for, and methodologies to assess, both interior and exterior dimensions of change. This research project began a dialogue about both the need for and nature of Integral M&E, provided a field-tested Framework for how to go about this, and made available extensive written resources for other organizations to follow. In so doing, the research project has opened the door on new innovations in this important aspect of development programming.

In particular, the project contributed to the areas listed below in the following ways:

Knowledge innovations
This project resulted in outcomes in knowledge innovations in all project partners (One Sky, ACCA and Drishti) in regards to how development practitioners:
1. Identify what is valid knowledge to be included in M&E;
2. Develop indicators for “all quadrant” changes;
3. Collect knowledge about interior and exterior changes; and
4. Assess that data qualitatively and quantitatively so to know something with rigor about behavioral change, systems change, cultural change, and personal change in regards to their project in question.

While surely there are refinements to this Framework and we view this as “version one,” we are excited to have begun the dialogue and hope it will serve to ignite more knowledge innovations in this area in the future.
Changes in organizational capacities
Beginning the action research with a series of in-depth, participatory focus groups assisted in creating a capacity-building mood throughout ACCA. Throughout this year, with this openness to ask new questions, inquire more deeply into the nature of the work and the breadth of changes sought, and the encouragement of creativity, the organizational capacities in regards to project design and M&E have shifted and expanded to include more subjective and objective changes. This is note-worthy as an outcome that will surely impact not just M&E in the organization, but also fundraising, strategic planning, and networking.

Relationships of both praxis-based and researched-based non-profit organizations
Another outcome of the research is the quality of relationships built through this project between two praxis-oriented organizations (ACCA and One Sky) with a more research-based organization (Drishti), which has been inspiring to all those involved and will continue to be nurtured in the future.

Technology development, adoption, and adaptation
Defining “technology” broadly, the Integral approach to M&E was beginning to be adapted into ACCA’s project design and M&E, most immediately in three smaller projects in social forestry that begin in 2009 and most notably in a larger project for the biological corridor planned for later in 2009 or 2010. The research process and outputs informed many of these larger discussions, sufficient to suggest this “technology” was being adapted into how ACCA functions.

Lessons learned
Key lessons learned about our approach and broad design of the research were in regards to balancing and meeting the various needs of working with two partner organizations. Our research primarily sought to provide an Integral M&E Framework to the One Sky VSF Project on Integral capacity development. However, since we carried out participatory action research to develop that framework with One Sky and ACCA, we felt compelled ethically to also provide ACCA with some assistance in its M&E framework as well. While we had not designed the project with sufficient funds for the workload associated with this, in any case, we did try to assist in this way, and found that it quickly became complicated for several reasons. For example, we realized we had to work with ACCA’s strategic plan with substantially different outcomes than One Sky-ACCA’s integral capacity development project. Further, we had to align with the other ACCA staff member hired to institute a quantitative data-management system as their organization-wide M&E plan. The timing for the combination of his work on data management and our work on Integral M&E was inappropriate. Rather than take on what was outside our budget and inappropriately timed, we stayed with our original plan and sought to emulate and model for ACCA and One Sky an Integral M&E Framework. We involved both organizations in every aspect of the research where possible and were available to assist in ways that were in close alignment with the central objectives of the research project but that were not anticipated in the initial design.

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