MEASURING SOCIAL CHANGE

Paper 3 in PSJP's Defining Key Concepts series

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace

About Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP)

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) is a network for social change. Its purpose is to support the development and adoption of ideas about what makes a good society, to connect and strengthen the agents of this work and contribute to the infrastructure that supports progressive social change.

PSJP is hosted by Global Dialogue, registered as a charity (1122052) and a limited company (05775827) in England and Wales.

About PSJP's Defining Key Concepts series

For philanthropy and development practices to have a significant impact on root causes of poverty, marginalization and violence, they need to be better aligned with social change agendas that are people led. This involves 'defining key concepts' that are commonly used in development and elucidating their meaning and implications in practice. PSJP is facilitating a peer-learning environment in order to do this and is exploring the themes such as dignity, community resilience, measuring change, sustainability, community philanthropy, leadership, power among others.

These terms are frequently used in development and philanthropy, and they are included in many organizations' mission statements and performance indicators, but often there is no clear understanding of what they mean in practice or how they can be measured. As a first step to develop this understanding we are facilitating discussions among a diverse set of practitioners in the field on these topics and producing papers which will be shared on http://www.psjp.org. We hope to engage in wider ranging discussion in response to the papers and invite you to share your perspectives, experience and research on these themes. To contribute a blog write to us at chandrika@psjp.org

This paper is based on research by Barry Knight and Chandrika Sahai for PSJP
Edited by Caroline Hartnell

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 2
WHAT ARE WE MEASURING? 3
WHY ARE WE MEASURING? 5
HOW ARE WE MEASURING? 6
PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOURS 6
METHODOLOGIES 11
CHALLENGES 12
WHAT'S NEEDED IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE MEASUREMENT OF CHANGE? 17

INTRODUCTION

This paper forms part of a Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace (PSJP) series on ‘defining key concepts’. The idea is to take terms commonly used in development such as ‘dignity’, ‘leadership’, ‘sustainability’, ‘community philanthropy’ and ‘measuring social change’ and elucidate their meaning. In consultations that PSJP conducted with two separate groups in 2018 and 2019, these topics emerged as ones that a cohort of development and philanthropy practitioners wanted to learn more about.

This paper draws on three webinar sessions held on the topic of ‘measuring change’ on 16 January 2019. In total, the webinars included 14 civil society practitioners from all over the world. During each session participants reflected on three open-ended questions:

- How do you measure social change in your organization? What works well and what are the challenges?
- Is there a difference between what you want to measure and what your funders think should be measured? If so, what are the main differences and how do you deal with this?
- Are there things you would ideally like to measure but can’t? What support would you like to address this?

The distinctive value of this paper is that it draws on discussions among practitioners from different kinds of civil society organizations in different contexts. These included CBOs, NGOs, INGOs, international funders, philanthropy networks and support organizations. As such, the paper is based on practical experience, as opposed to theoretical models promoted by social scientists or consultants.

The paper reveals a crisis at the heart of measurement. There is a mismatch between what happens on the ground in civil society development and what donors want. Donors tend to be obsessed with measurable targets – often of questionable importance – that fit simple linear models of measurement that trace inputs to outputs in a way that claims to embody a scientific approach to validating programme design. The civil society practitioners citied here, on the other hand, find themselves in complex situations where linear models are inappropriate. They seek a process-driven approach to measurement that aims to capture more nuanced ways of detecting outcomes.

In describing the complexity of measurement in their various contexts, civil society practitioners also describe the methods they use to approach the issue. Not only does this bust the stereotype that civil society organizations have little desire to measure what they do and how they achieve their results;

it also highlights some well-founded methodologies that the field as a whole can build on.

What follows is an analysis of the key principles, practices, challenges and needs that emerged from the discussions. While our objective is to develop a deeper understanding of what we should be measuring and how, this paper is not meant to present definitive answers to these questions. Instead, our aim is to share learning, to provoke discussion and to facilitate advance on the topic of measuring change. We invite you to contribute to this discussion via comments and blogs and to share with us your understanding, experience and needs around measuring change.

WHAT ARE WE MEASURING?

The webinar discussions stressed the importance of knowing what to measure before measuring. For most practitioners, there are two aspects of their work that they seek to evaluate: the difference that they are making and the process through which change happens.

Impact: what difference do we make?

Participants typically develop a measurement strategy because they want to find out what changes as a result of their interventions. Many of them want to go deep and look beyond material indicators of progress, such as number of roads, volume of production, or changes in income levels. They want to understand how people *feel* as a result of their work and track changes in the attitudes and behaviours that often form the basis of structural injustices and biases in society and serve as the root causes of conflicts, violence and the systemic marginalization of certain groups.

For instance, a grantmaker operating in the area that covers the former Soviet Union and working on health and social welfare seeks to measure changes in attitudes, knowledge, practices and legislation. Another grantmaker, working in the north east of India supporting a livelihood project with marginalized women working on mushroom cultivation, is not interested in measuring the quantity of produce and increase in profits. Instead, as they put it:

> ‘We want to look at the change in attitudes and behaviour in the women and return on investment in terms of economic independence.’

Some of the participants pursue this line of measurement by tying their evaluation methods back to their ‘theory of change’. An association of organizations working to support people with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers in the Asia Pacific region has recently developed an impact measurement toolkit with this in mind. The ultimate aim of the toolkit is to measure how the work of these organizations affects the quality of life of people with dementia and their caregivers. They have so far piloted it in three countries, including Indonesia. The findings show that the work of association member organizations helps in ‘reducing the burden of caregivers of Alzheimer’s patients; improving the quality of life by giving more activities; and providing a healthier lifestyle for people of all ages’.

Similarly, a global grantmaker that supports community-based social and environmental justice projects wants to find out what has changed on the ground from the lens of their theory of change, which involves a commitment to movement building for environmental and social justice. They do this by giving small grants to activists and CBOs to take on the problems affecting their communities. Based on this theory of change, what they want to learn in the end is what constitutes a grassroots movement and how they can contribute to building it.

Process: how does change happen?

Participating organizations are interested not only in what is achieved, but also in how it is achieved. As one participant puts it,

> ‘change is not a linear process, it’s a bumpy ride; there are multiple factors that affect it.’

To fully understand impact, measures of change need to take account of the complexity of change processes, looking both at the methods that are used and at their effect. An organization working with disadvantaged elderly people in the Asia Pacific region pays special attention to the mechanisms used to achieve change:

> ‘We don’t just measure the change that happens, we also measure the process of the change, ie how people create the change, what each country programme is doing to influence the government, etc.’

A hybrid non-profit and social enterprise organization working with women in baobab cultivation in Mozambique stresses the importance of understanding the changing dynamics in the community as a result of their interventions. As an example of the complexity of change processes that they encounter, they share the following example:

> ‘We now have contracts with over 1,000 suppliers in communities that are certainly patriarchal and mostly polygamous. As the scale of the trade has grown, the men have started to take much more notice of the

> women in this trade. On one end of the spectrum you have men who expect women to hand over the money and women that do; at the other end you might have younger couples who are renegotiating gender roles in the family. In some cases that's working well and in others there is a current phase of kickback. Older men in polygamous families may react differently from younger men even if the younger guy has two wives. Similarly we have situations where change is coming differently in households where the younger woman or wife does all the work but the older woman takes all the money and gives it to the husband. We are dealing with many issues and what we realize is that every time we peel off a layer of the onion of our understanding of that social dynamic, there is another layer underneath. This just means that we are getting deeper in our understanding but it's extremely challenging.'

WHY ARE WE MEASURING?

To learn

Many participants express the significance of evaluation not just to find out what they have achieved but also to highlight what they have learned as an organization, so that they can use it to adjust their strategies and ways of working. A grantmaker that works with children and young people in Colombia expresses this most explicitly. They do not work directly on the ground but through local partners. This means that they don't measure anything directly but through their partners, and learning is central in the grantmaker-partner relationship:

> 'We have a really great relationship with our partners where they see us as an equal and not as a donor that's just giving them money. As a result we don't have any fear that they will say that something worked because if they said it didn't we wouldn't give them funding in the future. We have a really open dialogue where we emphasize learning so it's fine if something didn't work as long we learn from that and apply what we learned to future adjustments in projects. Because of that we do get quite an accurate picture of what's working and what isn't.'

Similarly, the grantmaker working on environmental and social justice uses additional data collected during their evaluation processes to deepen their understanding of their contribution to building grassroots movements for environmental and social justice. The goal is to get an overarching story of what's worked and what hasn't. As they put it:

> 'That really helps us to see what is actually a grassroots movement and how we contribute to change there.'

To give voice

Numerous participants, especially those working with grassroots and marginalized communities, emphasize the importance of stories (which will be discussed in more detail below) in their measurement and evaluation strategies as a means to give voice to those who are normally not heard. A participant representing an INGO working with remote Himalayan communities in India and marginalized communities in parts of East Africa says:

> 'We would like to measure more on the human interest side because we work with ethnic minorities in remote locations and the voices from those communities are rarely heard so giving the beneficiaries voice is really important to us as an organization.'

Collecting stories and being mindful of which voices are being listened to (and which are being left out) can be a critical factor in measuring change.

HOW ARE WE MEASURING?

Practices and behaviours

Measurement is both complex and contextual. There isn't a one-size-fits-all model for development and philanthropy organizations. During the webinars, participants discussed various organizational practices and principles that they observe in their work. These are presented below.

Indicators for changes in attitudes and behaviours

Most participants are aiming for long-term change and addressing longstanding structural issues that require complex solutions. They identify and measure changed attitudes and behaviours in society as proxy indicators for long-term structural changes. This is how a grantmaker operating in Colombia that envisions 'a fair and peaceful Colombia that guarantees children's rights and celebrates their participation in transforming the country' monitors their progress on this vision:

> 'Rather than measure broader societal change we measure the smaller things that contribute to social change such as changes in social attitudes, and changes in behaviours and relationships. This gives us proxy indicators for social change because we see that human behaviour is what drives that change. Adults understanding more about children's rights and how to protect them is a change in attitude and in

> knowledge. This leads to people taking action to prevent violence and protect children and this in turn leads to children in communities where their rights are protected.'

While this grantmaker's data collection is 'anecdotal and through stories', which they then analyse using their indicators, other organizations use very specific methodologies to collect data on indicators for behavioural change. One INGO that works with marginalized communities in the Himalayas and in East Africa collects data using SMART indicators (SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound). This is then supplemented with qualitative indicators or 'stories'. They explain:

> 'We measure these [SMART indicators] at the project outset and we combine them with a qualitative approach. This is a more participatory form of evaluation where we involve beneficiaries from the outset. We ask them what the challenges are as they see them and what change they want to see. We work with communities closely to draw out mutually developed goals and then feed this into the quantitative indicators. We work towards a knowledge, attitude and practices survey. We identify at the beginning of the project, prior to the interventions, what is actually known, what is practised in communities concerning a certain issue. We then track progress over time using various logs. At project end we conduct end line surveys against SMART indicators which we then compare to the baseline and see the variation, the quantitative difference. It is one way of seeing what change has been brought about.'

The importance of stories

Nearly all participants stress the importance of stories or case studies in their evaluation approaches. Stories deepen their understanding of how people feel about the changes coming into their lives in a way that numerical scores cannot. Most use a combination of quantitative data and stories to build an overall picture, as noted above. The same participant who uses SMART indicators also emphasizes:

> 'On the qualitative side, we collect case studies and human-interest stories from beneficiaries regarding the project. The qualitative elements give the more human side while the quantitative elements give a more abstract overview of the project in its entirety. It is critical that we combine the two because we find that the quantitative elements are removed from the lived experience of the beneficiaries, so we need the human stories to give more detailed snapshots of how projects are really enhancing the wellbeing of beneficiaries.'

The grantmaker working on environmental and social justice issues presses the following point in relation to the importance of stories:

> 'Stories in the words of the people that we support are also a very important aspect for us in measuring change. We invest in story telling where we ask communities to write or work with a local storyteller, journalist or photographer who creates very short stories. These are fantastic in terms of measuring how people perceive the support that we give and what change is important for them.'

Sometimes stories or case studies are in fact the best way to understand the impact of an initiative and foster learning. This is true for philanthropy and NGO support organizations, such as networks and associations, that are removed from direct implementation on the ground. A group of grantmakers working in conflict-torn societies all over the world collects case studies on certain themes to understand the role their members are playing in their societies:

> 'To an extent we are in an indirect relationship with victims or survivors of violence. We have looked at a range of social justice issues, particularly of marginalized minorities in conflict situations, and brought them together in a series of publications that then provide a basis for further reflection and discussion.'

Long-term view

Participants take a long-term view of measuring change. They recognize that systemic change is deep-seated and that it doesn't come easily or quickly. Some have approaches that help them to track the impact of their work over at least 10 years. The environmental and social justice funder has developed an evaluation method based on 10-year goals. They do a grantee survey every three years with cohorts that they funded five years ago, three years ago and one year ago. The participant points out:

> 'This helps us to follow the same groups over time so we can see what happens with grassroots groups immediately when they get initial support and then what happens five years down the line. We have done three of these surveys so far and they are beginning to tell a story about why grassroots initiatives succeed and why they don't, and that really helps us tie back into our theory of change.'

For others, a long-term view of measuring change is, so far, merely an aspiration. As one put it:

> 'What we'd like to measure is the sustainability of the change. Has the change really stood the test of time? We'd ideally like to go back 5-10 years later to see how the particular project or change has lasted but there are constraints there concerning time and funding.'

Trust

A key factor that goes hand in hand with a long-term view of change is trust. Participants emphasize that trust is important in evaluation because they are working with vulnerable people. Trust is needed on both sides. One participant working with marginalized women in Mozambique says that trust is a quality that emerges from the way the donor, NGO or social enterprise engages with the community:

> 'It's about engagement, spending time going back again and again. Asking questions not as an exercise but capturing learning as it emerges.'

Another participant, who works in contested societies, stresses the value of trust from the other side:

> '…in terms of people feeling secure in sharing what their challenges are particularly where they are power brokers within their own community'.

Deep listening and mutuality

Another principle that emerged from the webinar discussions is the importance of 'mutuality', with goals being developed together with the community relating to the changes they'd like to see. These are then factored in as indicators in the evaluation strategy. The INGO working with Himalayan communities in India and marginalized communities in East Africa uses a participatory form of evaluation where they involve beneficiaries from the outset:

> 'We ask them what the challenges are as they see them and what change they want to see. We work with communities closely to draw out mutually developed goals and they are then fed into the quantitative indicators.'

Asking their grantees, or the communities they seek to serve, about the changes they want to see enables organizations to capture the perception of change by those whose life it affects the most. It also prevents organizations from imposing undue demands on their grantee partners in terms of evaluation. The environmental and social justice grantmaker explains:

> ‘We ask our grantee partners to report annually against the indicators but in a way that’s framed quite accessibly. We really don’t want to impose bureaucracy and reporting duties on our partners. Instead we ask questions around how people’s lives have changed, how their attitudes have changed, how the natural environment has changed, how their capacity to influence has changed, and we as staff then translate that into the indicators.’

Sometimes, participants have to seek out the most vulnerable, whose voices are normally silent or silenced, to ensure that they are listened to:

> ‘We make sure that the voices we hear are not just of the leader activist. We also seek out ethnic minorities who are being marginalized even further because of the dominant forces in an ethnic conflict, women’s voices, young voices and so forth.’

Flexibility

Stress is also laid on the ability to be flexible, particularly when working in areas of conflict or in remote areas, or when working on deep-seated injustices:

> ‘In such societies predictability is a limited quality. We cannot use scientific measures of regression analysis because that requires linear thinking.’

A participant representing a group of donors working in conflict-ridden societies says:

> ‘The really important thing that we have learned is to be flexible. Not to get ourselves tied down into a very rigid measurement of change because the macro politics in our situation change at such a rate, particularly in contested societies.’

Given the dynamic and non-linear nature of social change processes, flexibility is becoming a critical quality. An NGO support organization operating in Vietnam agrees:

> ‘We don’t always know at the beginning what we want to measure so having some flexibility and not being stuck is important. We have had to pick and choose donors and stayed small for that reason.’

Methodologies

Participants mentioned a number of specific impact measurement methodologies they are using in their work. A summary of these is provided below.

SMART indicators

Originally proposed as a management tool for project and programme managers to set goals and objectives, SMART indicators are now used as an evaluation method to develop indicators that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable (or achievable), **R**elevant (or realistic) and **T**ime-bound.

Outcome mapping

Outcome mapping is an approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation designed by the grantmaking organization International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Outcome mapping puts people at the centre and helps measure contributions to complex change processes. It defines outcomes as changes in behaviour and provides a set of tools to design and gather information on these changes.[1]

Social return on investment (SROI)

Social Return on Investment is a framework for measuring and accounting for social, economic and environmental value resulting from the activities of various social change agents. Developed by Jed Emerson and others in the US and further adapted by Social Value UK, it uses monetary values to represent this value. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value. SROI is about value, rather than money. It was developed from social accounting and cost-benefit analysis and is based on seven principles:

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value the things that matter
4. Only include what is material
5. Do not over-claim
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result[2]

[1] For more information on outcome mapping visit https://www.outcomemapping.ca
[2] For more information on SROI download the guide at http://www.socialvalueuk.org/resource/a-guide-to-social-return-on-investment-2012

Assets, capacities and trust framework

A philanthropy support organization in Russia has developed a system to evaluate the impact of community foundations on their communities. This evaluation system is based on the assets, capacities and trust framework developed by the Global Fund for Community Foundations. These are identified by practitioners as the three main elements that are critically important to the work of community foundations:

- Building local assets
- Strengthening the capacities and agency of communities
- Building trust

The leaders of Russian community foundations worked together on designing the indicators that meet the assets, capacity and trust framework. These are:

- **Indicators for assets**: sources of funds of different types, different methods available to the community foundation (algorithmically spelled out methods to work with communities), organizations and people contributing to the work of the community, different types of people contributing to the work of the community foundation.
- **Indicators for capacities**: new ideas/initiatives in the community or in NGOs and initiative groups, community foundation team working with the whole community, quality of management.
- **Indicators for trust**: sources in the community, applications to foundations, participants in community development, partnerships in the community (including joint implementing initiatives with government and business).[3]

CHALLENGES

'Evaluation and measuring change is a huge and very deep topic and is not easy to understand,' concludes one contributor. Nearly all participants admit that measuring change is very challenging. They identified six major challenges.

Donor obsession with quantity over quality, numbers over stories

We have noted above how participants express the complexity and dynamic nature of social change, and how this cannot be captured in simple metrics.

---

[3] At present the organization is piloting this framework. They have collected data for a baseline and will monitor changes against it.

They emphasize the value of stories and qualitative data to capture the process of change.

However, many donors insist on numbers to measure things that can't be seen. According to a community foundation operating in the north-east of India,

> 'The biggest challenge for us is donors asking for numbers as a measure of social change. This is a gap between funders and grassroots work.'

An INGO working in Myanmar expresses similar frustration with donors:

> 'We have one donor who is just after hard-core outcomes, how many roads and wells, etc. Now we are in the process of educating them and others and saying that there is a whole lot more to the process of social change. There is a gap between what we see as value and what they see as value.'

The emphasis of donors on numbers ignores key components of the change process that, as noted above, are essential to organizational learning. For example, the INGO mentioned above has run projects in Myanmar that it judges have had good outcomes in terms of 'hard indicators and have also added inherent value to the communities such as bringing women into the decision-making process'. But this value cannot be conveyed in numbers alone. Similarly they are working to bring Muslims and Buddhists together and the progress on such work is difficult to track and convey in quantitative terms.

> 'It's not like building a road and saying we've built the road. How do we actually say that these communities are now working in much more harmony than they ever have?'

Many others concur that donors' emphasis on quantity is an unhelpful over-simplification of complex change processes. For the social enterprise in Mozambique, the challenge is to balance the donor requirement to provide mostly quantitative data on short-term projects with their own interest in charting change over a much longer period of time. To illustrate how 'ridiculously simplistic' a lot of reporting to donors is, the participant says:

> 'For instance, we have a large grant to provide agricultural extension services to 70,000 farmers. The donor sent a monitoring framework including use of hand-helds and a set of questions. They want volumes and income data but have not asked even a question about why an increase or change in productivity might have occurred: was it training,

> or better seed, or simply climate? And as for what the additional income might be used for, no interest at all.'

Another INGO participant shares:

> 'We have a very big international funder essentially saying that we are collecting too much qualitative data and they want us to focus on the strict indicators.'

How do we measure the intangible elements of change?

According to the environmental and social justice funder, the most important change that they and their partners seek is to increase trust and confidence in communities.

> 'How do you explain this in terms of larger-scale change metrics so that it is appreciated by funders?'

The emphasis that donors place on linear methods of measurement and the frustration of grant recipients with that approach notwithstanding, many participants express challenges in measuring and articulating changes that cannot be counted. For instance, one participant asks, 'what is a measure of trust?' Of non-monetary contributions, 'how do you value pro bono work?' In similar vein, another participant questions the worth of what they capture versus what their partners see as important.

> 'Like dignity, how do we measure that and adapt our framework accordingly?'

How do we identify our contribution?

Knowing that social change does not happen in isolation, is not a linear process, and is usually a result of several forces acting together, how do we know what is the contribution of one single intervention in a complex change process? The environmental and social justice funder again expresses this challenge around understanding their role in any change process:

> 'We are seed funders so does it matter what the direct correlation to the change is? As an early supporter how do we measure how much we have contributed to that change?'

Another organization recognizes similar challenges in measuring their impact on policy-level changes:

> 'When we are trying to measure change regarding our advocacy work and see how it is affecting policy, it might be easier to see policy at the

local level. But to see larger changes in policy can be quite difficult because in many cases there may be many different groups that want the same thing and may be going about it in different ways.'

Constraints on data collection and data security

On certain issues and in certain regions, collecting authentic data can be a technical problem. Sometimes people are unwilling to share data on certain issues because of a climate of fear around them. Sometimes people's fears are practical:

> 'For example, we try to measure health benefits through the nutrition programme but that's all qualitative reporting. We are not able to undertake for example blood work. People can be scared of that so we have to rely on qualitative reporting which cannot be as scientific as we like.'

Other fears have a deep-seated social and political basis:

> 'We try to collect non-identifiable information against our indicators but that's difficult. For example, in India we want to collect data on sexual orientation but people simply aren't willing to share this even if they are not identifiable. There is a fear there and that's a challenge.'

Fear around data especially manifests itself in conflict and peace-building situations, raising issues of trust and power. A representative of a cohort of peace-building grantmakers describes demands from funders for data on who comes to meetings as unreasonable on security grounds:

> 'Our partners working in Palestine would say of these funder requirements for data and names of people who attend events that they just can't comply with that because people in that situation question "who is getting access to this information, is there a security issue?"'

She continues:

> 'This is also true in Northern Ireland and other places where there is a difficult relationship with the state.'

Capturing failure

Some webinar participants, particularly grantmakers or INGOs that work with and through local partners, face difficulty in capturing failure. 'There can be a gap between what is said and what actually happens,' points out one participant:

> 'The challenge is to ensure that the responses are accurate and honest, that participants don't feel obliged to say that a particular project has worked well just because we are asking that question.'

The trust operating in the former Soviet Union region faces similar difficulties:

> 'We ask people to tell us what didn't work, and like everyone else we find that we have to work quite hard to winkle it out of people because they are reluctant to say. They don't want their projects to appear to have failed in any way, so we have to find ways of asking like: how could this have been done better or turned out differently?'

However, it is worth remembering here, as we noted above, that a focus on 'learning' as opposed to 'measuring', and the quality of 'trust' in the relationship between evaluator and community, can help to mitigate this challenge.

Time and capacity

'It takes time and resources to capture social change' says one participant, and the experience of many others testifies to this. Time is fundamental to deep and meaningful evaluation and learning. The issue of capacity in terms of know-how, human resources and tools also poses a challenge to many participants who want a deeper understanding of their role and impact as agents of social change. A participant representing a CBO working in Indonesia notes:

> 'Ideally, I would like to be more qualitative about my data. That means time to think about each project – what kind of impact is it having? Are we already measuring it or are we not? If not, then what kind of questions should we ask? What data can we get out of our projects? But that takes time, and a dedicated person to analyse each project and each question.'

We've noted above another challenge relating to the time and resources needed to do a longitudinal analysis of changes seen outside the grant period. For some others, the nature or make-up of the organization itself poses a capacity challenge. For example, a grantmaker operating in areas that formed the former Soviet Union operates only through volunteers with one lone staff member:

> 'We have to rely on people travelling in the region or dropping in on business as and when they can. We don't have resources to do it

systematically. We are conscious of this and we try to use local embassies or businesses in the area, just asking them to go and see how things are going. But we can only visit four or five of the 10 projects every year and that is some cause for concern. We'd like to see more than just the reports and pictures that they send us.'

Similarly, capacity can be a challenge for organizations structured as support networks or membership-based associations that do not have dedicated facilities for collecting data and work through their members in many different societal contexts.

WHAT'S NEEDED IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE MEASUREMENT OF CHANGE?

All the organizations participating in the webinars recognize the importance of measuring change in their work and would like to be able to dig deeper to understand and improve the roles they are playing in social change processes. As one participant summarized succinctly:

> 'We need to take time to seriously improve the approach to impact measurement because it can really help us to have more effective programmes. It can give a clear sense of shared purpose, greater accountability, a deeper relationship with funders and donors, enabling us to have meaningful engagement on the ground and stronger messages as well.'

Participants identify two main steps that would improve their ability to measure change: increased capacity and donor education.

Capacity

Almost everyone would like to improve their capacity to evaluate and measure their impact and processes better. They express the need for more support: expert consultants to advise them, training, tools, education on impact evaluation methodologies, guidelines, frameworks and case studies. Here is a typical reflection:

> 'We are not sure about the methodology we are using right now. Is it suitable? Can it really provide the analysis to measure social change? So we need support – share tools among us, for example, to measure the changes in behaviours, dignity and self-confidence. What kind of tools are we using? How can we make them practical for people in the field to use them? We would like to consult with an external consultant as well.'

Two methods emerge as important in building capacity: a collaborative mindset and peer support. As one participant put it:

> 'The keyword is collaboration. Since we share similar values, it's easier. The support could elevate us and have greater impact.'

Participants express the desire for platforms and opportunities to share resources, ideas and experiences on measuring change with likeminded organizations. In order to build the collective capacity of the field, another suggestion is to develop an online platform that aggregates resources on the subject.

Donor education

As noted above, a number of organizations are frustrated with their donors' demands vis-à-vis impact evaluation. One participant put it like this:

> 'There a gap between what we see as being of value and what they see as being of value.'

In order to close this gap, participants would like to be able to influence donors and help them see the value in a more qualitative approach to measuring change.

Published by Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace

November 2019

PHILANTHROPY *for* SOCIAL JUSTICE *and* PEACE

www.psjp.org