Mentoring three ISIF-funded projects in evaluation and research communication

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Sonal Zaveri, Vira Ramelan, Ricardo Ramirez & Dal Brodhead

About the Series

This series of case studies emerged from an action-research project entitled Developing Evaluation and Communication Capacity in Information Society Research (DECI-2). The predecessor DECI-1 project focused only on evaluation mentoring in Asia. The subsequent DECI-2 project collaborated with research networks and grantees supported by International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) Information & Networks Program between July 2012 and 2017. This particular case summarizes work with the ISIF grants program based at APNIC in Brisbane, Australia.

The DECI-2 Team started off by helping this project develop evaluation plans and communication strategies. The initial DECI-2 road map consisted of a sequence of planning steps in evaluation and communication, some of which were clearly complementary. During the preceding DECI-1 project, we witnessed how utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) works as a decision-making framework within which numerous evaluation approaches can co-exist. The communication steps turned out to be quite similar as the planning sequence challenged project managers to be clear about their communication purposes, audiences and expected changes.

As evaluation and communication were linked together, we discovered that both processes created a decision-making framework for project partners to express and agree on their assumptions, expectations, and outcomes. The approach creates a pressure on stakeholders to make the implicit, explicit and consequently helps teams clarify their Theory of Change. With research projects and with experimental initiatives, this process can take time as emergent outcomes can provide feedback to cause stakeholders to adjust project objectives and strategies.

Using this approach is how we came about the notion of a hybrid decision-making framework where evaluative and communicative thinking work as two sides of the same coin. All this work to re-discover human nature: as soon as you encounter exciting news you feel compelled to share it.

DECI-2 was developed as an action-research project in capacity development. We tested mentoring as a way of providing evaluation and communication support to our partners. Regional mentors based in Asia, Africa, and Latin America provided the bulk of the mentoring. While our main partners were IDRC-funded research networks (part of the Information & Network Program), we have also tested the approach with projects in other fields.

Introduction

We have developed an integrated approach that combines Utilization-Focused Evaluation (U-FE) and Research Communication (ResCom) as complementary processes that can help research projects increase their long-term outcomes.

U-FE

In simple terms, U-FE is an evaluation approach proposed by Patton (2004)[1] that seeks to generate useful evaluation. In order to attain such a goal, U-FE follows a series of iterative steps from the early stages of a project that needs to be evaluated. The purpose of the steps is to help the evaluator facilitate a process that enables her/him to implement the key elements of the approach that includes:

- Identification of primary evaluation users;
- Identification of primary evaluation purposes and uses;
- Formulation of key evaluation questions (KEQ) in a systematic way;
- Identification of relevant/cost-effective data collection tools and analysis processes;
- Facilitation of findings use.

Although Patton, the original proponent of the U-FE approach, recently increased the number of UF-E steps to 17, for the sake of simplicity the DECI-2 team preferred to follow the original 12-step process (Patton, 2004).

ResCom

ResCom refers to the use of communication strategies for making research findings available, in a timely, relevant and useful way to policymakers as a means of more effectively influencing public policy. Although there wasn't a step-by-step ResCom process as in the case of U-FE, the DECI-2 team proposed a similar 12-step process for ResCom that would cover similar topics on the communication side. Such a process is based largely on the RAPID framework (2004)[2] and on the common and complementary aspects of ResCom and U-FE. In the same ways that U-FE tries to make evaluation "useful", ResCom focuses on "useful policy-influencing communication". It is worthwhile mentioning that as in the case of U-FE, the flow between steps is iterative rather than linear. Table 2 summarizes the proposed ResCom process steps.

Why combining U-FE and ResCom makes sense?

As indicated earlier, DECI-2's central assumption for combining U-FE and ResCom is that such a combination can help programs increase their long-term outcomes. As described on the DECI-2 website, from a practice perspective DECI-2 combines U-FE and ResCom because:

- They share a number of common planning steps (situational analysis, stakeholder analysis) that can enable complementary preparatory efforts.

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[1] Michael Quinn Patton, *Essentials of Utilization-Focused Evaluation,* Sage, 2012

[2] https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/198.pdf

- Making explicit what to evaluate focuses on the essential purposes of a research project, and this work in turn clarifies communication objectives.
- Both approaches call for researchers to "listen" to what partners need - what is relevant to them.
- The emphasis on "use" in UFE is comparable with the emphasis on targeted messages in communication planning.
- The emphasis on "facilitating use" in UFE, where the evaluators ensure the evaluation findings get utilized (as opposed to being left to chance), reminds us that communication activities and products need follow-up to heighten their effectiveness.
- The integration of evaluation and communication processes ensures that we focus on communication objectives that are realistic, and measurable in terms of reach and short-term outcomes.

Despite these complementarities, there are also some significant differences that can make it difficult to utilize the U-FE – ResCom combination. The main difference is that while ResCom has a very specific purpose – using communication to influence policy, U-FE is quite flexible in terms of its purpose and use. In this regard, it is easier to find the required project readiness level for conducting U-FE than for conducting ResCom. Another practical difference is that U-FE requires less technical knowledge for people who want to learn how to use it. It does not require a background in evaluation to learn how to conduct U-FE. In contrast, ResCom is quite difficult to implement for someone who does not have a background in communication and who does not understand the dynamics of influencing policy.

Overview of ISIF

The Information Society Innovation Fund Asia (ISIF Asia) is a grants and awards program aimed at stimulating creative solutions to ICT development needs in the Asia Pacific region. ISIF offered grants and awards on a competitive basis to groups interested in ICT action-research. The ISIF program is hosted by APNIC in Brisbane, Australia; an organization that partnered with DECI-1. That process enabled the organization to apply and benefit from Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE). Sonal Zaveri prepared a case study on that experience in 2011. ISIF then invited DECI-2 to partner again, this time to mentor a selection of their grantees in the Asia & Pacific region in both evaluation and communication.

Beginning the Journey: Establishing Readiness
DECI-2 and ISIF invited expressions of interest for mentoring in UFE and Research Communication (ResCom) from twelve successful ISIF grantees in the 2014-15 funding program. The first step was to verify their level of "readiness". The original steps of UFE call for a review of readiness at both the organizational and the evaluators levels. Our experience with DECI-1 confirmed the importance of these steps and in DECI-2 we extended this readiness review to also cover the ResCom side. The readiness assessment took place *before* launching any mentoring in UFE and

ResCom. The DECI team visited Brisbane to meet with the senior management behind the ISIF project.

Subsequently, three ISIF grantees were selected, from India, Cambodia and the Cook Islands.

Readiness Requirements	
evaluation - organizational • Assign a staff person(s) as the project evaluator • Allocate funds for data collection and reporting • Confirm top management commitment to learning & using the evaluation • Confirm any co-funders are open to UFE **evaluator(s)** • Has an evaluation or research background • Is willing to learn • Is a good listener, able communicator • Is willing to facilitate learning as opposed to dominating and judging	**communication - organizational** • Assign a staff person(s) as the project communication contact point • Allocate funds for audience research, materials production and dissemination. • Confirm top management commitment to having a communication strategy • Confirm other communication staff in the host organization will collaborate **communication person(s)** • Has a communication background or experience in implementing communication activities • Is willing to learn • Is a good listener, able communicator • Is willing to facilitate a communication strategy

"Readiness" meant that senior decision makers in the host organizations were willing and able to commit staff, time and some resources towards capacity building in both the evaluation and communication areas. Further, it meant that they were committed to designing and using evaluations as well developing a communication strategy and associated materials *as part of the work expected from the research grant*. We also made it clear that the combination of UFE and ResCom was new to us, and that we would be adapting this approach with them as part of our own research agenda. Since the projects had limited resources, we underlined our commitment to making the process *useful* to them.

Organizations were expected to identify staff, "mentees" with relevant skills who were interested in learning from the mentoring in evaluation and communication. Such "readiness" implicitly meant that senior decision makers understood the value of UFE and ResCom and the opportunity provided by the mentoring process to build organizational capacities in evaluation and communication. We learned that at best we could capture "readiness" as the *intent* to commit to the process of learning, but that it was very difficult for the mentees to fully understand how and what their involvement in this process would be. In other words, there was a leap of faith required at the start. The very fact that DECI-2 was introduced as an action-research project helped convey the notion of learning and adapting, which allowed partners

to assume a learning approach more readily.

The DECI mentors had a number of "readiness dialogues" using email and skype with those grantees who showed interest in UFE and ResCom mentoring. We explained what UFE and ResCom was, how it would benefit the organization, how mentoring would take place – (emails, skypes, webinars and at least one face to face meeting), and what type of commitment from the organization was necessary. **The 'readiness dialogues' enabled the mentors to engage senior decision makers, gauge *their commitment* and to assess the presence of basic analytic skills and interest in staff (for UFE) and communication experience (for ResCom).**

The availability of some skills is a necessary and important readiness component for UFE and ResCom. Evaluation and communication may not be priority issues for senior decision makers, but the UFE and ResCom processes are successful only if the organization commits not only to learning, but also to *systematically following the numerous steps outlined in both UFE and ResCom.*[3] **In other words, the key question was: would the selected organizations be willing to learn and stay the course over several months of mentoring?**

Having been through the UFE process in DECI-1, the ISIF grant manager was a champion for UFE (and the added component of ResCom) and played an important role in promoting the *value* of the mentoring with potential grantees. "Readiness" needs to be indicated by donors or grant managers as the road ahead in learning to implement UFE and ResCom is not smooth. This is the case because mentees set the pace of their learning, often going back and forth on what needs to be evaluated and communicated, for whom and what purpose. The patience and trust of the grant manager or donor in such individualized hand holding capacity building process is critical.

This intent to engage was translated into practical steps:
a) By organizations – the senior decision makers in each of the 3 grantee organizations sent a formal expression of interest to receive mentoring, committed to allocate a modest, realistic budget to implement the evaluation and communication plans. They identified point persons in their organizations to be 'mentees', individuals who would receive the one on one support from mentors and translate the learning into action in their own organizations.
b) By mentors: Through a series of email exchanges and skype interviews, the three grantee organizations and staff were vetted on their "readiness" to receive mentoring in UFE and ResCom.

Three 2014 ISIF grant recipients – Operation Asha (Cambodia), Nazdeek (India) and Cook Islands Maori Database (Cook Islands, South Pacific Ocean) – fulfilled the readiness criteria and were selected to receive additional mentoring in Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE) and Research Communication (ResCom) by a team of DECI-

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[3] We worked with the original 12 steps of UFE (not the 17 described in: Patton, M.Q. 2012. *Essentials of utilization-focused evaluation*. Sage) along with 12 comparable steps in ResCom, see. http://evaluationandcommunicationinpractice.net/about/why-we-combine-them

2 regional mentors (Asian) in UFE and ResCom, backstopped by the two DECI – 2 project leads in Canada.

The partners

Link TB with Technology (LTT). Operation ASHA, Cambodia

Operation ASHA (OpAsha) is an NGO with a presence in India and Cambodia that provides tuberculosis (TB) care to the most disadvantaged populations. In Cambodia, OpAsha works closely with the government to implement the TB program in eight provinces, reaching out to about 20% of the population. Cambodia and South Africa are among the High Burden Countries according to World Health Organization (WHO, 2014)[4]. On average, each undiagnosed/untreated patient potentially infects 12 others, leading to a geometric increase in infections. In 2014, about one third of TB cases in Cambodia remained undetected. There is an urgent need to scale up detection of these hidden patients to limit potential outbreaks in the community. With grants from ISIF, OpAsha developed a mobile application (App) that could potentially be a game changer in TB detection in Cambodia: it bridges the gap between the Government's TB programme and undiagnosed TB patients. The contact tracing App's geographic mapping function also allows mobile field supervisors to identify and react quickly to community hot spots with high TB prevalence to prevent outbreaks.
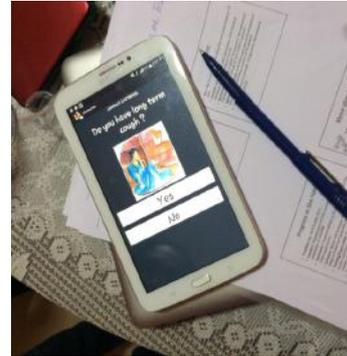
Field supervisors visit families of existing patients, factories where patients work and also go door-to-door in areas they serve. They use the App to educate the community on symptoms of TB, ask them to answer a basic questionnaire, and subsequently facilitate sputum testing and diagnosis of suspects. The App serves to connect patients and form a wireless link with the microscopy centers so that no patient is lost to follow-up. This App is easy to use and can be adapted to fit any language or cultural context. With the App, OpAsha has increased accuracy of TB detection by 12%.

Photo: DECI-2 mentors Vira Ramelan – left- and Sonal Zaveri –middle visit Operation Asha.

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[4] World Health Organization, 2014. *Global Tuberculosis Report 2014*. Geneva: WHO.

A Mobile Application & Mapping Platform to for Accountability in the Health Services for Tea Garden Workers, Nazdeek, Assam, India.

Tea garden workers in Assam have insufficient access to health facilities and essential services. Existing facilities are severely underequipped and understaffed, and many villages are located in underserved and remote areas. As a result, tea garden workers, many of them from the indigenous ("Adivasi") community, suffer high rates of maternal and infant mortality with minimal access to legal and advocacy resources to address violations.

Nazdeek[5], a human rights organization, was interested in piloting a nine-month project that tracks, maps, and receives real-time incident reporting. This process takes place through a SMS mobile and mapping platform on cases of maternal and infant mortality in one district (Sonitpur population is 1,924,110), an area with high Adivasi populations (approx. 600,000). Nazdeek partnered with an international NGO based in New York, the International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD), to build a SMS mobile and mapping platform and collaborated with Pajhra, a local activist organization, to implement the App.

Pajhra has worked for many years in the community around Tezpur, Assam promoting the rights of indigenous labourers working in the tea gardens. For the Nazdeek project, they have one Project Coordinator who works with two Block (government administrative unit) Coordinators. In each block, there are about 20 women volunteers enrolled in the use of mobile technology.

Forty women volunteers were given mobile phones to report health rights violations that have been pre-coded by type. Women have to text the code the violations, which are received at the Pajhra office and immediately verified by a staff through a call back. Sometimes the Pajhra team does site verification. The violations are populated on a map, which informs the location and type of violation.

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[5] Nazdeek is a high profile human rights NGO. They have good analytical and communication related skills. Four of the team members are non-profit human rights lawyers and also have some communication experience with publishing opinion-editorials (Guardian, Daily Beast, Huffington Post blogs) and organization newsletters, publishing YouTube videos (see YouTube channels for ICAAD and Nazdeek), and being interviewed on radio and television (Al-Jazeera, NDTV, local-ABC, local-Fox, Belgian TV).

The Cook Islands language is on the UNESCO's endangered languages list. The aim of the project is to develop a database of Cook Islands Maori Words, their English translations and example usages in a sentence in both English and Maori. The database is made available in various forms - web, mobile, email, SMS and social network applications where users can search for words in either English or Cook Islands Maori, and subscribe to daily random words service or contribute new words to the database. The intention is for the language not only to be preserved and retained, but it can also evolve as native speakers add new words for modern concepts to an easily accessible online Cook Islands Maori Dictionary. Other objectives of the grant were: to engage the Diaspora in the collection, organization and dissemination of language information; to utilize and build on the technical skills already available in country for IT Project Management, to promote web and mobile application development and provide teaching plans for teachers to utilize the Cook Islands Maori Database in their classrooms.

Lessons Learned

Evaluation Readiness

The "readiness dialogues" had tentatively outlined that there would be a commitment of time, resources and personnel. However, it was challenging for anyone embarking on this journey to *truly understand* the roles of the mentors, the mentees and accept that uncertainty. **Mentees were used to a more directive approach in capacity building, to be students rather than learners, expecting mentors to provide all the answers. Facilitated but exploratory learning at one's own pace was an unfamiliar process.**

We opted to start the readiness review with emphasis on UFE. OpAsha's Country Director's expectations about UFE at the beginning of the project were very different to what was to unfold during the mentoring process. The Director expected to participate in an evaluation "how to" course on what is evaluation, how to collect data, analyse data using "fancy" analysis techniques and so on. The UFE 12 steps had been shared through documents and webinars, but it took a while for the Country Director to understand that the mentoring and learning was a "process" and that there would be a great deal of back and forth across the various UFE and ResCom steps.

Initially, the DECI-2 mentors expected to have one evaluator mentee and one communication mentee. However, the NGOs were small with personnel responsible for multiple tasks. This meant that often, one mentee doubled up to fulfil both evaluation and communication functions. For the DECI-2 team, the mentee referred to the contact person for evaluation and/or communication mentoring. An associated challenge was the new terminology: in UFE those who own and design the evaluation are "primary intended users" of the evaluation. However, this term

can easily be confused with the project end-users (the intended beneficiaries). Furthermore, the evaluation primary user need not be the mentee (more on this below). The table below summarizes the persons and roles that we finally settled upon in each project:

OpAsha, Cambodia (*)	Nazdeek, India (**)	IAG, Cook Islands (***)
Mentee in UFE & ResCom	Mentee in UFE & ResCom	Internet Action Group (IAG) team shared UFE & ResCom mentee roles
Mentee: the project manager	Mentee: a human rights lawyer	
Mentee also a part user	User belonged to Pajhra	

(*) A dilemma for the mentors was whether the mentee could also be the User. UFE clearly warns against the 'evaluator mentee' being the 'User' stating that one should avoid this 'evaluation trap'. However, in the case of OpAsha, the mentee had to also take on the mantle of a *part user*. In the case of the Cook Islands, the both mentee and User were from the same organization but roles became blurred.

(**) Nazdeek had no problem identifying the Mentee but identifying the User took several iterations. The Mentee was from Nazdeek and a human rights lawyer who had both analytical and communication related skills. The User was identified as someone from the grassroots implementing organization, Pajhra. Nazdeek was very sure that they wanted Pajhra to develop evaluation and communication skills and they believed the mentoring process in UFE and ResCom was an excellent way to do so.

(***) *"Seeing as we only had two people on the team, it was easy sharing the responsibilities. The communication designate was Ano because he was the writer of the majority of the technical report. I [Maureen] was able to do the analysis of the survey that we used to evaluate the project and identify who would be appropriate users of our database and application too. "* Report, Learning from the UFE and ResCom Process, Cook Islands.

Overall, the mentees background was largely technical (software, legal) so they gained a greater appreciation of communication and evaluation from this study.

The selected organizations were aware that additional time would be needed for UFE and ResCom. One a team member from the Cook Islands noted that the extra workload did impact on the time they could give to the original grant (from ISIF) and delayed their reporting responsibilities for both the grant manager and the mentors. The team strongly felt that the time needed for the 'additional' UFE and ResCom tasks was underestimated. This however did not deter from their valuing the UFE and ResCom learning experience, which they felt build their capacities.

Research Communication Readiness

We have found that the communication side of a project often emerges spontaneously and intuitively as a set of unplanned activities. Communication products can be stand-alone materials or media that are produced with limited knowledge of audience needs, or their media preferences. In this instance, each project had a communication component in its design; though much of it was neither explicit nor strategic at the start. Production of communication materials tended to be a goal *per se*, rather than a means to support achievement of a well-defined objective. As a result, communication role was reduced as technical material production.

We found that there was a narrow understanding of "communication". It was often associated mainly with dissemination campaigns. Thus it was a bit difficult and confusing for project staff to be asked to define the intent or purpose and the objectives of communication. They were hesitant to carry out a "proper" audience research, although they did have some knowledge about their audiences' preferences. With the absence of clear communication purposes, objectives and audiences' preferences, made it difficult for the projects to measure whether the intended change was achieved. At the start, it was not clear to them how the formulation of the intent and objectives of communication, in combination with audience research would bring about benefits and not be a burden.

From a communication perspective, this meant that their readiness needed some extra support. Since we worked with small projects teams, and in some cases with a single person in charge of both UFE and ResCom, this readiness challenge needed attention, with attention not to overwhelm them. **What we began to discover however, was that the two components worked well together.** All projects had an innovation to test through field experimentation; they could easily identify those partners who would be interested if it worked (audiences). They could also identify the evidence that each audience would require as proof of concept around each innovation. In short, for these projects having evidence and sharing it could be understood as a tool to improve performance.

Implementation

Users, Uses and Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

All three organizations went through various iterations of identifying Users, Uses and KEQs and most of the initial discussions to define these were intense. The following example from OpAsha illustrates how the project came up with several options for Users, Uses and KEQs.

OpAsha First Approximation		
USER: WHO (World Health Organization in Cambodia)	**USE:** May publish findings in public health journals to influence public policy on	**KEQ:** To evaluate the TB algorithms that result in high TB yield, based on Cambodia's

	approach to case finding	epidemiology
OpAsha Second Approximation		
USER: CENAT (Government of Cambodia Center for Leprosy and Tuberculosis)	**USE:** Use our findings to influence and to substantiate CENAT's policy direction to implement electronic monitoring and evaluation system and electronic medical record	**KEQ:** To evaluate whether the use of technology has an impact on the TB detection in areas of intervention
OpAsha Final design		
USERS: OpAsha's Country Director and the Program Director (medical officer) jointly planned to use the findings.	**USE 1:** Internal- To develop a feedback mechanism to enhance the scale-up of the next pilot project, which integrates the eDetection App funded by ISIF grant with two other Apps for roll out in Daunkeo Operational District Takeo Province (~200,000 people). **USE 2:** External- To disseminate findings to donors, government and potential adopters to increase funding or uptake of the use of the technology to deliver TB care.	**KEQ 1:** How has the App contributed to TB care in terms of screening, case notification compared to conventional methods? **KEQ 2:** What are the Field Supervisors' challenges and benefits in using the App for TB care and service delivery? **KEQ 3:** What are the lessons learnt for scaling up?

As it turned out, the Use was immediate (with ResCom inputs) at the ICT4D 2015 Conference in May 2015 where the App was demonstrated, and the evidence gathered from the study was shared with an international audience and potential funders.

In India, Nazdeek and Pajhra also went through several iterations to decide on the Users, Uses and KEQs.

Nazdeek & Pajhra First Approximation		
USER: Local activists including Nazdeek, PAJHRA	**USE:** To collect data to advocate and litigate govt.	**KEQ**
Nazdeek & Pajhra Second Approximation		
USER: Community members and local leaders	**USE:** to create awareness for access to maternal health services	**KEQ**
Nazdeek & Pajhra Third Approximation		
USERS: Local Government and Courts	**USE:** for policy level choices to improve health services	**KEQ**
Nazdeek & Pajhra Final design		
USER: Project Coordinator,	**USE:** To learn about	**KEQ 1:** What are the factors that

| PAJHRA | implementation to improve the program, so that Pajhra and Nazdeek are better informed to source the next round of funding. | affect the participation of volunteers (women who use the mobile phones to report violation of health rights)? **KEQ 2:** How do the ASHAs (community health workers), women whose rights have been violated, community leaders, health facility staff and community **perceive the changes** that the project has brought? With reference to knowledge about health rights violations, better access to health services, better quality of services. What has worked and what has not? What more can be done? |

In 2015 the Cook Islands celebrated their 50th anniversary of self-rule. Their version of the Maori Language was on the UNESCO endangered languages list. The concern remains that the language will not survive into the 21st century. Hence, it first appeared to be an excellent opportunity to choose a User from the government and use the information to engage donors who were planning to come to kick off the anniversary celebrations in early 2015. Numerous meetings were held with the Deputy Prime Minister's Secretary and Personal Assistant, the Ministry of Culture – including one in the presence of the DECI-2 mentors. However, there was a stalemate in the elections and after waiting for the political results for several months, the Cook Islands team had to revise their User, Uses and KEQ.

It is to their credit that they were able to do so on their own – discard the old plans and create new ones, a testimony of the skills acquired through the mentoring process. An interim plan was made targeting the Ministry of Education and working with teachers who would use the App in mainstream Maori education. However this plan also could not be used because of the continuing stalemate in electing the new government.

As with the other two organizations, one of the senior team members of the Cook Islands Internet Action Group became the mentee where as the software developer became the User. The urgent need was to continue developing the App for which the funds were needed. Once again, the organization was able to plan the Uses and KEQ.

Cook Islands IAG First Approximation		
USERS: Deputy Prime Minister's Secretary and Personal Assistant, the Ministry of Culture	**USE:**	**KEQ:** To
Cook Islands IAG Second Approximation		
USER: Ministry of Education representative	**USE:**	**KEQ:** To

Cook Islands IAG Final design		
USER: Project software developer	**USE:** To approach government and donors for funding and credibility would be high because results were obtained from mentoring through an IDRC funded project and supported by APNIC/ISIF.	**KEQ 1:** Is it (website/mobile app) a useful tool? **KEQ 2**: If so, who is it useful tor? (*)

(*) In term of: Demographics (age, gender, location); actual numbers; preferred medium for access (Android, iOS, Web, Book, other); and Language Fluency for Maori/English.

As a side benefit the UFE and ResCom study would provide better insights about the target users to:
  • Better meet their needs;
  • Establish relationships with them; and
  • Convert them to become contributors.

In other words, one team member became the mentee for evaluation and ResCom, she developed the survey, and provided materials to the local newspaper; in turn, she was assisted by the User to get the 'survey out' on the internet platform.

Challenges with Users, Uses and KEQ

Identifying Users, linking them to Use and KEQ proved to be challenging for all three organizations. E-mail exchanges, Skypes and webinars provided the 'how to' – what are the criteria to identify User, how do you help the User identify the Use of the evaluation and how to develop KEQ to support Use. However, this theoretical understanding using remote mentoring was inadequate to finalize User, Uses and KEQ.   As the OpAsha Country Director for Cambodia stated, she: *"…got stuck on some components of Users and Uses – I tried so hard to pin it down. Whare the KEWs – asked muyself 10,000 times. Once that was sorted out, everything quickly fell in place."*

A face-to-face meeting proved to be critical in breaking the deadlock of identifying Users, Uses and KEQ. The mentors' budget permitted only one face-to-face meeting and it had to be carefully timed so that organizations were 'ready' to move smoothly through several steps and derive maximum benefit from the intensive one on one mentoring. The mentors were aware of the outputs expected from the grantees. They had read relevant documents such as the grant applications, summary reports and sought clarifications from the mentees by e-mail and Skype. Initially it was difficult for mentors to understand why the selection of Users, Uses and KEQs proved to be so difficult when the grant applications with expected outputs were available.

The face-to-face meetings with each project enabled mentors to understand the complexity of the projects, what they were trying to achieve; and their constraints as

well as the capacities of the staff. While the project documents explained details (such as what the App intended to achieve), the face-to-face meeting enabled the mentors to understand the **context** in which the organizations were working, staff capacity and interrelationships as well as the political environment in which they worked. In UFE this represents a step know as situational analysis.

The identification of Users, Uses and KEQs triggered a 'project audit' and an informal unravelling of the underlying Theory of Change. It focused on basic issues such as: what resources was the organization investing in the project, what were the underlying assumptions for selection of the activities, what change was expected initially and more long-term and how the change would impact the target population? Each organization was introducing an App that had cultural and political overtones and it was important to understand the context in which the App was being introduced and to assess if the proposed change was likely to be sustainable. These considerations were important for UFE and ResCom as findings were meant to promote some change and influence others.

In two of the projects (OpAsha, Cambodia and Maori Database, Cook Island), the UFE and ResCom mentoring process went closely together. Although some Skype discussions and emails exchange were done separately, both UFE and ResCom mentors were able to visit and work together with the project team in each location. This face-to-face mentoring – which turned to be the most effective mentoring method. In contrast, the mentoring process for Nazdeek project was slightly different. Only the UFE mentor was able to visit the project, as the ResCom mentor was not able to do the face-to-face visit to India. This meant that most ResCom mentoring process with Nazdeek and Pajhra team was done through emails and Skype discussions, followed by one additional, face-to-face meeting in Brisbane[6].

a) OpAsha's journey

OpAsha Cambodia had difficulty identifying the User. UFE suggests that the User must also identify Use and link that to the KEQ necessary to provide findings that support Use. This discussion of Use and KEQ that can help to identify the most appropriate User. For example, OpAsha had various dialogues with an international health expert from WHO who was embedded in the Ministry of Health, to identify Use and KEQ. OpAsha was looking for a champion within the government to promote their e-detection App (with evidence on its efficacy through the UFE study) as a viable alternative to existing solutions for TB case finding in the community. A series of KEQ were developed with the expert such as how the technology had improved detection, community's response to the new technology and field supervisor's performance. Yet, while discussing Use, the User suggested writing journal articles on this pilot. Clearly, this was not OpAsha's expectation regarding Use (in fact it sounded like a communication objective). A great deal of time was lost in engaging with this potential User – the expert was very busy and appointments were difficult to get, several meetings were needed to sensitize about UFE, explain

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[6] For photos of the meeting see:
https://www.flickr.com/photos/gabrielvaldezcadena/albums/72157647395892848

role of the User, encourage the expert to become a potential User, identify KEQs and so on. During the mentor's face-to-face visit, it was apparent that OpAsha's e-detection App was a pilot and the government would entertain its wider application only when the reach and evidence was substantial. Clearly, the expert User and OpAsha's expectation of what the User could Use it for was unrealistic.

OpAsha is a small NGO with a Country Director, a medical officer in charge of programs, and a large field staff. The Country Director was the UFE and ResCom mentee since she had the education, experience, good knowledge of English and analytic ability. The medical officer was selected to be a User since he was aware of the TB diagnosis and treatment and could provide input for the KEQ. However, the key User was more likely by the Mentee because of her position (CD) and rapport with the government. The Mentee was also the User's boss, and it was decided that both the Mentee and the Medical Officer would be joint Users. This decision meant that there was greater chance of institutional learning. This decision in hindsight proved to be very useful as the Medical Officer was able to participate in a subsequent conference, ICT4D in Singapore, to discuss findings and contribute to the development of communication materials. In the words of the Country Director, the role of "User" was the "hook" which helped the medical officer go "fishing" in different fora – this User went from being involved to engaged in the process.

The ResCom component benefitted from this process. Identifying USE, USER, and KEQ led to an in-depth discussion on a broader organizational as well as political and social contexts. This had some similarities with situational analysis, one the first important steps in Research Communication. However, some elaboration on communication-related matters or "communication audit" was also done. It included an assessment of the existing practices of project communication, the extent to which communication products or activities met the current needs of the organization, communication capacity among project team members, resources allocated for communication products, etc.

In OpAsha the institutional capacity of communication was lacking. The Country Director was solely responsible for all project communication implementation - due to the limited capacity of the existing staff. The communication products that the project produced in the past included training materials for field coordinators, power point presentation, reports, and video. The production of communication materials tended to be spontaneous, as an operational framework for communication material development did not exist. The lack of clear communication purposes, objectives and target audience made it difficult to measure the effectiveness of communication materials they produced.

The discussion of USER, USE and KEQ during the face-to-face visit helped to show the link between UFE and ResCom. For instance, the second Evaluation Use ["*to disseminate findings and evidence to donors, government and potential adopters to provide more funding or uptake of the use of the technology to deliver TB"*] requires an explicit and structured communication strategy and plan. The OpAsha mentee confirmed that the intent of communication should be to support their immediate

need of using evidence to promote the App. So in this case the evaluation USE overlapped with one of the Research Communication purposes.

As explained earlier, the 2015 ICT4D Conference in Singapore was seen as an immediate opportunity for OpAsha to demonstrate the App and promote findings from the study to international audience and potential donors. It was then decided that OpAsha would prepare two communication materials, power point presentation and poster to be shown at the conference. The content and structure of those materials were discussed and reviewed together with mentee and mentors. This kind of peer-review prior to the production or demonstration of communication materials was never been initiated before.

b) Nazdeek's journey

Nazdeek had challenges in deciding what to evaluate and how to use the findings. The context was highly complex and the Skype calls proved to be inconclusive and it was difficult for the mentor to understand the bottlenecks. The mentor's visit to the project site allowed her to appreciate the situation. She was able to understand the partnership between Nazdeek -a high profile human rights NGO- and Pajhra -a committed field level NGO fighting for the rights of the marginalized. Nazdeek had filed two human rights violations in the state's high court with documentary evidence and the atmosphere was very tense when the mentor visited Tezpur, Assam. In addition, the USP [7] of the project, which was greater community involvement in reporting human rights violation, was itself under threat. While the geo-mapping of health rights violations was taking place, the tea garden owners and government were unaware of it. The women volunteers were afraid to report health rights violations as some of them were employed by the government (as nurse, nursery teacher, etc). Discussions with the Pajhra staff indicated that some women volunteers were not texting the infringements, they faced problems in selecting the right code, and did not seem to be motivated. Many women had never reported while others were very active (texting started in May 2014). It was also clear that without good community level data, Nazdeek would not be able to confront the government. The face-to-face discussions enabled a better understanding of the project under review, the challenges being faced and the context in which the App was being used.

Several options were explored for Users and Uses. One option for User was the government but having understood the political undertones of Nazdeek and Pajhra's work, and the fact that they did not have much of a working relationship with them, ruled out this possibility. Other options for Users were: the co-founder of Nazdeek, a human rights lawyer, located at their Delhi office, and the Program Director of Pajhra. The Use would be to gather data to communicate to potential funders as the project was ending in November 2014 (they subsequently received an extension of 3 months from ISIF). The mentee lawyer from Nazdeek felt that writing proposals to funders was not a problem but there was an urgent need to address implementation challenges particularly in community involvement, their proclaimed USP. For these

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[7] unique selling proposition

reasons, it was decided that the Pajhra Project Coordinator (ISIF grant) would be the User. The Use was to learn about implementation to improve the program, so that Pajhra and Nazdeek were better informed to source the next round of funding.

It appeared that Pajhra and Nazdeek were on a collision course with the government. It was critical for Nazdeek to understand that keeping a door open for communication was important for the realization of maternal rights. It must be noted that Assam is a border state in the North East of India and agitation politics is common. Authorities are less likely to listen and proactively assist in reviewing maternal health violations if the organizations are identified with agitation politics.

The UFE mentor assisted both Nazdeek and Pajhra to review their **theory of change** and in the discussions about KEQ, Users and Uses – a program audit happened quite naturally. This was immensely useful to the team. On return, this is what the mentee emailed: *It was great to meet you and get so much work done in such a short time. Although it was all completely new to us, we are now in the right place to get the UFE moving. (August 8, 2014)*

The result of the situational analysis also shed light on an opportunity for a communication intervention. Having known that Nazdeek was on collision course with the government, DECI-2 team strongly suggested Nazdeek and Pajhra to focus their project communication on building a good communication with the government in order to get their attention on the urgent need to stop violations of health right of women labours at tea garden. The underlying assumption was while a government might be part of the problem but they are also part of the solution, and that change – in this case is support from the government, will less likely to occur if organizations had an open and strong confrontational political stand.

Nazdeek and Pajhra agreed to use more collaborative approaches to engage the government. It was decided by the project that Pajhra led the communication activities with the government especially as Nazdeek would have been perceived as antagonistic. This meant that an explicit communication strategy needed to be built to support this work. A starting place was audience analysis, which allowed the team to connect with government as a future audience, and begin establishing a basis for collaboration.

The communication outcomes set out included "expect to see", "like to see", and "love to see" outcomes. The case in Nazdeek and Pajhra shows a considerable different with the case in OpAsha Cambodia and Cook Islands, as direct link between UFE and ResCom was not strong.

Following the communication strategy designed with the guidance from the DECI mentors, Nazdeek, Pajhra and ICAAD released the report, *No Time to Lose: Fighting Maternal and Infant Mortality through Community Reporting* and sent out a joint-press release about the report. The press release mentioned that commitment from the government was gained with the plan to establish "Citizen Grievance Forum" at the Block level to address maternal health violations. A short video was also made

and distributed highlighting stories on maternal mortality cases from the ground and testimonies on how the App is used as a tool to report cases.

The Nazdeek team reported that media coverage was good, around 4-5 local and national newspapers covered the press conference, including The Hindustan Times, and the kind of coverage was indeed positive. More recently, Time Magazine and the Guardian, covered the story of the use of App as a tool for community reporting to reduce maternal and infant mortality in Assam.

A Nazdeek laywer comments: "We've basically been following the strategy we designed during our last call … The objective of the communication strategy, (i.e. building a relation with the Government to have regular meetings between local authorities and participants) was met, and we're very happy about that. Now we'll need to understand whether authorities will actually commit to holding the meetings and whether they will follow up on the individual cases presented by participants during the meetings".

Nazdeek facilitated outreach to media, while Pajhra took a leading role in providing information to journalists from Time Magazine and the Guardian on what have been happening on the field. Executive Director of Pajhra testified that findings obtained from the evaluation process were very useful as convincing evidences to show to the media. The Pajhra mentee came to realize the link between UFE and ResCom where research-based evidence is taken up and used for communication purposes.

c) Cook Island's journey
One of the Cook Islands initial challenges was discriminating between a user and a beneficiary, especially as traditional evaluations looks at the results and impacts of the project of the main beneficiary. However, once they were able to identify other Users, including themselves, there was better understanding about how the evaluation data could be helpful to the project. They were able to leverage the huge amount of work that had gone into the database project and the impacts it could have on a number of users outside of those originally identified.

From the outset one of the key Users identified was the government. The purpose of the database project was to build an application that would preserve the Cook Islands Maori language that faces a threat of becoming extinct due to lack of use. The mentee was sure that at least one politician could be enlisted as the User, who would vouch for the project as it was focusing on the dwindling number of fluent Maori Language speakers. However, the political situation remained uncertain. The government was initially preparing for an election and even a year after it had been run, there was indecision as to its final outcome. This meant that there was little support from Ministers who were unsure if they retained their portfolios. Similarly without the Ministers, even Secretaries (the Heads of Ministries) were unsure about their positions. It therefore meant that the Cook Islands group had to look outside of government for other Users.

In line with the role of Evaluation Uses in the UFE process, the Purpose of communication is important to define. It this case, it was to get the buy in from the Ministry of Cultural Development and the Cabinet to allocate some funds to support preservation of Maori Language using the App; and to help the Ministry of Cultural Development to convince and get funding from the donors to support preservation of Maori Language. The main target audience identified included: the Secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Development and the Cabinet as their primary target audience; and Donors as their secondary target audience.

Although the Cook Islands team needed to do audience research in order to verify information needed and media preferences, some ideas emerged with regards to communication materials, including video presentation that contained testimonials from the users of the App, factsheets, and series of testimonial posters.

Outcomes: use of the findings

All three organizations reported benefits and unexpected outcomes from the UFE and ResCom process.

OpAsha's outcomes

1) OpAsha's **mentee/user** benefited greatly from being mentored – she knew the data so well that she could position it as needed to target key influencers and was able to use her ResCom knowledge and skills for marketing and developing communication materials. Involving the medical officer as a joint User has resulted in more debate and analysis within the organization. The greatest benefit was at a personal level – in understanding the project better and building a set of skills in evaluation and communication that could not be forgotten easily.

"I went through the process, so the data is part of me...the team understands how to use evidence and has built their capacity…they have touched, felt and learned from the data." (OpAsha, Country Director)

There were some **unexpected findings** from the UFE study – the number of people screened using the App (with the tablet) was fewer than the conventional paper-and-pencil method because field workers had to immediately key in information as

well as spend time explaining about the tablet and the App in the community. **This has resulted in plans for community sensitization.** This finding was important for a smoother scale-up. Other findings were positive as diagnosis was more systematic, more people were diagnosed and case detection rates were better. Most important, the medical record keeping was accurate as was the follow up with patients. Geo mapping was an added advantage.

OpAsha has used the information both internally and externally. *Internal* use has resulted in combining the e-detection app (which was funded by the ISIF grant) seamlessly with eAlert and eCompliance apps to provide a comprehensive community led TB prevention and treatment service. **The findings have also helped OpAsha to market its work and enabled a scale-up to other districts in Cambodia**. The data generated through the UFE study is being used as a baseline within the organization.

External use of the data includes the government's request to present the App and its findings at its next Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting and there is interest in OpAsha's extending the reach of the App. OpAsha feels confident regarding repeating the survey that they applied through the UFE and adding on questions for its next round of analysis. **OpAsha realized through the UFE and ResCom mentoring process, that the government would be interested in their work only if evidence was available from the pilot phase and OpAsha scaled up and extended its reach.** OpAsha is now realistic in its expectations from the government and has a mature understanding of how to plan their next steps.

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OpAsha's outcomes

- OpAsha had been ambitious, expecting the Cambodia government to invest in its technology from the pilot findings.
- OpAsha had been gathering a great deal of 'live data' about cases screened, detected, and followed up, related to the detection of TB. However the team had only counted the numbers and not analysed them across various criteria.
- OpAsha had streamlined the eDetection App, built field workers capacity regarding how to use the tablets, and resolved connectivity issues. However, they found that reporting by field workers was uneven with some doing better than others.
- The UFE provided an opportunity to analyse how the App was better in comparison to conventional paper and pencil reporting, what the constraints were of the field workers and what was the reaction of the community regarding the use of tablets by field workers.
- The UFE findings helped OpAsha realize that community sensitization regarding the use of the App and tablet was important and needed to be introduced.
- OpAsha realized that they needed to scale up, make the outputs of the field workers more uniform and sensitize the community - and only then ask the government to consider adoption of OpAsha's technology. This resulted in seeking donor funds for scaling up and expansion as an interim step before approaching the government to replicate and adopt.

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Nazdeek's outcomes

Nazdeek and Pajhra had been documenting and geomapping health rights violations on line without informing the government. The initial plan was to confront the government with the evidence. **However, it was only when a discussion about what**

needed to be evaluated and what needed to be communicated took place that the idea to build partnerships and strengthen advocacy with the government took root.

The UFE gathered information about volunteers profile, enquired about their motivation and constraints in reporting. The data indicated that the women did not perceive the violations as against human rights. All their life they had seen such violations and had accepted them as routine or their fate. What emerged was exactly what Pajhra as a human rights organization had been fighting for years – the need to empower tribal men and women who for generations had experienced exploitation. **Pajhra had, in the application of the App, completely missed out WHY the tribal women were not reporting lapses.**

Nazdeek and Pajhra **collected information regarding the factors affecting the participation of volunteers using a guided questionnaire** (because of the limited literacy of volunteers) and FGDs with volunteers and community. Almost an equal number of volunteers lived in the villages and the tea gardens but those who lived in villages were the "high reporters". Most "High reporters" were students and teachers, as opposed to not housewives or government field nurses or government employed nursery teachers. Those who did not report did so because they were not sure of the code they selected. Surprisingly, the government field nurses did not volunteer information regarding lapses in the tea gardens whereas those in the villages and towns were able to respond to demand for information. "Low reporters" in the tea gardens had more informal communication with women who accessed health services. ASHAs (government field nurses) command respect and have influence in the tea gardens and tend to blame the pregnant (tribal) women for keeping poor health or not taking the medicines and the pregnant women.

For example, Pajhra reported that the government nursery teacher did not receive nutrition for the under 5s in her care for 6 months in tea gardens and the villages, but did not report it. In villages, volunteers are more educated and can access ASHAs who will provide accurate information on health care lapses. But the context is very different in the tea gardens where there are cultural barriers for tea garden workers to access the higher caste ASHAs and her records.

The survey data raised questions about the interrelationships of the volunteers with the community, health care workers and the historical structural inequalities that subtly impacted the responses for an App that was technologically fine. **The underlying problem for Pajhra was the issue of entitlements and how confident women are to claim their rights. Unless this was resolved, the App was unlikely to report the real numbers of health rights violations.**

Another important outcome was that although there was a strong mobile platform available to report health violations -and it was common knowledge that there were health violations- **the volunteers were not reporting them in the numbers required**. Pajhra had assumed that the volunteers selected were either not competent or not motivated or had a conflict of interest (since some were employed by the government as teachers and field nurses) and it was perhaps necessary to recruit

new personnel. In fact the first interpretation of the findings was that it was the tea garden worker women (tribal) who were the least responsive although their interaction with other women was the highest. The plan was to ask them to leave.

The volunteers needed empowerment sessions – to know and exercise their rights as tribals and women and to be confident in reporting lapses in health care. Having minimal education, the women also needed more interactive ways to understand and report codes that represented specific violations. Finally, the women needed to understand their collective strength as advocates and to share and learn from each other. Follow up meetings with the relevant government authorities to redress health rights violations needed to be introduced and strengthened, not just the reporting of lapses. Women needed to see change happening. **Perhaps the reporting was important from a legal perspective but community action and dialogue with the government was the priority at the community level.**

The Outcomes helped Pajhra in the following ways:
- To retain the existing volunteers;
- To introduce rights based and empowerment sessions (and not just how to key in different health violations on a mobile phone);
- To strengthen the community component which was very weak and was subsequently addressed through trainings/meetings on cultural identity and self esteem;
- To translate the training materials into the tribal language "Sadri"; and
- To work with block level (administrative division) government officials to collaboratively bring change. This was a huge step as Nazdeek and Pajhra had already filed two legal suits against the government in the Assam High Court.

The Cook Islands' outcomes

The Cook Islands worked on what they wanted to find out through **the online survey** as part of the UFE study. Some of the areas for information gathering were to:
- Identify the demographic of our audience
- Identify their level of fluency in English and Cook Islands Maori
- Their preferred access to the database
- Its usefulness – given a set of suggestions
- Where the database was being used
- How the database compared with similar products also online
- Respondents views on whether we should proceed with the project

The Cook Islands team particularly **appreciated the mentor's guided instruction regarding what questions to ask,** helping them focus on how the findings were to be used. The User had previous experience in designing a survey and this was easy to do online.

One of the positive outcomes of the survey data, was that **they were reaching the intended target audience** – those who were native speakers of English. There was also an almost equal number of native speakers of Cook Islands Maori, which was

another advantage because they became the contributors to the development of the Maori database. There was overwhelming support for the project and its continuation. The target audience identified the predominant use of and the usefulness of the online access of the database.

The User used various avenues to communicate about the project findings via local media, a regional IT email list (PICISOC.org) and taking advantage of requests from IT conference organizers. Presenting the project as these events enabled them to extend the project out to as many other potential users as possible.

The local media, particularly the Cook Islands News reported on the work of the Cook Islands Internet Action Group. The media has been proactive in providing articles that have promoted the work that has been done on this project and in the achievements along the way. This has raised the profile not only of the project but also of the technical partners who have become involved. This has resulted in employment opportunities that were earlier not as forthcoming. The Cook Islands team proposes to use the survey findings to put public pressure on government via the media to allocate more resources in terms of language preservation.

The Maori Database, Cook Islands were unable to find at least one political champion to support their work. But within each of the sectors they found individual champions for their cause. Although the Ministry of Education did not give them the support, individual teachers eagerly offered to assist the project by helping to upload the dictionaries, and then later to produce the classroom teaching and audio resources to be used alongside the database in Maori Language classes of the national secondary schools. Along the way, they learned more about their own language and why it was important to produce this tool. The User (plus the software expert of the Cook Islands Internet Action Group) made the android app available offline and free for Cook Islands students, and it is proposed that another app will be developed to utilize the teaching resources more effectively.

The User and soft ware developer was awarded "Best Digital Innovator in the Pacific" for the database development for promoting a native language, by the Vanuatu

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Cook Island Outcomes: the recognition snowballed into other unexpected opportunities:

- Kia Rangatira - A group based in New Zealand got in touch. They are also interested in language preservation and shared the vision: Cook Islands Māori prosperity through excellence in education & training; and a commitment to supporting our students achieve their tertiary education goals.
- Niue Home Base - A trust setup in New Zealand got in touch as they were looking at partnering to tap into the Cook Island's expertise for developing teaching and language resources.
- Cook Islands Teachers Association – The association is looking at partnering with the project to get assistnce in deploying the teaching and learning resources into classrooms.
- Mama Mata's Cook Island Language Classes – A connection was made with a facebook site posting basic language lessons run by Mama Mata, a retired teacher based in New Zealand.

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Government – testimony that the project had succeeded in getting the message out across the region.

The intended outcome was the development of education resources and enabling teachers to use the database app as a teaching and learning tool. However, an unintentional outcome that emerged was that another App is being designed to use these teaching resources, which will utilize the original database, but can be used alongside the audio resources as additional tools for Maori Language learners.

Another intended outcome was to enable government officials to experience the work that the Cook Islands team was capable of, and to offer them employment. This occurred due to media coverage, which highlighted the achievements mainly abroad. An unintended outcome was an increased demand for the software developer's skills, acknowledged by a large regional organization (Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, FFA) and job offers in the Solomon Islands.

A ResCom user is the local media, particularly the Cook Islands News which has by far the widest distribution and influence of all the media outlets in the Cook Islands. The media has been proactive in providing articles that have promoted the work that has been done on this. This has raised the profile not only of the project but of the technical partners who have become involved, resulting in employment opportunities that were earlier not as forthcoming.

An unexpected propose was to use the survey findings to put public pressure on government via the media to allocate more resources in terms of language preservation. In the first 6 weeks of its going on sale, the Apple app was generating funds mainly from New Zealand and Australia but also from elsewhere.

Integrating UFE and ResCom

DECI-2 combined UFE and ResCom for the first time as two parallel mentoring streams. Organizations received opportunities to identify what they wanted to evaluate and in parallel an opportunity to work on their communication strategy. Organizations mentored for ResCom had the option to design the communication strategy, identify the audience and develop communication materials for whatever purpose they deemed important. They had the option to choose (or not) to combine ResCom with UFE, and develop communications for UFE dissemination. The mentors were open to both possibilities. As DECI-2 was a research project interested in tracing the conditions where organizations would see the 'natural fit' of UFE and ResCom and had the opportunity to create a coordinated response of USE and INFLUENCE of their study findings.

Because UFE and ResCom were considered to be parallel processes, the mentors followed their own mentoring schedule with the respective organizations. The UFE mentor scheduled the face-to-face meeting with Nazdeek independently, whereas the ResCom mentor provided inputs later and through Skype calls. Because the Cook

Islands were geographically far away and travel was complicated, it was planned that both mentors would visit together, but could mentor independently (as for Nazdeek). Our experience and feedback from our mentees in the Cook Islands indicated that if UFE 'led' the process, the ResCom steps fitted perfectly within the overall evaluation plans of the organizations. Identifying USE, USERS and KEQs provided an entry point for situational analysis, which is an important step in Research Communication. The mentees could see the connection between UFE and ResCom and their planning for both was simpler, quicker and relevant. It was a win-win for both mentors and mentees. This idea of twinning mentoring of UFE and ResCom was replicated for OpAsha with the same success. The OpAsha mentee reported that **UFE without ResCom and vice versa was 'fluff' and had no substance in application.** Lessons learned from this experience have led to the development of a hybrid approach to integrate UFE and ResCom.

This graphic below summarises how the Maori Database project interpreted the coordinated impact of UFE and ResCom. Their communication strategy involving media and conference presentations had raised awareness and users were starting to purchase the apps online. At the same time, it raised awareness of the skills of one of the local talents. The User and software developer was acknowledged: he has been snowed under with work of late, and received an offer of a job in the Solomon Islands to where he will be going very shortly. During the ISIF grant, the same person had lost his job and his skills were not recognized. The graphic explains how the database will use principles of ResCom and UFE to be a sustainable resource providing income to strengthen work on the database in the future.
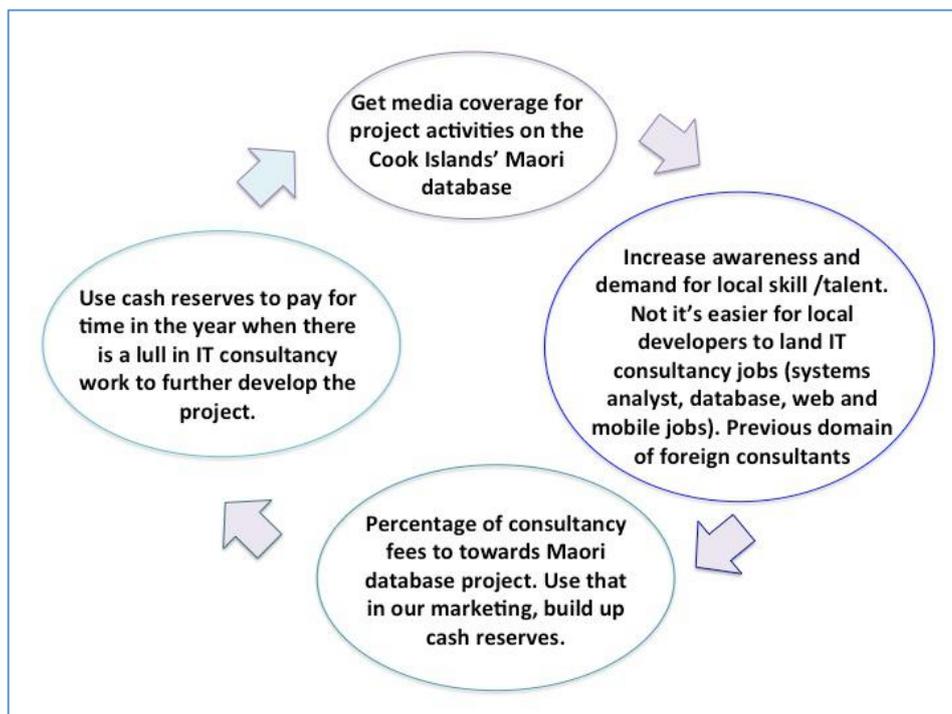
Nine lessons learned

1) **Informal project audit:** The emphasis in UFE on USERS, USES and Key Evaluation Questions, opened doors for course-correction in each of the three projects. A discussion on *what* the projects were trying to accomplish and *how,* enabled outcomes to be articulated clearly leading to an informal project audit.

2) **Complementary face-to-face & remote mentoring**: Webinars were meant to build capacities using low-cost technology with the recorded sessions available for refreshing and clarifying knowledge. The webinars were planned in such a way that each team had to do some homework that would build on what was learned in each webinar and bridge to the next webinar. It was hoped that this graded, blended learning would provide an impetus to the application of UFE and ResCom concepts. We learned that while the webinars were used to refresh concepts, and Power Points slides were used to sensitize important stakeholders, they could not substitute for the dialogue and discussion needed in a face-to-face meeting that helped to clarify doubts of both mentors and mentees. For the mentors, the most important advantage obtained from the face-to-face meeting was an understanding of the context in which the projects worked and an assessment of the staff capacity available in the organization. Both were critical to execute the UFE and ResCom since capacities had to be built internally and use was possible only within a certain context.

3) **UFE and ResCom are two sides of the same coin:** UFE and ResCom were planned in parallel, but they appeared to be best understood when capacities were built in tandem. In other words, having worked on the UFE *USERS, USES and KEQs* – it was very natural and easy for organizations to develop a communication strategy, identify the audience and purpose of the communication materials. The process was smoother and less intimidating when mentors worked together in supporting the mentees in UFE and ResCom. The synergy between UFE and ResCom enhanced the value of both. As one mentee put it – "You cannot do UFE without ResCom and you cannot do ResCom without UFE." The timing was important, illustrated through an experience with an organization where ResCom support came much later than UFE. The organization could not decide what they wanted to work on and such an experience can be frustrating.

4) **Evaluation USERs with many hats:** While working with this grassroots organization, it became evident that there was limited staff capacity and that they played multiple roles. Also, managerial staff was lean and hence there were very few options for adding evaluator and user responsibilities. In such cases, the practice of separating User and Mentee/evaluator/communication specialist roles was not possible.

5) **Keep it simple:** It is also important to note that grassroots organizations such as the ISIF grantees were busy with field level, dynamic issues that required

constant problem solving within a limited time frame. Therefore, application of UFE concepts and steps demanded simplicity. In other words: less theory, more practice.

6) **Just-in-time mentoring:** Mentoring based upon the need, pacing it so that organizations learn when they are ready was critical in embedding and experientially learning UFE and ResCom in this case. This type of individualized mentoring capacity building was very different from the workshop approach where primarily skill building has been provided.

7) **No goal posts:** Mentor skills and experience are important to guide organizations and facilitate the UFE and ResCom process. The process is entirely driven by organizations and although attractive in theory, it can be intimidating in practice. There are no goal posts. Mentor skills are important to understand the context and political environment in which grassroots organizations work. This understanding in turn guides organizations to implement UFE or ResCom that is practical, relevant and completed within a designated period, say six months.

8) **Building capacities and demystifying:** The mentoring that was offered built institutional capacity and commitment. Organizations expressed readiness, selected evaluators or communicators to receive the mentoring; and provided time, resources and personnel to complete the tasks. The mentoring not only built skills in UFE and ResCom, but demystified both and opened the door to use evidence for learning and evaluation. The process built institutional confidence and enhanced evaluative thinking. Organizations who were mentored were able to use the evidence constructively and identified new areas of work that would benefit from focused data gathering and analysis.

9) **Return on investment**: The mentoring process provided good quality sustainable capacity building for evaluation and communication skills, but it did require the investment of time and resources. Inexpensive means or short cuts to capacity building, however, do not give the same results. The mentoring process was cost effective in that only one face-to-face meeting was scheduled, and the results were a useful evaluation and communication product, as well as a number of new skills learned.