

**SAFERWORLD**  
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

# OUTCOME HARVESTING

Saferworld's approach



## What is outcome monitoring and harvesting?

Monitoring, evaluation and learning is a core part of the work that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding organisations do. At Saferworld, we are committed to learning from our work so that those most affected by conflict and insecurity see the biggest changes.

We use an adapted version of ‘outcome harvesting’ to carry out regular monitoring of our work and to ‘harvest’ our results. Outcome harvesting is an evaluation approach that brings together elements of ‘outcome mapping’ – which looks at changes in behaviour – and ‘utilisation-focused evaluation’, which aims to make evaluations as useful as possible for the intended users.

Unlike other evaluation methods, outcome harvesting doesn’t involve measuring progress towards predetermined outcomes. Instead, it collects evidence of what has been achieved in a programme or project area, and works backwards to determine whether and how the programme contributed to this change.

Ongoing outcome monitoring is Saferworld’s innovation. We don’t wait until the project is over: we monitor outcomes as we go.



Our focus is on changes in the behaviour of those we seek to influence, and on the relationships between them.

The system we use is simple – but the data we collect is rich, complex and varied. We ask a few core questions:

- Who is doing what differently, when and where?
- How significant is this change in practice or change in relationship?
- What contribution did the programme make to this change?
- What evidence do we have?

It works particularly well when you want to focus on outcomes rather than on activities.

It also works well for monitoring in complex programming environments where the paths to achieve change are often unpredictable, and theories of change need to be modified over time to respond to changes in the context.



## Why do we use outcome-focused approaches?

Saferworld works with people and communities affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security. We primarily focus on behaviour and relationship change in complex contexts – by and between different people, institutions and groups. We do this through programming, policy and advocacy. We use outcome mapping to specify the kinds of changes in behaviours, practices and relationships that we, our partners and communities would like to see. These changes are what we call ‘outcomes’ – what others are doing differently.

Using this straightforward language enables teams and partners to clearly define their own criteria for success. We work from the assumption that if, for example, a community can say what kind of behaviour and practice they want from the authorities that serve them, they will not only act as agents to bring about that change – they will also be invested in monitoring it.

Outcome monitoring and harvesting offer a way for us to get to the heart of what matters. It is a straightforward and easy-to-understand method of shifting attention away from

our activities (what did we do?) and onto the practical and observable shifts in actions by the people, groups and institutions our programmes are seeking to influence (what did they do differently?).

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**While doing outcome harvesting in Aden with groups that support the role of women in peacebuilding, the groups shared what they thought were minor changes but then realised the actual effects of those changes on behaviours. This is one of the reasons many groups in Aden are still working on peacebuilding activities.**

Awfa al Naami, Saferworld Programme Adviser.

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## Why is outcome monitoring and harvesting important for you?

You can use outcome monitoring and harvesting for several purposes:

- To put power in the hands of partners and communities – monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is for everyone.
- To document changes in very clear ways – who did what differently? Where did this happen? When? Why is it significant, and what contribution did we make to it?
- To provide practical ways to put conflict and gender sensitivity into practice – by understanding and responding to the negative and positive effects of interacting in a specific conflict context. A change could be significant in one context, and insignificant in another.
- To assess what you might need to adapt, shift, reinforce or remove as you go through different project phases.
- To create outcome stories that develop over time and that show your theory of change is working.
- To compile data sets for evaluations that track changes against time and context.
- To create project, annual and strategic grant reports.
- To improve your work and your proposals.

### Further resources

- **Doing things differently: Rethinking monitoring and evaluation to understand change**
- **Doing evaluation differently**
- **Upending the system: putting people at the heart of monitoring and evaluation**

A group of people, including a man in a black shirt and a woman in a purple shirt, are gathered around a whiteboard in a workshop. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or activity. The room has large windows in the background, and there are some decorations on the wall.

## What we can offer

### Saferworld's experience

At Saferworld, we have designed and developed our outcome harvesting approach over seven years. We embed this method in all our programmes and in our policy and advocacy work.

We've created a more participatory, analytical and adaptive approach to inspire our staff and our partners. We want everyone to see themselves as MEL practitioners, and to experience MEL not as a compliance and upward accountability exercise but as part of a professional commitment to high-quality programming.

At Saferworld, all teams and their partners run outcome workshops, develop outcome stories and upload them onto an online outcomes database that we have developed. Other teams review these outcomes and learn from them. When evaluations are commissioned, we make these outcome stories available as evidence to evaluators. This helps us to substantiate our theory of change, both programmatically and organisationally.

### Our services

- One-day training workshops for people who manage projects and programmes in complex environments and who have some experience of MEL as leaders, grant managers and/or participants. The workshops cover the basic aspects of developing and using an outcome-focused monitoring and learning system and provide insights and practical tips for putting such a system in place.
- Bespoke training for your organisation.
- Bespoke support to introduce outcome monitoring and harvesting as an organisational approach.

To find out more, contact us at: [training@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:training@saferworld.org.uk)

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I love these workshops. They help us to stop racing through project implementation activities and to reflect what works and what does not work, and how we need to adapt our interventions to be more effective and sensitive.  
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Bakhrum from Foundation for Tolerance International on his experience of Saferworld's outcome harvesting workshops.






## About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

For further information about our outcome monitoring and harvesting approach please visit: [www.saferworld.org.uk/what-we-do/learning](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/what-we-do/learning) or email us at [training@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:training@saferworld.org.uk)

You can keep up to date with our work by signing up to our newsletter at [www.saferworld.org.uk/stay-informed](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/stay-informed) or by following us on social media:

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