

# Outcome Harvesting Manual

Family for Every Child

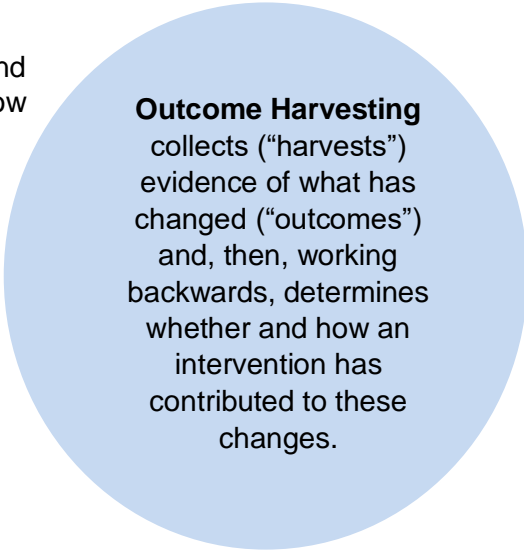
## 1. What is Outcome Harvesting

As it is said, a network is not the sum of its parts; it is the product of the parts' interaction. So in a network like Family for Every Child, many actors and factors work together to achieve change and it is hard to predict results. Outcome Harvesting has been a proven methodology to monitor and evaluate in a network setting.

**Outcome Harvesting** is a tool to identify, formulate, verify, and make sense of outcomes to answer useable questions like how did a programme or initiative contribute to outcomes?

**Outcome** here is understood as a change in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices of an individual, group, community, organization, or institution.

Using Outcome Harvesting, the **Evaluator or Harvester** collects information from reports, personal interviews, and other sources to document how a given program or initiative has contributed to outcomes. These outcomes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended, but the connection between the initiative and the outcomes should be verifiable.



**Outcome Harvesting** collects (“harvests”) evidence of what has changed (“outcomes”) and, then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes.

Unlike some evaluation methods, Outcome Harvesting does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes or objectives, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change. In this sense, it is analogous to sciences such as forensics, anthropology, or geology, which interpret events or contributing factors that led to a particular outcome or result by collecting evidence and answering specific questions. Information is collected, or **harvested**, from the individual or organization whose actions influenced the outcome(s) to answer specific, useful questions. The harvested information goes through a winnowing process during which it is validated or substantiated by comparing it to information collected from knowledgeable, independent sources. The substantiated information is then analysed and interpreted at the level of individual outcomes or groups of outcomes that contribute to mission, goals or strategies and the resultant outcome descriptions are used to answer the questions that were initially posed. (Ricardo Wilson-Grau Heather Britt 2012)

Sleuthing for Answers Outcome Harvesting is like forensic science in that it applies a broad spectrum of techniques to yield evidence-based answers to the following questions:

- ▶ What (change) happened?
- ▶ Who did it (or contributed to the change)?
- ▶ How do we know this (change) happened? Is there corroborating evidence ?
- ▶ Why is this important?
- ▶ What do we do with what we found out?

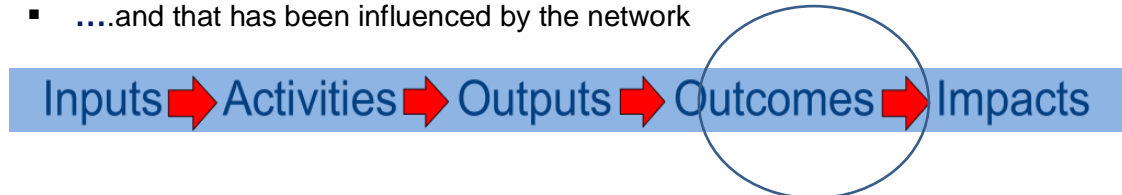
Answers to these questions provide important information about the contributions made by a specific program toward a given outcome or outcomes.

## 2. Some key Outcome Harvesting concepts to keep in mind:

- ▶ **Actor-centred:** Who are the social actors that contribute to or hinder the achievement of the goals of the network? Who have you influenced through your actions?  
*For Family for Every Child, these actors could be:*  
**Internal:** Network members and Board  
**External:** Government actors, Children, United Nations etc.

- ▶ **Outcomes as behavioural change:** Outcome is defined as:

- an observable and significant change in a social actor's behaviour (relationships, activities, policies or practice) that has been achieved...
- ....and that has been influenced by the network



- ▶ **Starts with what has changed**

- *From focusing on what is done - to focusing on what is achieved*
- *Working backwards to determine whether and how the network contributed to the change*
- *No measurement of progress towards predetermined results.*

Effect → Cause

- ▶ **Contribution over attribution:** what specific action or activity you took or what resources you provided which contributed to this *outcome*? This is a crucial part of the *outcome* statement, and shows how you and other organisations played a part in making change happen. How did you facilitate, inspire, persuade, advocate towards or deliver on achieving the *outcome*?
- ▶ **Participatory:** The harvesters, engage field staff and informants (families, children and other stakeholders), who are knowledgeable about what the intervention has achieved and how, and who are willing to share what they know. It also engages 'Harvest Users', individuals or organisations requiring the findings to make decisions or take action are also engaged throughout the process. These users involve in making decisions about the design of the approach as both the process and the outcomes unfold.

### It is important to note two different uses of the word OUTCOME:

- 1) An **outcome** (not capitalised and in italics) is the change/achievement described by Harvesters as a result of, or related to, programme intervention. This is how the term is used in Outcome Harvesting.
- 2) A **Programme Outcome** (capitalised) is a description of the long-term expected result of the programme, as described in the Programme Theory of Change, and as used in the Results Framework. (Christian Aid 2017)

### 3. The Basics of Outcome Harvesting

Outcome Harvesting can be used for the monitoring or evaluation of projects, programs, networks, or organizations. The method consists of six iterative steps:

1. **Design the Outcome Harvest:** Harvest users and harvesters identify useful questions to guide the harvest. They agree on what information is to be collected and included in the outcome description as well as on the changes in the social actors and how the change agent influenced them.
2. **Gather data and draft outcome descriptions:** Harvesters glean information about changes that have occurred in social actors and how the change agent contributed to these changes. Information about outcomes may be found in documents or collected through interviews, surveys, and other sources. The harvesters write preliminary outcome descriptions with questions for review and clarification by the change agent.
3. **Engage change agents in formulating outcome descriptions:** Harvesters engage directly with change agents to review the draft outcome descriptions, identify and formulate additional outcomes, and classify all outcomes. Change agents often consult with well-informed individuals (inside or outside their organization) who can provide information about outcomes.
4. **Substantiate:** Harvesters obtain the views of independent individuals knowledgeable about the outcome(s) and how they were achieved; this validates and enhances the credibility of the findings.
5. **Analyze and interpret:** Harvesters organize outcome descriptions through a database in order to make sense of them, analyze and interpret the data, and provide evidence-based answers to the useful harvesting questions.
6. **Support use of findings:** Drawing on the evidence-based, actionable answers to the useful questions, harvesters propose points for discussion to harvest users, including how the users might make use of findings. The harvesters also wrap up their contribution by accompanying or facilitating the discussion amongst harvest users.

*It is not about what you did  
It is about who you changed  
because of what you did!*

## 4. How to formulate Outcomes

- ▶ **Outcome title:** describe who changed, what, when and where
- ▶ **Outcome description:** Who changed / What change happened / Where it happened / When it happened  
A short narrative (max 3 sentences) describing the significant change in a social actor.  
The outcome description starts with the date and then the actor that changed.

- ▶ **Significance: Why it is important?**

**What is a significant change?** = A new practice, a break-through from old habits, something that is important to a certain stakeholder group, something that is a step towards a long-term change, etc.

- ✓ Explain **why** the outcome is important, and add context information.
- ✓ Include information related to the **prior situation or status** that changed.
- ✓ Compare/relate the achieved change to the expected goals of the network

- ▶ **Contribution: Activities / Outputs of the Family**

Short description of the activities and outputs of the network that plausibly contributed to the change in the social actor. The contribution can be small or large, partially, indirectly and even unintentionally.

- ✓ Describe how your programme activities plausibly influenced the outcome(s).
- ✓ Describe what the programme did, when and where: implemented activities (workshops, meetings, petitions, trainings etc.), publications (research), campaigns and other activities.
- ✓ Provide quantitative information: e.g., "4 meetings were held, 150 people attended workshops", "6 researches conducted" etc.

- ▶ **Substantiate**

Verify accuracy + deepen understanding • independent substantiators

For Family for Every Child

The evaluator will substantiate a representative set of outcomes with independent, third parties who have knowledge of the outcome

The Family For Every Child members and staff will be asked to provide sources related to their outcomes as well as relevant third parties.

- ▶ **Analyse:** Organise the outcomes so that they can be interpreted in ways that will enable you to answer the useable questions.  
Seeking processes, patterns, trends in what happened  
Classifying and analysing Outcomes  
Year, Internal, external etc

**Internal outcomes:** Changes in the behaviour of the Family for Every Child members and bodies which strengthen and develop their collective capacity to achieve the network's purpose.

**External outcomes:** Changes in the behaviour of individuals, groups or organisations outside of the Family for Every Child network that represent significant contributions towards the network's purpose

## Example:

**Outcome description:** In June 2015, the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India invited Butterflies to lead the Foster Care Committee in developing guidelines, training modules and monitoring tools on foster care and included their contribution in the Foster Care guidelines that were launched in October 2015.

**Significance:** This was a key moment in the development of state policy and guidance in India, when not only international NGOs and experts, but also national NGOs, including Butterflies were asked to contribute. Previously, there had been piecemeal and patchy development of foster care in India, led by internationally supported NGOs, but not strongly or consistently coordinated by the government.

**Contribution:** The exposure of Butterflies to foster care through its membership of Family enabled it to respond to a request it received from its government, and thereby make a significant contribution to the government's development of policy and guidance for foster care providers. Butterflies was able to respond within tight deadlines because of the help of network members finding and sharing with them the policy and practice examples from various countries

## Drafting solid outcome descriptions

Outcome: In 2008, UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) strengthened the language in its semi-annual review of peacebuilding in Burundi regarding the importance of accountability and human rights training for the security services, reflecting civil society concerns about human rights abuses in 2007-2008. Comment

Can you be more specific about the date? Which month?

Who within the PBC?

## Example of Internal outcome

### Outcome description:

At the September 2015 Assembly of Members, members led the individual sessions instead of secretariat staff.

**Significance:** Assemblies were far more led by the Secretariat. This demonstrates that there has been a shift in power, decision-making and representation away from the secretariat to the members. This supports a shift to a member-led network now that the mechanisms are in place to support members in a leadership role. These were not in place when it was a support unit and steering committee since the accountability for use of funds and delivery of results sat with the support unit staff who were employed and reporting to EveryChild

**Contribution:** The Assembly was designed by a working group made up of the President, Vice-Chair of the Board and staff from the Secretariat. It was a decision by the working group to ensure that members rather than staff were running sessions whenever possible. Also the approach to having co-chairs for the multi-member projects (Multi Country Initiatives) meant that there were members who had been involved in the decision-making on the development and delivery of the projects as part of the reference groups. They were therefore informed enough and participating in the leadership of the projects enough to be able to lead sessions

## 5. Formulating outcomes – Dos and Don'ts

### Use active verbs:

- ✓ Signed an agreement
- ✓ Invited to a meeting
- ✓ Participated in
- ✓ Used
- ✓ Worked together
- ✓ Promoted
- ✓ Published

### Keep in mind

Outcomes take time to emerge

Some outputs do not lead to outcomes

### Don't use phrases like

- ✗ Greater awareness...
- ✗ *Empowered women...*
- ✗ Community ownership...
- ✗ Reduced conflict...
- ✗ Increased collaboration...
- ✗ Governmental commitment...
- ✗ Gender sensitivity...
- ✗ Equal access...
- ✗ Budgetary transparency...
- ✗ Active participation...
- ✗ Poverty alleviation...
- ✗ Strengthened capacity...

**It is not about what you did –It is about who you changed because of what you did!**

### Remember.....

- ☺ Not every output leads to an outcome
- ☺ Outcomes take time to emerge – non linearity
- ☺ Not just big, intended outcomes – also unintended and minor
- ☺ Not just positive ones, but also negative ones
- ☺ No value statements – only observable facts
- ☺ Avoid abbreviations and too much jargon - Make it understandable for an outsider
- ☺ Not only funded activities – participation in the network
- ☺ No bullet points – write complete sentences

**Outcome Harvesting** was developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and colleagues Barbara Klugman, Claudia Fontes, Fe Briones Garcia, Gabriela Sánchez, Goele Scheers, Heather Britt, Jennifer Vincent, Julie Lafreniere, Juliette Majot, Marcie Mersky, Martha Nuñez, Mary Jane Real, Natalia Ortiz and Wolfgang Richert

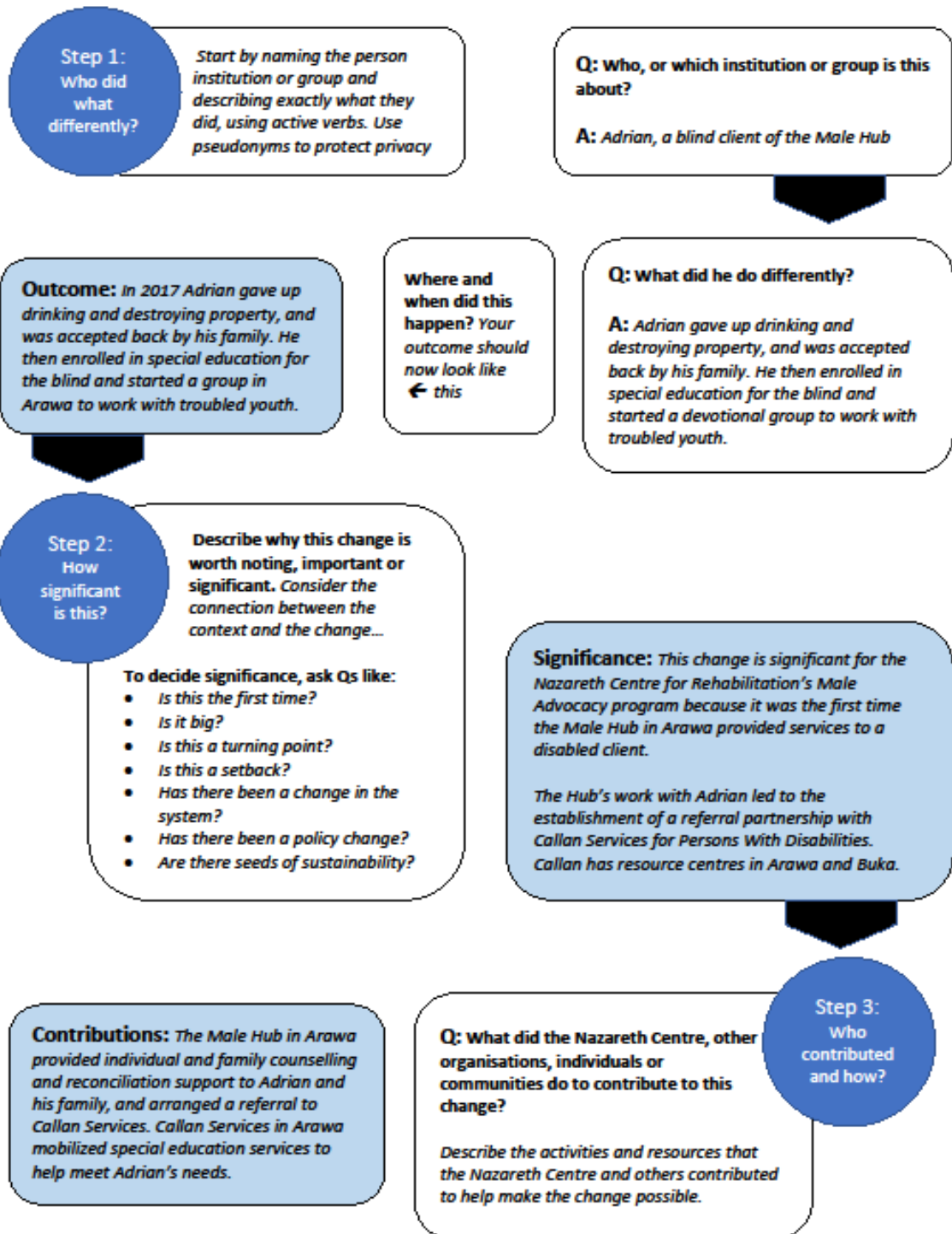
### References:

*Outcome Harvesting: Ricardo Wilson-Grau Heather Britt, May 2012 (Revised November 2013)*  
*Outcome Harvesting training material from Goele Scheers, 2016*



## Outcome Harvesting Step by Step: An Example

Adapted from: [SaferWorld 2016 Learning Paper](#)



## Annex 1: Outcome Harvesting Template

<b>Outcome number and Title</b>
<b>Overall description of the Outcome influenced by your membership of Family</b> <i>In which actor (e.g. government, partner, community or families) have you observed change, influenced by Family for Every Child, and your participation in the work of Family? Please describe in max. three sentences <b>what</b> this actor did that was new or different. Be as specific as possible about <b>when</b> this happened and <b>where</b>.</i>
<b>Significance</b> <i>Briefly explain why the outcome is important. The challenge is to contextualise the outcome so that a reader who does not have country and topical expertise will be able to understand why this outcome is significant.</i>
<b>Contribution</b> <i>Describe how Family for Every Child contributed to that change. How do you know that this change was a result— partially or totally, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally the work of Family?</i>
<b>Sources of information</b> <i>Provide the names of everyone who provided information on the outcome.</i>
<b>Substantiation: Documents</b> <i>Provide links to all written material that could provide evidence to support the outcome, significance and contribution (for example: publications, project reports, policy documents).</i>
<b>Substantiation: Independent people</b> <i>You will be asked to name two people who could testify the accurateness of the outcome. These should be independent people, who are not involved in the activities of the network.</i>

**Note:** The last two shaded rows will be filled in with the help of the M&E facilitator



## Annex 2: Outcome harvesting Design for 2019-2020

<p><b>Users and uses</b></p> <p><b>Board / LT</b>  Review progress against the goals and strategy  Make decision on integrating OH into regular - LT</p> <p><b>Members</b>  Review and improve projects, working groups  Identify new ways to engage in Family based on examples of what others are achieving</p> <p><b>Secretariat</b>  Review and improve the content of Alliance programme  Remove and improve processes of Alliance programme  Demonstrate value of membership  Help develop for support to donors  To develop case studies and communicate externally to build Family's credibility</p> <p><b>Strategic partners</b>  Learning about networks  Evidence of the effectiveness of our model and theory of change  Evidence that we are a key partner and change agent for them to work with</p> <p><b>Donors</b> current  Inform decision to invest in Family  Evidence of what their investment has achieved</p> <p><b>Supporters</b> individual givers, current and potential  Inform decision to support Family  Evidence of what their support has achieved</p>
<p><b>Monitoring questions: What do we need to know?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent are we delivering our goals?</li> <li>2. Where and how are we having most impact as an alliance?</li> <li>3. What are the emerging internal and external outcomes telling us about the value and vibrancy of the alliance</li> <li>4. What is contributed to Family evidencing outcomes – what is the story of impact that that we can tell?</li> <li>5. What is the internal learning from this annual Outcome harvesting?</li> </ol>
<p><b>How often and when to collect outcomes?</b></p> <p>Members (secretariat prompting) harvest on a continuous basis - use opportunities of meetings, trainings and any other events). As much as possible, the focal point will follow up with the member to articulate the outcome correctly.</p> <p>6 months deadline for outcomes- 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020.</p> <p><b>Please note:</b> For 2020-2021, because of the Covid-19 crisis, members will continue harvesting outcomes till end of July 2020 to capture outcomes of 2019-2020.</p> <p>After the 5 months deadline for members to finalise the outcomes, the following month will be used pin-ponging if that was not done immediately after the member sent the outcome.</p>
<p><b>Who formulates the outcomes?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members</li> <li>• Alliance Programme staff</li> <li>• Board.</li> </ul>

- Working groups;
- Joint action projects.

#### **Who coaches?**

M&E lead

AP staff coach the members to whom they are focal points to.

Goele Scheers as Advisor on specific things like Mobile App etc.

#### **How will the outcomes be harvested?**

On-going basis.

Individually and as in groups

Using the user-friendly template that is available on member's site and all the M&E documents

Mobile App when ready.

#### **Where will the outcomes be stored?**

Store the outcomes in Agile case by the focal point.

#### **Who does the analysis and when?**

Once a year by M&E focal point (a meeting will be held with the AP staff to cross check the analysis before writing the report) programme staff)

#### **When, where and with whom to do the interpretation and sense making?**

- The core M&E team
- Secretariat
- Members
- Board

## **Annex 3: How to use Outcome Harvesting App using Podio.**

*(This is available to members as a separate instruction document)*



**For any queries, questions and help, please contact**

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