

## Evaluating Influence

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### Introduction and Summary

*Influence approaches should lie at the heart of international development interventions. They apply to all types of interventions which enable change, whether large scale interventions demonstrating good practice or innovation, whether negotiation or diplomacy, lobbying or campaigning. The evaluation of influence is critical to shaping and maximising the effect of DFID’s development contribution by allowing interventions to be adjusted on an on-going basis. A recurring theme of International Commission for Aid Impact and the National Audit Office assessments is how we exercise our influence, in addition to direct spend, to maximise value for money. Systematising existing approaches and the judicious use of relevant indicators will allow practitioners to understand the pathways of change and to compare influence costs with anticipated outputs and benefits. Well designed and proportionate monitoring and evaluation can help capture influencing outcomes and be a foundation for assessment of value for money. The application of many existing approaches, methods and tools to evaluating influence will present the evaluator with some challenges not least in dealing with counterfactuals in order to assess impact and some other criteria. However, this note will go a long way in demystifying the evaluation of influence, if not in answering every question on the subject, and will help you maximise influence and make the most of the engagement by using the appropriate methods and techniques.*

**A working definition of influence:**  
 ...the action or process intended to directly or indirectly affect the way actors think or behave or the way something happens to achieve development goals.

## 1 Concepts and the Need for a New Approach

### 1.1 Who is this Guidance for and how should it be used?

This guidance is for DFID staff developing, implementing and evaluating influence interventions. It is anticipated that any evaluation of influence would be undertaken by an independent team. This guidance will help DFID staff develop evaluations and subsequently assess evaluations of influence and act as intelligent evaluation

Purple coloured boxes are used to **illustrate examples**

Sand coloured boxes are used to **highlight issues**

*Highlighted text in body of the paper indicates important aspects needed to get right.*

consumers. It is relevant to all sectors, and is equally relevant for the evaluation of strategy, or discrete actions or interventions.

The guide can be used by individual DFID staff or dedicated DFID negotiating teams aiming to achieve specific agreements or policy changes in the boards of multilateral and other agencies as well as specific programmes. It can be used to design the M&E of DFID influence to develop policy ideas for take up by developing partner Governments; or to shape the use of bilateral funding. It could also help improve DFID contributions to wider HMG influence goals.<sup>1</sup>

It supplements DFID’s [Evaluation Handbook](#) which Staff are advised to read first. Staff will also find other DFID guidance useful particularly regarding [business cases](#), theory of change, [results frameworks](#), [value for money](#) and [logframes](#). This guidance also provides examples and links to additional information.

## 1.2 What is “influence”?

*Influence* encompasses a range of activities, whether on programme budget or not, exercised directly, or indirectly. It *includes such activities as advocacy, lobbying, negotiation, diplomacy, demonstration, technical advice and other means*.

Each of these typically involve certain sets of activities carried out in certain spaces and through certain channels, and are summarised in the table below<sup>2</sup>.

<i>Type of influencing</i>	<i>Where? Through what channels?</i>	<i>How? By what means?</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<b>Evidence and advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National and international policy discourses/debates</li> <li>- Formal and informal meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research and analysis, ‘good practice’</li> <li>- Evidence-based argument</li> <li>- Providing advisory support</li> <li>- Developing and piloting new policy approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Piloting a new policy idea in-country, encouraging scaling-up at national level and spreading of ‘good practice’ lessons beyond</li> <li>- Use of analysis and evidence to build consensus for effective policy among donor community</li> </ul>
<b>Public campaigns and advocacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public and political debates in developing countries</li> <li>- Public meetings, speeches, presentations</li> <li>- Television, newspapers, radio and other media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public communications and campaigns</li> <li>- ‘Public education’</li> <li>- Messaging</li> <li>- Advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘Call for action’ around key international meetings (e.g. G8) in order to boost public interest and political will</li> <li>- Media campaign to promote governance through encouraging transparency</li> </ul>
<b>Lobbying and negotiation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formal meetings</li> <li>- Semi-formal and informal channels</li> <li>- Membership and participation in boards and committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face meetings and discussions</li> <li>- Relationships and trust</li> <li>- Direct incentives and diplomacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussions and negotiations around budget support for countries implementing reform plans</li> <li>- Participation in board meetings (etc) to negotiate future structure of UN</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Clarke, Jeremy, Mendizabal, Enrique et. al (2009) [DFID Influencing in the Health Sector: A preliminary assessment of cost effectiveness](#), ODI Evaluation Report

<sup>2</sup> To this end, Jeremy Clarke’s April 2008 paper for the strategy unit provided an important input.

**A word of caution:** In all cases the use of the term 'influence' in an evaluation should be used with caution to avoid the sensitivities than many organisations have of being influenced by DFID (or indeed any other organisation) or accusations of institutional arrogance. Other more palatable terms which could be used in public documents include evaluating DFID's *advice, efficacy of negotiation; policy dialogue or engagement.*

Some influence is targeted at other bilateral or multilateral donors. In some cases, influence is part of a wider sector programme while in other cases, it involves working with other donors to shape policy decisions by developing country Governments. Sometimes, DFID takes the lead and works on its

own, but often it plans and implements influencing interventions in close collaboration with other organisations – donors, CSOs, national governments, the media, etc. DFID's influence could be either specifically designed as stand-alone interventions or part of a broader budgeted intervention.

### 1.3 Why DFID should evaluate influence.

Managing the performance of influence is a neglected area and there are likely to be high pay-offs for small changes. Influence lies at the heart of all international development interventions. It is a complex subject for evaluation, providing both conceptual and practical challenges. As a consequence, the international development sector has tended to overlook its potential and significance in achieving development results. However, a combination of both internal and external factors has pushed the evaluation of influence up the agenda. These incentives include:

- a growing appreciation and understanding of complexity in development where results are determined by a mix of factors, both certain and uncertain.
- the ready availability of cost effective communications technology
- the changing global order elevating both reputation and 'soft power' as dimensions in development co-operation.
- a growing commitment to results, value for money and transparency.

**Stand-alone influencing interventions** are actions which are specifically designed to influence, where the message is the key focus and where skilled human resources are the critical ingredient and where relatively little, or no funds are involved. This type is common in lobbying, campaigns, negotiations, diplomacy. Specific examples include DFID's MDG campaign 2005/6 to encourage countries to actively adopt strategies to deliver 2015 targets; DFID lobby for one Gender Entity within the UN system (2009).

**Programme budgeted interventions** are those where the funding element is essential. The influencing dimension is not always made explicit but is central to leveraging the change sought by the budgeted programme, for example by enabling change, or demonstrating good practice or innovation. This type is dominant in DFID's bilateral programmes. Specific examples include budget support programmes to national governments; DFID's support to Kenya's social protection programme.

The reasons for DFID to engage in evaluation of influence are the same as for other types of evaluation and include the need to provide credible evidence for accountability purposes and to ensure that policy and interventions are evidence-based.

### 1.4 Challenges of evaluating influence

Influence processes are particularly challenging to monitor and evaluate as they are intangible, dynamic interactions with many variables.

### Key characteristics of influencing processes

<b>Sophisticated</b>	involves depth of understanding and managing nuance
<b>Multi-layered</b>	operates with different and over-lapping constituencies simultaneously
<b>Unpredictable</b>	influencing is a dynamic and adaptive process with many factors affecting an influencing pathway. It is varied in pace, intensity and duration, making predictability a challenge, and unintended consequences and beneficiaries part of the process.
<b>Non-linear</b>	progression of influencing pathways can chop and change, reverse, slow down, or accelerate after a sudden breakthrough.
<b>Multi-dimensional</b>	transmission of ideas, policies, approaches - we often think of influencing as being uni-dimensional ie we expect the influencer to influence its targets, however the targets also influence the influencers as the interaction develops, plus others, who have their own relationship with those influencers or with the targets, also engage.
<b>Context specific</b>	every influencing action and intervention is vulnerable to external contextual factors, the particular interaction between the immediate players, and the resourcing of the intervention in question
<b>Multiple perspectives</b>	open to differing perceptions from those who engage, witness or examine.

## 2 Stage One: Planning the Evaluation

When undertaking an intervention involving influence the general principles underpinning evaluation are applicable and start with the need to build evaluation in at the beginning. DFID's [Evaluation Handbook](#) provides generic guidance on the principles, planning and delivery of evaluation, but here we highlight aspects which are particularly relevant to the evaluation of influence. The basic components of good intervention design applicable to other interventions are equally applicable to influence. These include ensuring adequate baseline information of key performance indicators; robust situation/context analysis; clear and measurable objectives; a testable theory of change and solid monitoring data.

### 2.1 Defining the Purpose and Audience

*Every evaluation – including of influence – needs to have a clear purpose articulating what the evaluation is intended to ascertain.* If the purpose is not clear then neither will the evaluation be clear. Performance improvement and accountability are the most common evaluation purposes, but there are others also. If the evaluation is done jointly with others for example, the purpose may be to promote a common understanding of the context or influence initiative.

A closely related issue which should be resolved at the same time you define the evaluation purpose, is *for whom is the evaluation being undertaken?* Key questions to ask are: Who wants the evaluation? Why do they want it? How do they intend to use it? To answer these questions, it is useful to look back at stakeholder or political analysis of the intervention (often conducted for influence) of whom the project seeks to influence, key drivers of change and who the key partners are. Their involvement in the design,

#### Two reasons why DFID should evaluate influence

1. **to improve** performance on influencing strategies and processes which are:
  - currently underway (eg changing influencing tactics)
  - to be pursued in the future (eg optimise choice of strategy)
2. **to account** for the public (human and financial) resources spent. Influencing is a legitimate development intervention and therefore subject to the same degree of scrutiny as any other development intervention.

development and delivery of the evaluation will greatly influence the degree to which the evaluation will serve its purpose.

## 2.2 Influence and the Theory of Change

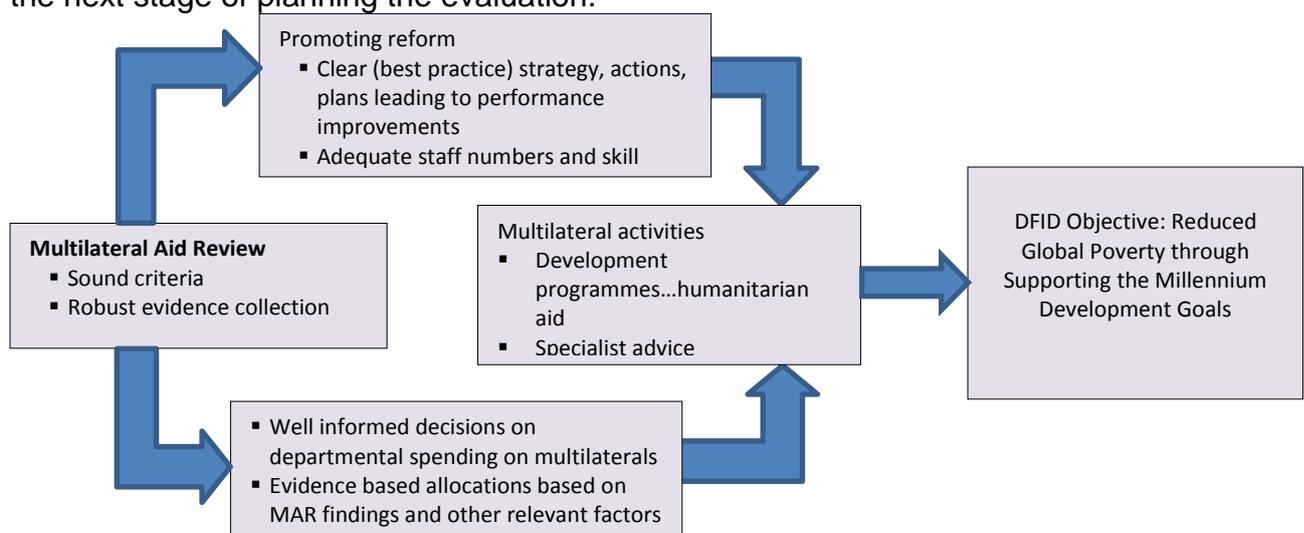
*A robust **theory of change**<sup>3</sup> should lie at the heart of development interventions and their evaluation. Influence is no different.* In order to directly or indirectly influence relevant actors and audiences to achieve development goals it is essential to know how the proposed influence actions will translate into development goals.

*Establishing degrees of causality between inputs and outputs, outcomes and impact can be technically challenging for influence, but is important none-the-less even in this challenging field.*

Packed with beliefs, assumptions and hypotheses about how influence occurs, influence needs to articulate these assumptions, causal chains and hypotheses about how influence occurs (normally in a non-linear way) in ways which an evaluation of influence can subsequently test. Explicit detail is needed about the intermediate steps, for which a diagram is a useful tool. Additionally supported by text to explore hypotheses and evidence, the theory of change is both a product and a process which should reflect both DFID's and its partners' initial and evolving understanding of how the influence change will happen from inputs, through outputs, outcomes to impact. Each step of the pathway should be underpinned with explicit assumptions. Each assumption should in turn, be underpinned with an indication of the existing quality of evidence. If it is known or anticipated that assumptions may not hold in certain contexts, it is useful to note these risks.

The theory of change will help identify key evaluation questions about the influence intervention which in turn will shape the design, approach and methods. One such example of a theory of change was the one developed by the NAO to assess DFID's influence efforts of multilaterals following the Multilateral Aid Review. The diagrammatic representation of this is presented below.

This simple articulation of the theory of change, separating influence activities from spending decisions, provided a good starting point to develop evaluation questions – the next stage of planning the evaluation.



<sup>3</sup> DFID's approach to theory of change has three components: context analysis, hypotheses of change, assessment of the evidence for the hypotheses.

## 2.3 Evaluation Questions

*Evaluation questions are central to shaping the evaluation design of any influence intervention.* The evaluation questions should be specific and emanate from the purpose of the evaluation; theory of change; and the proposed use of the evaluation findings.

In principle, a range of evaluation questions could be generated for any influence intervention, and it is important to craft the evaluation question(s) carefully to focus the evaluation such that it meets its purpose. Depending on the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the questions may focus on the process of the influence (target of influence, which processes or products are most relevant, success of alliances etc) or on the impact of the influence, examining the degree to which the intervention achieved and contributed to its goals.

### Developing evaluation questions.

In 2012, DFID worked with the NAO to evaluate its influencing efforts in relation to multilateral reform, including an assessment of the Multilateral Aid Review's impact on value for money. Focusing both on process and impact the following evaluation questions were designed to give DFID an idea of what progress is being made relatively soon after the MAR was published.

- How robust is DFID's engagement on system-wide reform?
- How well is DFID engaging with other donors?
- How well is DFID promoting agency-specific reforms?
- What has been the impact of the MAR so far?

## 2.4 Scope of the Evaluation

The influence intervention being evaluated is currently frequently ill-defined in which case preparatory work should be done to better define the intervention and describe the theory of change. In preparing the evaluation a decision needs to be made on *the scope of the evaluation which will define the policy and institutional context, time period, geographical area, target groups/partners, expenditure, implementation arrangements and other aspects to be covered by the evaluation.*

Narrowing the scope of the evaluation is important to ensure that the evaluation is achievable and more likely to deliver robust results. Where constrained by time or other resources, evaluations of DFID's influence should focus more on delivering quality findings of narrow areas of its work than attempting to cover a broader scope of the intervention.

## 2.5 Key Choices on Design, Methods and Tools

*The choice of questions to be asked and answered in an evaluation of influence will directly inform the choice of evaluation design, method and tools, which together should be capable of articulating a credible approach to attribution of cause and result.*

There are two types of **evaluation design**<sup>4</sup> – experimental (including quasi experimental) and non-experimental. (See DFID [Evaluation Handbook Chapter 4](#)). In most cases the evaluation design for influence will be non-experimental on account of the difficulty of establishing the 'control' or 'comparison' groups required for experimental and quasi-experimental design. However [evaluations using experimental designs](#) have been conducted for evaluating the impact of research and such approaches should not be ruled out.

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<sup>4</sup> Staff should refer to the study commissioned by DFID, [Broadening the range of Designs and Methods for Impact Evaluation](#), Stern et al (2012) for in depth discussion on non-experimental designs.

### Evaluating Influence Using Quantitative Methods

In 2012, researchers from Harvard evaluated the impact of propaganda on violent conflict using quantitative methods, including a study of the effects of “hate radio” station Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) which called for the extermination of the Tutsi ethnic minority population before and during the Rwanda Genocide.

The study used village-level data sets on RTLM transmitters to identify how many villagers had access to a radio before and during the Genocide, coupled with the number of people prosecuted for violent crimes in those areas.

The main finding shows that broadcasts calling for the extermination of the Tutsis by RTLM were responsible for an increase in violence. A counterfactual suggests that 10% of violent crime can be attributed to the radio. Other findings demonstrate that, once a critical mass of the village had access to RTLM broadcasts, the composition of violence changed to collective violence rather than individual acts of violent crime.

See [Propaganda and Conflict: Theory and Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide](#) David Yanagizwa-Drott

As with many complex evaluations, it is anticipated that evaluations of influence contain a mix of both **quantitative and qualitative methods** - though it is important in all events that the choice of methods reflects the purpose and questions.

As with standard evaluations there is a wide range of information and **data collection tools** available, including a growing number of digitalised instruments. Before going to the effort and expense of collecting new data it would be important to assess what data is already available. Whether collating existing data or collecting new data it is important to select tools which will deliver the data required to respond to the

evaluation questions. These tools need to be identified at the planning stage as there are operational implications for the tools selected. For example who will undertake the data collection? What will be the cost of data collection?

Section 4.1 contains summary information on a range of data collection tools sufficient to identify which might be appropriate for a given evaluation. Links to further information are contained in each summary.

## 3 Stage Two: Conducting the Evaluation

Evaluation principles<sup>5</sup> apply to the evaluation of influence in the same way as they do for any other evaluation. In common with some other complex evaluations, the evaluation of influence does have some distinctive features<sup>6</sup>.

### 3.1 Time-frames for scheduling evaluation

The time-frame for achieving influence goals is often unpredictable, can take many years, and in many cases is very likely to extend beyond the period of DFID’s support. In these circumstances how do we account for use of DFID’s funds which may be required before meaningful results on influence are available?

How do we set and implement a meaningful evaluation plan? Where delivering influence goals will clearly take many years to achieve and their evaluation is not feasible, intermediate or interim outcomes can be evaluated whose indicators should signal progress along the way and be clearly grounded in the influence theory of

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<sup>5</sup> See DAC Guidelines on Evaluation <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/41612905.pdf> for a general treatment of the five core criteria for evaluation: effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact and relevance later explained in the HTN.

<sup>6</sup> DFID acknowledges the design of the UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit Chapter 4, to present distinctive features of the M and E of influencing

change.

*During implementation, regularly care should be taken to review the scheduling of the evaluation plan and to adjust as necessary to ensure evaluation takes place at meaningful point(s) in the life of the influence* ie when results have had a chance to materialize or to mature.

Where a meaningful point for evaluation is going to lie beyond the duration of DFID's engagement, various strategies can be adopted including supporting partner(s) to undertake an evaluation at a later date or else commission an evaluation after DFID's engagement has concluded.

#### Evaluating the influence of research – a case study from Vietnam

16 months after the publication of the *Vietnam Development Report 2010 (VDR)*, the Overseas Development Institute partnered with a local research institution to evaluate its impact on policy debates around institutional reforms in Vietnam.

The evaluation design involved an analysis of uptake of the report through data collection of online hits, downloads, citation analysis and analysis of outcomes using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders.

An assessment of the evaluation concluded that 16 months was too soon to meaningfully assess the report's impact; a longer time frame is suggested for future similar projects. Citation analysis was found to take much longer than had been expected, due in part to the variety of ways in which the VDR was cited.

Click [here](#) for an assessment of the evaluation and [here](#) for the evaluation

### 3.2 Shifting strategies and milestones

*Influencing strategies and tactics evolve over time.* They reflect new or changing information and experience as well as the influence others have over us and our approach and objectives. Opportunities also arise which could not have been predicted at the outset, where those seeking to influence will want to take strategic advantage in order to maximise impact. How should we deal with this in our evaluation?

- At the outset, identify and describe discrete aspects of the relevant context which will likely affect influence. These might include key stakeholders' values, interests and needs; external context: key threats and opportunities in the pathway to reaching the influence goal. (see for example DFID's [Political Economy Analysis](#))
- Focus on the core influencing goal, but retain flexibility to adapt strategy, tactics and milestones in light of information gained through disciplined tracking and monitoring as the influence develops. For example schedule regular opportunities to reflect on the alignment between information, influence pathway and goal and adjust as necessary.
- Record adjustments in a timely fashion across all the relevant tools (for example theory of change, strategy, milestones, logframe), so that everyone engaged in the evaluation is working to the adjusted strategy or tactics. This is important not only for the immediate development of the influence, but also to generate evidence for use in subsequent evaluation.

These should be addressed within the theory of change at the outset which should be adjusted as necessary during the course of the intervention. *The annual review is a good time to make changes to the theory of change, logframe and other pertinent documents.*

### 3.3 Measuring attribution

*Direct causal links between inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact are often difficult*

*to establish in influence<sup>7</sup> and it is rarely appropriate to attribute all results to DFID's actions. Describing DFID's plausible contribution to an influencing intervention using the theory of change and assessing the degree of contribution to a result or impact should be considered standard practice for evaluating influence.*

Impact evaluations often use control groups to ascertain what would have happened in the absence of an intervention or an alternative intervention. This approach can be problematic for evaluating influence for which there are other useful more feasible approaches to evaluating impact using alternative counterfactuals. These include for example theory-based evaluation; simulation modelling; identifying and tracing mechanisms that explain effects; ruling out other mechanisms/hypotheses; looking for frequency of association between cause and effect; and/or association and analysis of multiple combinations of causes (for example, qualitative comparative analysis). Some of these approaches are discussed in Section 4 on [Methods and Tools](#) and in the [Annexes](#)

### **3.4 Evaluating Influence and the DAC Criteria**

*Like other evaluations, the evaluation of influence should seek to use the [DAC Evalnet](#) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.*

The criterion are well defined in DAC Evalnet papers and in the DFID evaluation guidance but it is useful to consider how they might be adapted to influence.

An assessment of **relevance** will judge the extent to which the influencing intervention serves DFID's and their partner countries' overall development priorities and policies. The theory of change will articulate the link between the specific influence and the overall anticipated change, but the evaluation may wish to assess the extent to which the objectives of the programme remain valid; whether the specific activities and outputs of the programme are consistent with the goal and the achievement of the outcomes; whether the intervention is based on a robust situation analysis which has been updated over time, and whether the intervention approaches, partnerships, aid instruments are still the right ones.

**Effectiveness** is a measure of the extent to which an intervention achieves its objectives and should be regarded as a main-stay of any evaluation of influence. Evaluating the effectiveness of influence will seek to ascertain the degree to which the objectives have been met and the degree to which the influence contributed to the objectives. Evaluating effectiveness may prompt such questions as: To what extent were the objectives of the influence achieved or can be plausibly expected to do so? What factors contributed to the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?<sup>8</sup> Examples of influence and engagement-specific questions might include: To what extent did the secondment at Institution X play a key role in advancing the results agenda? Did the budgetary replenishment negotiations at the Regional Development Bank result in a greater focus on value for money that would not have occurred otherwise? Did the NGO campaign to raise public awareness of human rights lead in country Y to a discernible change in attitudes to human rights violations?

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<sup>7</sup> See section 5.4 regarding the important question of whether it is *desirable* to claim attribution, or even contribution

<sup>8</sup> It can also be argued that results are hard to define without assessing the counterfactual question, including "what if we did not do it"?

### Evaluation of Communications Efficiency

The Institute for Public Policy Research commissioned an evaluation on the public discourse around climate change in the UK. Discourse and semiotic analysis (which reveals structural patterns in communications and cultural exchange) were used to assess their implications for providing communications which connect to mass audiences. Analysis was undertaken across extensive written media, radio, TV, books, web and interviews.

Evidence in the first evaluation showed that communication was 'confusing, contradictory and chaotic.' Three core repertoires were detected (1) alarmist (2) 'it will be OK' (3) 'it will be OK if we do something about it'. The report found that these messages were largely unproductive and recommended that communications agencies "sell" positive climate behaviours just as products are marketed in the retail sector.

To download the full reports: ['Warm Words' : How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?](#) (2006) and [How the climate change story is evolving and lessons we can learn for encouraging public action](#) (2007)

The **efficiency** criteria measures how inputs are translated into results. It may seek to ask whether an alternative intervention could have achieved the same results using fewer resources (including money, time and staff). When evaluating the efficiency of an influence, the following example illustrates the type of evaluation question asked: Was the combination of institutional secondments, high level formal negotiation and public diplomacy the most efficient means to change the UN's approach to X or would a cheaper range of interventions have achieved the same result<sup>9</sup>? Were the objectives to

influence the host government's policy on X achieved on time?

The criterion of **impact** seeks to assess the positive and negative changes produced by an influencing intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. They may be short term or emerge more slowly. *Attributing impact will involve a counterfactual (though not necessarily a control group) against which to compare what might have happened in the absence of the influencing intervention or under an alternative intervention* (for example the pre-existing approach). *Constructing a counterfactual for influence particularly when many other factors have a bearing on the intended result presents difficulties which will require careful consideration by the evaluators.* It cannot be stressed enough that critical, intellectual input is needed to do this well since the credibility of the whole evaluation of influence may be questioned if the counterfactual is not credible<sup>10</sup>.

When evaluating the impact of an influence, it may be useful to consider the following questions: What has happened as a result of the intervention and why? How have attitudes changed and what was the contribution made by the influence? To what extent has the government X's policy on Y changed and what role did DFID's public diplomacy play?

**Sustainability** is concerned with the continuation of benefits beyond the end of the intervention, where benefits should be regarded in its broadest sense to include, as appropriate, economic, institutional, human resources, environmental etc.

When evaluating the sustainability of an influencing intervention, the following

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<sup>9</sup> This question also implies the use of the counterfactual referred to elsewhere in this section.

<sup>10</sup> One way of emphasising is to get evaluators here to explicitly ask the question in the negative: *what if the intervention had not taken place?* It is acknowledged that this is a hard question, but it is the one making evaluation of influence worthwhile. When evaluating influence, the articulation of the counterfactual is hardest, and is likely to be mixing art and science – the art of persuasion.

questions might be considered: To what extent did the benefits identified continue after the intervention ceased? What were the major factors which affected the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the intervention?

### 3.5 Calculation of value for money in influence

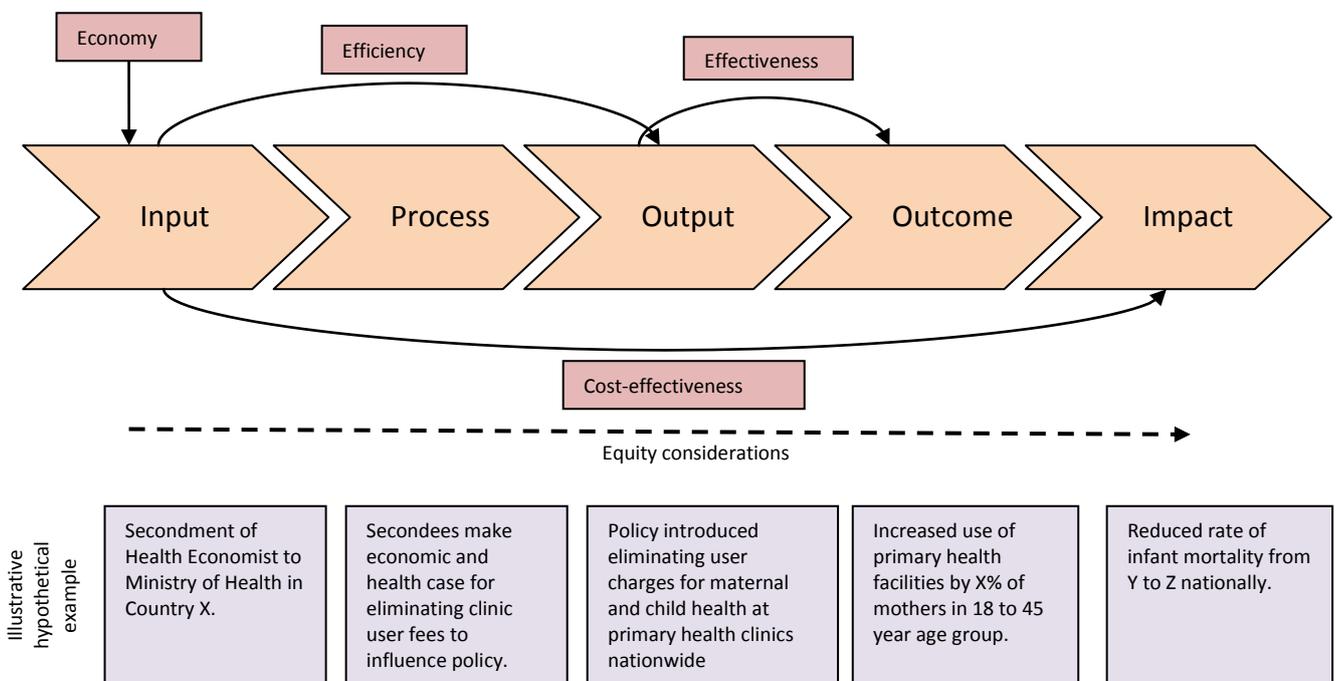
*The process and goals of influence should be regarded as a development intervention like any other and as such be subject to value for money considerations and assessment.*

The calculation of value for money for influence is more complicated than other topics of evaluation, as it is likely to include intangible outputs, unintended costs and benefits and long time-frames. When calculating value for money for influence, we recommend the assessment, at the outset, of the probability of success of influencing interventions or funded intervention.

When understood and presented as a development intervention with a results chain, theory of change and budgeted costs and quantified benefits, the application of standard value for money tools and approaches to an evaluation of influencing interventions becomes more manageable.

Expected development **benefits** might include particular benefits of policy changes; more effective multilateral organisations; greater practitioner understanding of a particular development problem; better public awareness of a particular development issue etc. Where expected benefits can be monetised, cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness exercises can be undertaken, and indicators such as net present value, economic rate of return, social return on investment can be used to assess the value for money of the influencing action / intervention.

Where the benefits cannot be monetised, but only identified, or observed, shift the focus lower down the chain to measure efficiency (ie the ratio of outputs to inputs). In these instances a strong evidence base and strong theory of change, explicit in stating underlying assumptions of causal links, are necessary to ensure outputs will stand a good chance of translating into outcomes.



Defined as *'the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes'* value for money is about both costs and benefits of the work we do. Detailed guidance available from Finance, Performance and Impact Department suggests three levels

of analysis.

- a. **Economy** measures the cost of influencing interventions inputs and assesses whether the inputs are acquired at the right price. Inputs should be assessed for: quantity, quality, timing, appropriateness, application and costs (eg secondments, travel, research grants, administration, consultancies, staff<sup>11</sup> and opportunity costs of senior officials and Ministerial time). In the health example above an assessment might be made of whether a consultant or a DFID staff member represents best value for money.
- b. **Efficiency** measures how inputs (costs) are translated into stated outputs (benefits) and whether alternative processes might have achieved the same or similar outputs for less input. In the health influencing example above alternative ways of supporting the elimination of user charges (such as high level negotiation and lobbying or results based aid) should be explored to assess whether similar cheaper alternative interventions would likely to achieve the same or similar results. Such an evaluation finding might suggest changing course mid-term.
- c. **Effectiveness** measures how well the outputs from influencing interventions are achieving the desired outcomes. In the health influencing interventions example above an examination should be made of the relationship between the elimination of health user fees and the increase in use of health facilities. Would for example, better training of traditional birth attendants have achieved the same result at lower cost?

It is important to always state clearly how benefits or costs are being calculated, including any assumptions made. The text box opposite provides an example of an innovative way to value benefits.

Another aspect of VFM of influencing interventions is to consider whether a proposed evaluation itself represents value for money. For this you will need to assess the likely value of the evidence the evaluation will generate and compare that to the financial and other resource cost of the evaluation exercise itself.<sup>12</sup>

Together with the New Economics Foundation, WaterAid used **Social Return On Investment (SROI)** to calculate the **value for money** of its policy influence on sanitation in Nigeria.

Drawing up a list of possible benefits of the national sanitation policy included fewer work days lost through illness, avoidance of direct health costs and a greater sense of well-being. The NEF used data on average rural wages in Nigeria to estimate the extra income that would result from fewer periods of illness as well as WHO research on the direct costs of healthcare in Nigeria. A proxy was chosen to value the greater sense of well-being and assumptions were made (including on the discount rate) that enabled WaterAid to identify a net present value of these benefits of \$22.5m. Five per cent of this was attributed to WaterAid's influence, acknowledging the contribution of other key stakeholders and the coinciding International Year of Sanitation which triggered increases in funding, including from DFID. Applying these calculations and assumptions, the NEF calculated a return on WaterAid's investment of 1:76.

### 3.6 Sensitivities regarding communications

The norm for DFID is to make publicly available the information on evaluation findings of influencing interventions. There are however instances where to do this

<sup>11</sup> see <http://teamsite/sites/fcpd/MAG/default.aspx> scroll down to *Other Information*, and click *Unit Pay Costs*

<sup>12</sup> Note the cost of not evaluating and then running an unsuccessful intervention or intervention with unintended negative impacts needs to be factored into the decision

would undermine the very objective of the influencing interventions, for example, where knowledge of an active influencing plan, or claim of attribution<sup>13</sup> would adversely affect a partnership or have wider detrimental impact.

Communicating about influencing interventions processes and findings should be pro-actively considered during design, and reviewed regularly during implementation, as a mistake in communications has the potential to undermine the whole influencing intervention. Staff will need to apply their own judgement, and take particular heed of the following:

- the IATI Standard<sup>14</sup> for the publication of aid information
- DFID’s Guidance on excluding sensitive information from publications.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.7 Metrics and Measurement

*As influencing intervention is often intangible and multi-dimensional, considerable attention should be given to framing and describing the relevant, discrete elements which, together, contribute to a particular influencing intervention process ie a pathway to deliver particular goals. The more an influencing intervention can be broken down into discrete units of measurement mapped against the results chain, the more robust monitoring and evaluation can be.* It is important that the baseline and target indicators for the influencing intervention are appropriate for their level in the results chain. For instance indicators of web hits or downloads following a communications campaign are more likely to be activity indicators than anything higher up the results chain.

As with other interventions, indicators should be articulated for each stage of the results chain. For example, consider the following dimensions:

- **Activities** can be measured by determining and describing whether they were implemented and completed. In some cases it will be possible to establish a percentage completion rate of influencing interventions or the quality and timeliness of policy related analysis or research or DFID staff support and advice.
- **Outputs** can be measured by reporting observable changes in the behaviours<sup>16</sup> of

**Model - Dimensions of Policy Change**

- Framing debates and getting issues on the political agenda: this is about **attitudinal change**, drawing attention to new issues, affecting the awareness, attitudes or perceptions of key stakeholders.
- Encouraging **discursive commitments** from states and other policy actors; affecting language and rhetoric is important, for example, promoting recognition of specific groups or endorsements of international declarations.
- Securing **procedural change** at the domestic or international level; changes in the process through which policy decisions are made. For example, opening new spaces for influencing
- Affecting **policy content**: while legislative change is not the sum total of ‘policy change,’ it is an important element
- Influencing **behaviour change** in key actors; policy change requires changes in behaviour and implementation at various levels in order to be meaningful and sustainable

Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, Cornell, Ithaca, 1998.  
[Wikisum.com/w/keck and sikkink: Activists beyond borders](https://wikisum.com/w/keck_and_sikkink:Activists_beyond_borders)

<sup>13</sup> Even when ‘attribution’ can be measured, it may be advisable to claim ‘contribution’ in order to protect and sustain good partnerships, some of which may sometimes be delicate.

<sup>14</sup> [IATI Standard](#)

<sup>15</sup> The guidance also includes procedures to follow regarding implementation of the exclusion criteria within DFID’s systems. The exemption criteria are based on the Freedom of Information Act (FOI).

the intervention's main audiences or targets; or changes in DFID's own behaviour in relation to the purpose if they are directly responsible for achieving it. Some of these will be expected changes; others will be unexpected. And these changes may be positive or negative in relation to the Theory of Change.

- **Outcome** indicators will identify what will change, and who will benefit. For influencing interventions of all types, indicators of outcome should be measures of how the influence being sought will contribute to poverty alleviation or the Millennium Development Goals. If an outcome of an influencing interventions is a change to a specific policy, the indicator could suggest the degree to which the policy has been articulated, approved and subsequently implemented. In cases where the *policy* changes refer to efficiency savings or increased or decreased budgets or interventions these should *be quantified* and noted.
- As already noted, the **impact** of influencing interventions is most likely to be a broader longer-term change that is brought about by the cumulative effect of a number of influencing interventions and other interventions by a variety of stakeholders. Any evaluation of the impact of influencing interventions should include appropriate high level indicators and be systematic, rigorous and empirically investigate the impacts produced by an intervention, using appropriate designs and methods.

## 4 Methods and Tools

Many evaluation methods and data collection tools are not exclusive to assessing influencing efforts, but rather lend themselves to such engagement. Cost benefit measurement in regard to evaluating can be particularly useful where influencing efforts are directed at generating, or expanding public goods and services.

The methods and tools toolkit noted below provide short descriptions of methods and data collection tools which are particularly relevant to both the monitoring and evaluation of influencing interventions. The list is by no means comprehensive, but rather illustrative of the range of methods and tools available and aims to give an indication of the tools that could be used for each type of influencing intervention whether campaigning, lobbying, public diplomacy or negotiation.<sup>17</sup> The recent DFID commissioned study, Broadening the Range of Designs and Methods for Impact Evaluations<sup>18</sup> (on which this material is partially drawn) gives a good overview of the issues.

### 4.1 Theory Based Methods

Here is a selection of qualitative and quantitative methods which can be used in non-experimental design. Choice will depend on both the evaluation question being answered and the type of influencing intervention being evaluated.

The *general elimination method* uses a case study after completion of an influencing

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<sup>16</sup> Behaviour changes include measurable levels of awareness or understanding about an issue; the attitude towards people, groups, issues, or ways of doing things; the formal and informal discusses that both guide and illustrate agents' beliefs, understandings and intentions; their actions and relationships; and their competencies, skills and capabilities.

<sup>17</sup> The [Annexes](#) contain more information on each of the tools including notes on the process, examples and a bibliography where further information can be obtained.

<sup>18</sup> See [www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/design-method-impact-eval.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/design-method-impact-eval.pdf)

effort, and is used to determine whether a plausible or defensible case can be made that the influencing interventions effort had an attributable impact.

*Contribution analysis* compares an intervention's theory of change against the evidence in order to come to robust conclusions about the contribution that it has made to observed outcomes.

*Process Tracing* is a qualitative research protocol to trace the causal links between putative causes and outcomes by identifying the intervening causal processes or mechanism at work.

## 4.2 Case Based Methods

The *single case study* is a qualitative method which allows the examination of context, causal processes, results and unintended results or unexpected consequences. Case studies tell an in-depth story about what happened and contribute to the bigger picture, but which have limited use out of context.

*Multiple case studies* A more rigorous design also exists, involving multiple case studies, termed '*qualitative comparative analysis*'. Here the emphasis is on constructing case studies with strong features of comparability, such that consistent, new or divergent patterns can be identified.

*Social network analysis* maps and measures relationships and flows between people, groups and organisations, computers, URLs and other connected information/knowledge entities. The nodes in the network are people or groups, while links show relationships or flows between the nodes. Social Network Analysis provides both a visual and a mathematical analysis of human relationships.

The aim of *discourse analysis* is to reveal underlying assumptions and perspectives as expressed across various forms of communication and involves analysing discourse such as writing, conversation or any other form of communication. Political discourse analysis is a variation which focuses on debates, hearings, speeches, draft policy to reveal policy positions, openings for negotiation etc.

## 4.3 Participatory Methods and Approaches

### Using a diverse range of indicators:

DFID worked with NAO to evaluate its influence on multilateral reform, including an assessment of the impact of the MAR. Since the evaluation began less than a year after the publication of the MAR, it was thought that a focus on good practice criteria and progress to date could enable the team to conclude whether the influencing efforts were likely to deliver the intended outcomes:

- Quantitative: number of multilaterals who said the review led to an increased focus on reform
- Qualitative: views of DFID staff, expert panel, academics, other government departments
- Semi-quantitative: conformity of DFID's strategy for reform with good practice criteria
- Semi-quantitative: conformity of DFID's engagement strategy for multilaterals with its own best practice criteria

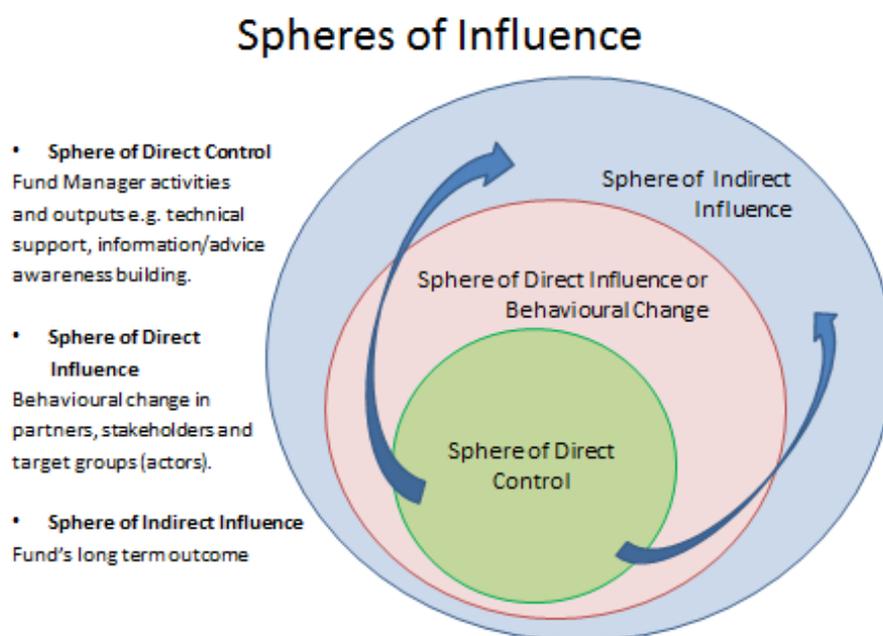
The evaluation found that the MAR had increased scrutiny on value for money and created incentives for organisations to reform, however, according to NAO DFID's approach to multilateral reform had fully met only one of six good practice criteria.

*Developmental Evaluation* involves either internal or external evaluators who develop long term relationships with a particular influencing interventions process. Evaluators become part of the influencing team, contribute evaluation questions, and bring data and logic to assessment and decision making. They strengthen the reflective dimension which is particularly critical in the development and assessment

of any influencing effort. Developmental evaluation is particularly useful where the evaluation purpose is informing decision-making concerning an influencing process currently underway. It works well in complex situations, and over long periods of time.

The aim of *Spheres of Influence Approach* is to align inputs, outputs and outcomes with spheres of control and influence, clarifying the contribution of actors to ultimate outcomes or impacts while also understanding the extent of that contribution. A particularly useful aspect of this approach is its application to situations where the role and value of particular partnerships need to be recognised<sup>19</sup>.

CSD is piloting this approach to better understand whether fund manager activities such as capacity building can lead to improved performance of projects.



The diagram shows three spheres of variable control from direct control to indirect influence onto which is mapped the spheres of influence of one of Civil Society Departments' main funding mechanisms – the Global Poverty Action Fund (GPAF).

*Impact Planning Assessment and Learning*, developed by Keystone, assesses influence from the perspective of the consumers/recipients. It is designed to help social purpose organisations plan, monitor, evaluate and communicate their work in a way which makes practical sense of the complexity of social change processes and their measurement.

*Most Significant Change* involves participatory monitoring and evaluation where participants collect and select stories/aspects of the intervention which are most significant to them. Originally developed for impact monitoring, most significant change has been adapted for use in impact evaluations by expanding the scale of story collection, the range of stakeholders engaged in story collection and by using it alongside other evaluation methods.

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<sup>19</sup> This work is subject to peer review by Steve Montague and it is hoped that further stages will examine the interconnected nature of spheres of influence with different spheres of direct control. More information is available from CSD.

*Outcome Mapping* is a participatory approach for planning, monitoring and evaluating development programmes developed by the International Development and Research Centre. Development outcomes are measured in terms of the programme's contribution to changes in behaviour and relationships between the actors with whom the programme interacts directly.

Participatory Analysis – '*Sensemaker*' derives from a mix of systems theory, cognitive science and anthropology, and is useful where an organisation has to understand multiple interactions and decisions from a large population, which cannot be predicted or controlled by that organisation. The concept was originally used in risk assessment and counter-terrorism. Its use has now been extended to other fields, and is for example, currently being used in DFID in the Girl Hub.

*Social Return On Investment* (SROI) is an adjusted form of cost-benefit analysis that was developed to operationalise the HM Treasury's guidance on value for money. It is an outcomes-based approach that uses techniques of economic valuation to bring non-traded social and environmental costs and benefits into the appraisal framework.

#### 4.4 Data Collection Tools

In the context of influencing, monitoring needs to be sensitive to the fast pace and dynamic nature of the interaction and processes involved. Obtaining data/feedback in real-time, ensuring space to reflect on implications for strategy and tactics, and using the data/feedback to adjust action or overall course has higher priority than in other areas.

*Tracking* requires a disciplined approach to recording events, action/in-action, changes – progress or backtracking. Maintaining a tracking log is an essential way for ensuring individuals and teams keep abreast of all that is happening, and have as much relevant information as possible to inform decisions on the influencing intervention and strategy in hand. Tracking is a form of monitoring which is both able to record changes in real time, and to gather any information, not just information which is directly relevant to progress against indicators.

Tracking of *media logs* may involve keeping quotes, newspaper articles with date and time of reference to record how campaigns or issues are covered in the media. Extend this to include tracking column inches in print media or air time on TV/radio to make a deeper assessment. Uptake logs: note examples and anecdotes of uptake of advice/research.

A tracking log critically enables the influencing team to reflect on the various aspects of influencing as it unfolds, to facilitate timely adjustment to course of action and make strategic adjustment in light of patterns emerging from cumulative data and information.

*Social media analytics* (digital tools) is a fast developing area containing a variety of data collection tools, and where globally, there are many experienced consultants available. The following box provides a few examples of data sought and the digital tools which can deliver.

*Critical incident timeline* plots a graphic of actions or critical events associated with strategy, alongside outcome. It can incorporate contextual and historical factors. It is constructed using document review and key informant input. This tool provides a way to present the relationship in time between a strategy's activities and its outcomes and achievements. An example is an [interactive timeline](#) for mapping the

Middle East protest.

*Crowdsourcing* derives from 'crowd' and 'outsourcing' is where a task, usually undertaken by a designated person or group, is outsourced to an undefined and generally large group of people by an open call for contributions. As crowdsourcing is technology- driven it can engage stakeholders across large geographical areas. An example of crowdsourcing is [mapping election violence](#) in Kenya.

#### Some on-line data collection tools

<b>Data Sought</b>	<b>Appropriate digital tools</b> (each with hyperlink)
Track webpage statistics	<a href="#">Google Analytics</a>
Track downloads	interrogate <i>server logs</i> ; huge choice, try <a href="#">Weblog Expert</a>
Twitter statistics	<a href="#">TwitterCounter</a> for raw statistics <a href="#">Klout</a> to get an idea of influence
Survey of your website users	<a href="#">4Q</a> gets key data on how people are using website and what they think of it
Analysis of contacts	<a href="#">Mailchimp</a> for mailing list system
Track media and blog mentions	<a href="#">Google Alerts</a> ; and <a href="#">Social Mention</a>
Academic citation analysis	<a href="#">Publish or Perish</a> uses Google scholar
Implement an M and E log	Survey tool such as <a href="#">Survey Gizmo</a>
Bring all data together in a dashboard possible software and site	<a href="#">Qlikview</a> software for larger organisations creating a lot of outputs each month. Other tools include: <a href="#">Zoho Reports</a> , <a href="#">Google Docs</a> or <a href="#">Google Fusion Tables</a>

Source: A pragmatic guide to monitoring and evaluating research communications using digital tools Nick Scott, ODI  
<http://onthinktanks.org/2012/01/06/monitoring-evaluating-research-communications>