

EVALUATION RESULTS:

Engaging various audiences for effective learning and influence



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Presentation overview

1. Introduction
2. Two challenges re achieving influence with evaluation results
3. Possible solutions to challenges with examples from recent evaluation practice

Introduction

- **Step 1** in achieving influence!
- As evaluators we are interested that our research about the changes we find will be used to make a difference in the context that we are working in (at various levels)
- Produce reports with the results of our work: how effective are they at reaching and engaging decision-makers?
- Results must **reach** key players and decision-makers and they must **engage** with the results if they are to influence policy at any level.
- To achieve this, evaluation results need to be **accessible**.

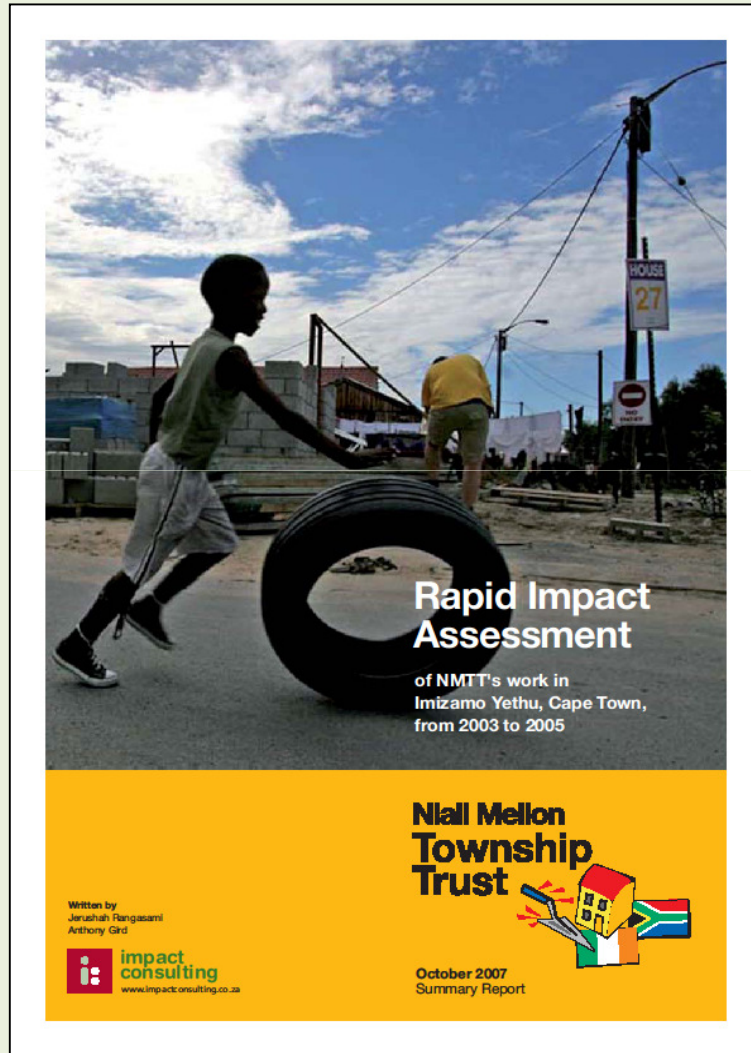
Two challenges

1. Difficulties of **effectively reaching** a wide audience
2. Lack of **meaningful engagement** with results

Challenge 1: effective reach

- Effective reach means that relevant stakeholders will be:
 - *motivated to read*
 - *able to understand*(at least) relevant portions of the report
- We hold unrealistic expectations of intended readership, particularly when it is comprised of multiple and diverse stakeholder groups
- Exhaustive and technical reports not accessible to many stakeholders (eg programme staff, policy makers, beneficiaries)

Solution 1 to challenge 1



- Production of a summary report that is **accessible**
- Presents key findings and lessons without ***diluting integrity*** and without ***simplifying*** at the expense of richness or complexity

Accessibility =

- shorter, concise
- attractively designed
- clearly and simply written
- use of diagrams, graphs, pictures
- presentation of rich qualitative work (eg MSC stories)

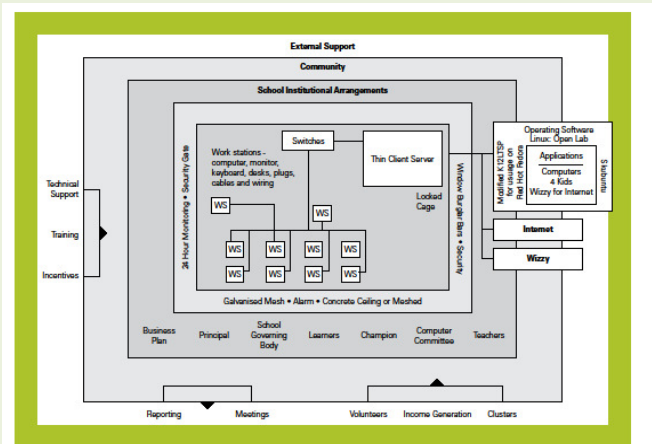


Figure 2: Elements of the i2Lab model

“

Niall Mellon is like Moses from the Bible who released the Israelites from persecutions in Egypt and took them to Canaan, to a world of milk and honey.

”

“

I feel like I'm in heaven. I have found my heaven on earth with my new house.

”



Examples of reporting impact in an accessible summary report

4. Findings

4.1 Impact on direct beneficiaries

4.1.1 Most significant change stories

The most significant change stories were filtered through a beneficiary small group selection process to get four stories per focus group and then through a selection from the research team to choose one story per focus group. The two beneficiary stories presented below are the two that have been finally chosen as the most significant stories overall by NMTT management. These particular stories were chosen primarily because they represent the range of issues that arose in the MSC stories. The other two stories chosen by the research team can be found in Appendix 2.

All stories were translated from Xhosa to English by the Xhosa-speaking facilitators. The MSC stories provided rich detail of impacts for beneficiaries. However, what cannot be presented here is the level of emotional intensity with which many of the stories were relayed in the focus groups and the deep appreciation for the houses that were relayed to the research team by the research participants. In addition, beneficiaries expressed appreciation for the research itself and the space to tell their stories.



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Story 1

“

I was born in a shack. I have stayed there all my life, bridging electricity¹ from other people, toilets that were too far from the home and were not safe to go to night. In 2004 our shack was one of the shacks that burnt to the ground.

We had to stay at my mother's workplace - in the back room, all 6 of us in one room. The room was also leaking and had asbestos roof, which is where I picked up chest problems. We also had to contend with the boss's moods.

2005. My mother then bought a 1 1/2 bungalow (single-roomed timber shed) and put it up at Westlake (Tokai). We stayed for a year and came back when we heard about the Mellon project. However there were other people living in my mother's plot so we had to rent space to put the bungalow. Once more we were all cramped in the bungalow. During winter, it would rain and all our clothes would be soaking wet. We had nothing to wear to school so we did not go.

Gerald helped my mother and the people who were staying on our plot were moved. Then my eldest sister passed away and we had no place to have the funeral. We had it at my aunt's house which was better house. After that we lost our cousin. On the other hand they had started building our house. Then heavy rains came in June and we couldn't take the flooded place anymore. We moved that same night into our Mellon house which was not finished. The steep [verandah] had not been erected, there were no floors and we had to borrow a leg from someone to get in. People tried to talk us out of moving in to an incomplete house, they said we would get sick but we did not care.

The following day the people from NMTT said and we were not supposed to be there was no way we were going back to the shack. They later came back to finish up and fix it. There were more of us now, with two of us children having come from the Eastern Cape.

Life improved as soon as we moved into the house. My mother started buying furniture house and this created a lot of tension among neighbours. This did not dampen our about having a home at last - especially since not even have what you could call a toilet back in Eastern Cape to talk of. My mother us a home at last.

Unfortunately we lost another sister in 2008 makes me sad in that we all struggled to get small shack, and today when we finally have a comfortable home - our family members be there to enjoy it with us. I know it may be but I believe that if there had never been in 2004, maybe we would not have had the built for us. Some good came out of some

¹ Photos of bridging electricity from shacks or shacks into other shacks into administration buildings.

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Story 2

“

I arrived in Hout Bay in 1972 at the height of apartheid. I raised my all my children and some have their own homes today. Life was very hard then, we lived in plastic shacks. We would go to work and not know if our homes would be there when we got back. Bulldozers would destroy the shacks, all our belongings and food destroyed.

If it wasn't that it would be the rain or a fire. We were moved from squatter to squatter until we came to Hout Bay - near Disa River. I must say that in the midst of our suffering, we enjoyed the clearest, purest water from the mountain.

It was heartbreaking to realise that we left our homes in the Eastern Cape for a better future in the Cape and ended up living in terrible conditions, not fit human beings. You would be ashamed to have people visiting you from home (Eastern Cape). You would be laughing stock because they couldn't understand how you could leave your home in the rural areas to stay in a shack. We were ashamed to have visitors, every year the shack needs fixing, sealing the leaks, plastering.

If we were having babies, the midwife would not be able to find your home because there was no address in Disa River.

The health problems (chest and legs) I have today are as a result of years of wet and cold in the shacks. I moved into the Mellon house in 2003. I am overjoyed that after so many years of suffering in the shacks I have a proper house today. Today we see like other people - proud of our homes. We are no longer living like pigs, which is the case when you live in a shack, because no matter how often you clean, it is always dirty. Today we are not ashamed to have visitors

coming to our houses. We are enjoying hot water, the security of locking your house when you leave. My health is much better than it was before.²

Today (when I go to work, I lock my house and know that it will be safe. Even when I come back wet from the rain, I know I can get into a hot bath. Today even when I work as a domestic worker, I look at my maid's house and say "mine is just like this - with electricity and hot water". Today I do shopping like the ma'am. I get "Windowlene, Handy Andy..." household cleaning products), the same.

When my boss is renovating her house I know I will get good things I'll be able to put to good use in my new home. Some of us have washing machines in our homes today. Of course there are problems, but we are very happy and grateful to have proper houses over our heads.

Mellon has given us our dignity, pride and self respect back. No one ever thought that black people would stay in Hout Bay.³

”

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4.2 Case Studies

Six case studies were conducted at schools – three at schools with well functioning labs and three at schools with labs which were not functioning well. The case studies were conducted to get a better sense of why labs functioned or not, and what some of the contextual limiting and enabling factors were. Two of the case studies are presented here.

case study one:

“Linux is actually not that difficult, people just need a mind shift”

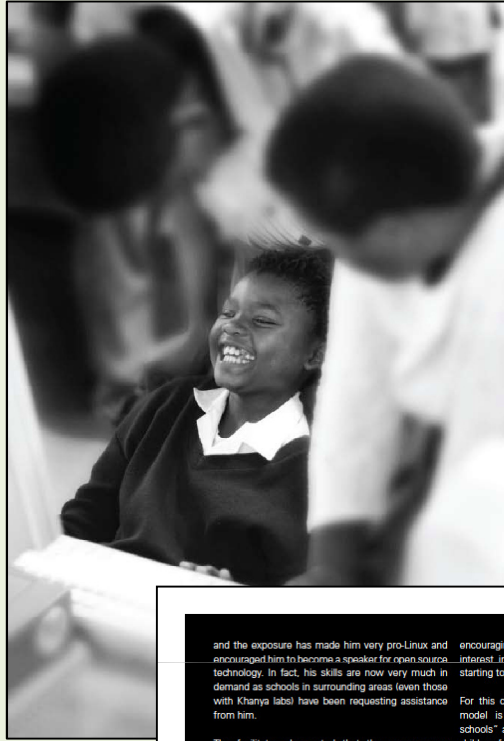
Situated in the scenic Cape Winelands, School A is a primary school with 700 learners and 10 teachers. Most learners come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, where opportunities to excel in education (and in general) are limited.

Only 50% of the school's learners will matriculate and there is a very high level of unemployment within the local community. Much of the work available is limited to seasonal employment on

surrounding wine and fruit farms. As 80% of the learners do not have access to computers at home, the general level of computer literacy is low. When their tuXlab was established in 2004, there was much excitement at the school as it was the

first time that most of the learners had been given any access to a computer. One little boy in Grade 3 reported that he had never seen a computer before his visit to the new tuXlab and he initially thought that he was looking at a television or a piano.

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and the exposure has made him very pro-Linux and encouraged him to become a speaker for open source technology. In fact, his skills are now very much in demand as schools in surrounding areas (even those with Khanya labs) have been requesting assistance from him.

The facilitator also noted that the open source programmes have allowed him to make his lessons more creative. This change in perception about open source technology has not, however, filtered down to the teachers. They feel that they have not learnt anything about open source software and they prefer Microsoft because it “is just so much more accessible”. One teacher felt that open source was “a step back”, because the tuXlabs don't have the curriculum programmes that Microsoft has. Therefore, the facilitator faces the challenge of changing the perceptions of teachers who “are quite set in their un-technological ways”. Teachers received training a number of years ago when the lab was first established, but they do not know much about the labs or about open source. The facilitator has been

encouraging teachers to take more of an active interest in the labs and has noticed that they are starting to experiment more on the computers.

For this champion, the key strength of the tuXlab model is that “it identifies the poverty-stricken schools” and is able to provide computer access to children for the first time in their lives. Without the tuXlabs, these children would not have any access at all. The result is computer literacy for learners and an increase in children's sense of self. One teacher noted that “children are typing faster and with more confidence”. There has also been an improvement in learners' mental maths skills and they can also now use various maths programmes to make graphs and add up different currencies. Their general knowledge, chess skills and grasp of literature has improved, as learners have access to poetry through the labs. Equally importantly, the lab has prepared learners to work with computers when they reach high school. For teachers, the hope is that the labs will help children to learn “that the world isn't only as big as South Africa”.



case study two:

“At present the computers look like they are about to fall apart... learners don't want to come in here and work on this”

School B, situated in the Cape Town area, is a junior secondary school that was one of the first schools to have their tuXlab installed in 2004. These were the first computer facilities that were established at the school.

The lab was used until 2006 when a series of power cuts in Cape Town “blew the computers”. Damage to the hardware as a result of these power cuts put the lab out of commission. There are currently only

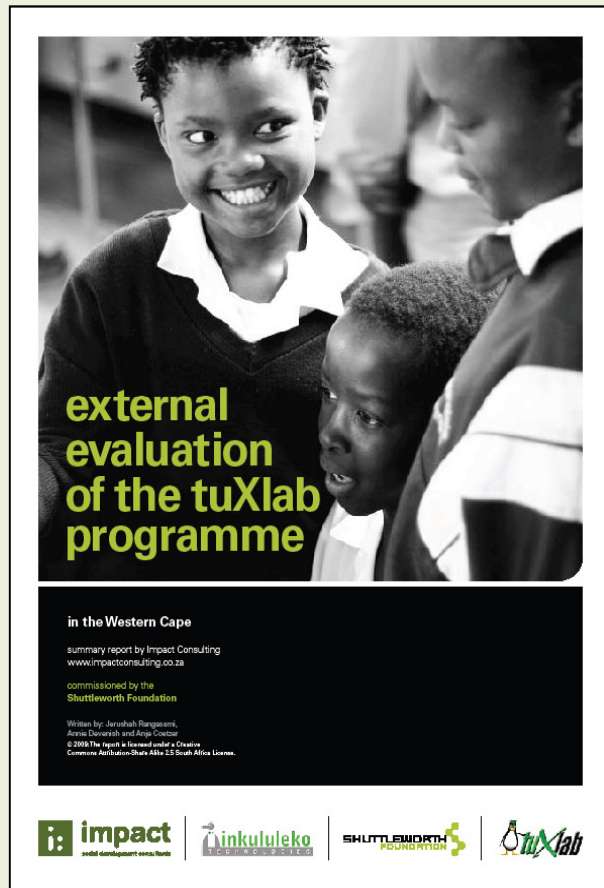
nine computers in the lab that are in working order, but these are not being used because, as both the coordinator and principal stress, with just a handful of working computers, “it's impossible to bring a class of 30 or 40 learners in to use the lab”.

The majority of the learners at the school live in Cape Town townships and the school also has some learners from other African countries such as Rwanda. Most of the learners do not have

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Our experience with Solution 1

- Seems innocuous and obvious
- But these reports do reach a wider audience: have resulted in unelicited feedback/queries from diverse international and national stakeholders
- Designed to grab (any) reader's attention and hold it long enough for them to get some information...and it works.
- Therefore extends reach of evaluation findings beyond standard evaluation report.



Some issues to consider

- Debate: report that is not comprehensive but is widely read VS a comprehensive report that is not read
 - We propose referencing the full report in the summary and ensuring that it is available to any reader upon request
- Summary report is simple in presentation but not so simple in construction: WHOSE SUMMARY? Need to balance completeness of findings with clients' willingness to be "exposed"
 - We propose a participatory summary report construction session with key stakeholders and an interactive editing process with lots of feedback from client.

Another approach to challenge 1

- Consider report audience in evaluation planning stages: in participatory planning session, different stakeholders identify different key audiences for report
- Plan how you are going to reach this audience (whether a summary report will be necessary and at what level it will need to be pitched)
- Obtains buy-in for dissemination at this point, before any findings (evaluator agenda)

Challenge 2: engagement

- Lack of meaningful engagement with the results
- Need for an interactive forum where findings and recommendations/implications can be discussed and debated
- Without such a forum, evaluation findings can “end” on a desk and not be used for constructive programme or policy development

Solution to challenge 2

- ***Participatory evaluation findings workshop*** with a range of key stakeholders is effective for meaningful engagement
- Opportunity:
 - to present findings and lessons learned
 - for stakeholders to validate findings (in some cases this happens in a prior evaluation findings workshop with a smaller group)
 - for discussion on “way forward”, ie policy development, in light of what is actually happening and with information/”evidence” to base these discussions on.

Some issues to consider

- Whose responsibility? (host, budget)
 - must be agreed upon at the outset (at the planning workshop)
 - usually paid for by the commissioning agent
 - facilitated (mediated!) by the evaluator
- Can only have influence if the right stakeholders are present
 - “advertised” from the beginning of the process to try ensure that key players are present (obtain buy-in at participatory planning or inform intended users immediately afterwards)
 - continuous feedback on evaluation process and reminders about workshop help to keep interest and motivation about the findings

Experiences with challenge 2

Recent evaluation of an in-school programme:

- Three stages in evaluation process to share and discuss evaluation findings:
 1. Draft report shared with commissioning and implementing agents and recommendations workshopped
 2. Dissemination plan formulated and summary report drafted together
 3. Interactive forum with wider group

Experiences with challenge 2

Interactive workshop format:

- Presentation of findings
- Donor and implementer shared their responses to findings and plans going forward
- Open floor for stakeholders with panel
- Chaired by evaluator
- Participants received copy of report and other necessary/useful documents

Experiences with challenge 2

Results of the interactive forums

- Decision made to exit programme based on evidence and openly communicated to stakeholders
- Other sector players able to air approaches, opinions and services
- Beneficiaries clear on their role and options and able to engage with each other and other sector players (unintended networking)
- Government players engaged with programme goals and evaluation findings (established foundation for further interactions from implementers and donor)
- Way forward jointly established

Conclusion

- Solutions presented to the first steps in achieving influence: reaching and engaging stakeholders
- Two solutions should be used together for maximum effect

