SOCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

HANDBOOK
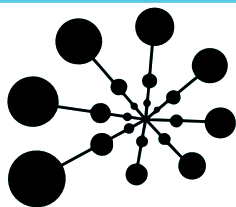
by
Jaan Aps

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INTRO

This educational material is targeted at stakeholders who need to practically develop their skills related to social impact analysis. Professors designing and students participating in relevant courses (e.g. social entrepreneurship) will hopefully benefit as much as grass-root level changemakers who are aiming at establishing or refining their approach to societal change.

Any social enterprise or other social purpose organisation has just one justification for its existence: to create positive changes that would not have happened otherwise. It is also responsible for implementing those changes as effectively as they can. Otherwise, members of the target group might have been much better off benefiting from the endeavours of some other organisation.

While social enterprises have perfectly adequate systems available to analyse their finances and employee turnover, many struggle with defining and mapping their impact. There are a variety of reasons, of course; setting vague goals and having limited resource are just two of them.

When officially establishing the Estonian Social Enterprise Network in 2012, I as one of the founders considered providing a solution for our members related to impact mapping as one of our essentially important objectives. By now, we have developed a standardised solution that is already a generally accepted impact mapping standard for Estonian organisations with a social purpose.

It has been tried out by many of the members of the Estonian Social Enterprise Network (as an informal criterion for membership). Also, some other flagship social purpose organisations have opted to use it (e.g. the Estonian Association of Large Families).

The methodology is still being improved. However, it is already

robust enough to have attracted financing from the Ministry of the Interior (that is responsible for civil society development in Estonia) for developing it into an online format.

When developing anything standardised, testing the concept with as many non-standard cases as possible is crucial for success. Testing means testers. Thus I am are very grateful for the opportunities provided by the Erasmus+ project "Social entrepreneurship development in Baltic Sea region". On the one hand, it has provided us access to the know-how of experienced stakeholders all around the Baltic Sea. On the other hand, it has directly financed development of content and design for this educational material.

I would like to thank Ms Olivia Verev for her design that has been in perfect accordance with the idea of keeping the content of the material as accessible as possible. Also, I'm grateful for the manager of the Erasmus+ project Ms Renate Lukjanska and all the project partners for making cross-border idea exchange not only possible, but intellectually stimulating and practically useful as well.

Mr Jaan Aps
Chairman of the Management Board
Estonian Social Enterprise Network

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OUR JOURNEY TO STANDARDISED APPROACH

The journey from identifying the need for a standardised impact mapping approach to establishing an online portal based on a robust methodology has been an exciting one. It should be encouraging for any user of this educational material to know that all the ideas and tools have been successfully tested by dozens of social purpose organisations in Estonia.

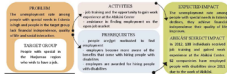Some examples of the original design of "outcome and impact reports" of Estonian social enterprises.

The process has been an exciting learning journey for many community leaders.

DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE

Usually, strategic planning is a complicated process. Various tools have been created to satisfy various needs of strategic planners. Theory of change, logic model, programme theory... You can choose any tool that suits your style and the nature of the questions that you need to explore in relation to your own unique strategic challenges. It is just crucial to remember that any tool for defining and mapping your impact has to outline a journey from A to B, from the problem to the solution.
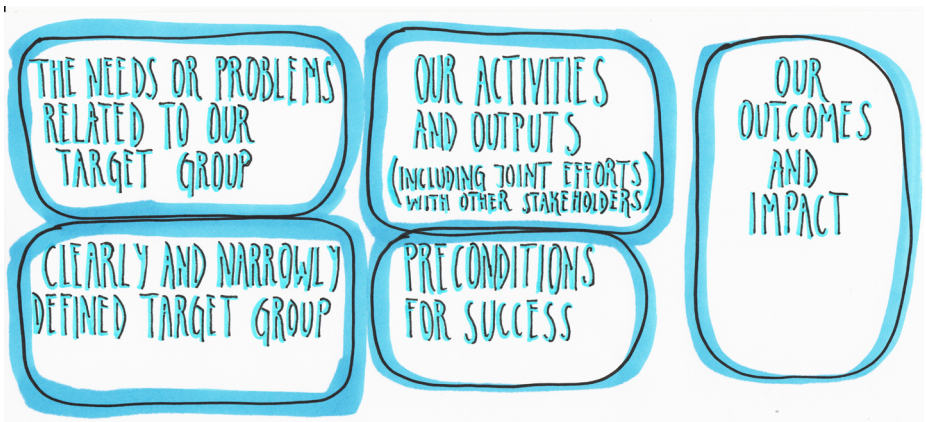
Traditionally, strategic schemes are used to describe the intended impact of the whole organisation. In practice, we have found such approach extremely unhelpful. Our suggestion is to define as clear and narrow target groups as possible. Of course, any organisation has usually more than one (separate or interrelated) target group. In that case it is perfectly okay to design as many theories of change as you need, one per each target group.

DEFINING OUR TARGET GROUP

Most social purpose organisations who are struggling with analysing their impact have defined their target group too widely. For example, the sentence „We ensure the rights of all children in our country" sounds nice as a mission statement but is a completely unsuitable for planning and analysing impact.

Avoiding the mistake of doing everything for everybody and influencing nothing, starting from defining the target group as clearly and narrowly as possible. We have designed a set of questions that helps to do that. Here is a snapshot showing some examples of the questions based on our methodology that might be helpful for specifying your target group.

TARGET GROUP CHARACTERISTICS	LANGUAGE OF COMMUNICATION	AGE	AREA
☑ RESIDENT OF ORGANIZATION'S OPERATING AREA	☑ ESTONIAN	☐ 0-3 YEARS	☐ CITY OF NARVA
☐ PUPIL (SCHOOL)	☐ RUSSIAN	☐ 4-6 YEARS	☑ CITY OF TARTU
☐ STUDENT (UNIVERSITY)	☐ ENGLISH	☐ 7-13 YEARS	☑ CITY OF PÄRNU
☐ PARENT	☐ OTHER	☐ 14-17 YEARS	☐ CITY OF TALLINN
☑ EMPLOYED PERSON	☐ …	☑ 18-26 YEARS	☐ COUNTY 1/15
☐ …		☑ 27-65 YEARS	☐ COUNTY 2/15
		☐ 66- YEARS	☐ …

Workshop in the city of Pärnu

DEFINING OUR TARGET GROUP

THE NEEDS OR PROBLEMS RELATED TO OUR TARGET GROUP

Approx. 33% of the people living in Estonia are directly affected by mood and stress spectrum disorders.

Stress, depression and burnout make it difficult for people to cope with everyday things, such as work, studies, and relationships

OUR ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Psychoeducational group work and training (both long-term programs and training sessions with short durations), individual counselling and internet support groups in order to help people develop their personalities, increase their self-confidence and proactiveness and to acquire coping and interpersonal skills as well as positive patterns of behavior.

OUR OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The emotional state of people with mood and stress spectrum disorders improves. Their capacity to deal with daily challenges increases.

The emotional state of participants in the long-term programs has improved and negative symptoms have decreased by ~25-30%. They live a more proactive life. The quality of their relationships and working life has improved and their self-confidence has increased.

They have acquired new interpersonal skills and coping strategies. Their attitudes and patterns of behavior have become more positive.

CLEARLY AND NARROWLY DEFINED TARGET GROUP

Employed people with stress and mood disorders in Tartu and in Pärnu

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

1. People put aside the prejudice that only "crazy" people have to deal with mental health issues or that these things should be kept private.

2. They are interested and ready to change.

3. Our staff is fully qualified and has access to sufficient professional supervision.

IDENTIFYING THE NEED OR PROBLEM

When speaking about a need/problem, why do we speak about it being *related to* the target group, not simply describing it as being a problem *of* the target group? Advocacy organisations might guess the answer. In many cases the well-being of our target group actually depends on the behavioural choices of other people who do not consider *themselves* to have any problems. We as social entrepreneurs might be the only ones thinking that their reaction (or the lack of it) is indeed problematic.

In those cases, we have to build two theories of change. One of them defines our main target group. The other describes the journey of positive change related to the target group whose choices influence the well-being of our main target group.

However, the illustration below demonstrates the most typical case: the problem is directly related to the members of the target group. The picture is a snapshot of our methodology showing some examples from the finite list of needs/problems.

LIST OF GENERAL NEEDS/PROBLEMS

WHAT EXACTLY DO WE WANT TO INFLUENCE ?

☐	INCOME AND MATERIAL SITUATION
☑	PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH (WELL-BEING)
☐	BEHAVIOUR (DECISION TO DO OR NOT TO DO SOMETHING)
☐	HIGH RISK FOR INJURIES
☐	...

LIST OF SPECIFIC NEEDS/PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE GENERAL LIST

WELL-BEING

☑	STRESS, BURNOUT
☐	MOOD DISORDERS (INCLUDING DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY DISORDER)
☐	OTHER MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS
☐	...

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While academically there is a big (fair and appropriate) difference between the terms „outcome" and „impact", achieving any evidence-based results is nearly impossible for most grass-root level social purpose organisations who are mapping their impact with limited resources. In our opinion, it would be already a great step forward if the organisations collected as much adequate change-related information as they could. The more precisely the target group has been defined, the easier it is to get at least qualitative data about (potential) links between the initial situation, our activities and final outcomes.

The example on the illustration shows one attempt at describing outcomes and impact. The organisation has measured the changes related to the emotional state and the occurrence of negative symptoms of the participants of their programs. The scheme presents only one quantitative indicator. However, it is clear that more numeric information is available if needed.

OUR OUTCOMES AND IMPACT
WHICH SHOW THE EXPECTED IMPACT
IN THE FUTURE AND THE DIRECT
IMPACT OF OUR ACTIVITIES

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OUR ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Activities and outputs are among the stepping stones for the members of our target group when they move from unsatisfactory present to desired future. Only such activities and outputs should be included that have a clearly defined role in our plan to influence lives for the better. All the simply "nice-to-have" activities should be skipped when designing the scheme.

The illustration presents some examples of meaningful output indicators. It also shows how each of the outcomes can (and should) be expressed quantitatively.

Choosing output indicators

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PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Analysing preconditions increases the value of the theory of change as a tool for planning and improvement. Any scheme tends to remain theoretical and omit crucial aspects related to implementation that influence directly the probablity of success. Analyzing the main preconditions for success helps to make reality as visible as possible when designing the journey of positive change for the target group.

The illustration below shows three examples of possible preconditions for success. Of course, identifying the conditions is only the first step. The results of the analysis should be used directly when drafting the activity and resource plan for implementing your theory of change. Additionally, it is wise to choose some indicators to be regularly checked whether the preconditions are still fulfilled.

PLEASE DESCRIBE THE MOST RELEVANT PRECONDITIONS THAT SHOULD BE FULFILLED FOR YOUR SUCCESS

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CHECKING THE COMPLETE THEORY OF CHANGE

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH:
DOES IT ALL MAKE ANY SENSE?

The concept behind a certain theory of change should be tested repeatedly and regularly with a variety of target groups (beneficiaries, experts outside the organisation etc). However, the best test is just to collect and analyze data concerning your outcomes and impact as well as about changing needs related to your target group.

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EXPLORING STORIES TO TEST THE THEORY

How to test whether your theory of change is truly a tool for transformative change or should be published in the next edition of "The Greatest Fairy Tales of Social Enterprises?"

In the beginning of their impact analysis journey, most grass-root level organisations have numeric data available only about their activities and outputs. One of the solutions is to collect stories to test the theory of change. It is crucial to note that any story should fulfill some important qualification criteria. Only *such* stories are useful that demonstrate the journey of an individual, which reflects the main aspects described in the theory of change that you have designed for the whole target group.

Of course, having just a single story does not prove the theory of change to be correct. The number of stories should represent a fair ratio/sample compared with the number of people that have been influenced by you in total. Studying the stories can lead to important insights, resulting in modifying the theory of change or skipping it altogether.

"THE GREATEST FAIRY TALES OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES"

EXPLORING STORIES TO TEST THE THEORY

„ OUR HERO "

Due to severe disabilities, official documents state that Katrin's incapacity to work amounts to 80%. Among other things, Katrin has a congenital heart defect, hyperopic eyes and is too short for her age.

THE NEED RELATED TO HER/HIM

She used to be completely financially depended on her parents. Even though she worked in a protected job center that offered tailoring services and from time to time, and also in a copy shop, she couldn't afford things like going out with friends or going to concerts.

OUR ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

The economic situation of her family got even more complicated when her parents retired. Katrin applied for jobs on the open job market. For instance, she sent her CV to the grocery store chain Rimi, but most job offers turned out be incompatible with her disabilities.

OUR OUTCOMES

In 2011, Katrin's family heard of Abikäsi for the first time. She started working at the Abikäsi Center as a data entry operator. Although she had a hard time typing in the beginning due her disability

OUR IMPACT

Katrin says that her life has become more colorful and she has finally achieved financial independence. Katrin now goes swimming on a regular basis, visits concerts, buys CDs and enjoys having coffee with her friends.

Katrin's story

Due to severe disabilities, official documents state that Katrin's incapacity to work amounts to 80%. Among other things, Katrin has a congenital heart defect, hyperopic eyes and is too short for her age.

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In 2011, Katrin's family heard of Abikäsi for the first time. She started working at the Abikäsi Center as a data entry operator. Although she had a hard time typing in the beginning due her disability, the data entry job turned out to be just perfect for this kind of disability as continuously moving her fingers improved the condition of her hands. After two months of training and continuous practice, Katrin's efficiency had increased by approximately 200%.

Katrin says that her life has become more colorful and she has finally achieved financial independence. Katrin now goes swimming on a regular basis, visits concerts, buys CDs and enjoys having coffee with her friends.
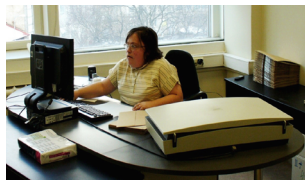
STORY ⟶ WWW/PDF

ANNEX: ORGANISATIONAL INDICATORS

Many people outside your field might not realize that achieving any change usually requires coordinated long-term activities. It is useful to accompany the theory of change with some relevant information about your organisation, in some cases notifying the audience clearly of your needs for capacity building to be able to create even more change.

ACTIVITY AND OUTPUT INDICATORS NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED...	2011-2012	2012-2013	CHANGE (%)
...DEALING WITH MOOD DISORDERS	213	760	257%
...WITH PARENT EDUCATION	35	284	711%
...VIA INTERNET SUPPORT GROUP	1970	2400	22%
SHOW FOLLOWING YEARS	☑	☑	

ORGANISATION AS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

FINANCIAL INDICATORS	2011-2012	2012-2013	CHANGE (%)
INCOME	56 669€	42 145€	-26%
SALES INCOME	8 646€	13 211€	53%
SHOW FOLLOWING YEARS	☑	☑	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN NATIONAL LANGUAGES

DENMARK
1. The Danish Ministry of Education´s guide on how to create a Theory of Change – link is here.
2. Example of the SROI report by Gallo Crisis Counseling in 2014 – link is here.
3. Example of the Impact Analysis Report by The Specialist People Foundation in 2013 – link is here.

ESTONIA
1. Social impact analysis handbook for civil society organisations – link is here.
2. Outcome and impact reports of Estonian social enterprises – link is here.
3. A video about social impact analysis for the municipalities that cooperate with social enterprises and other civil society organisations – link is here.

FINLAND
1. A report by the ESR project "Third Source" (2013) investigates a wide range of impact measurement methodologies and also includes a wide range of links to databases, indicator banks, publications etc. – link is here.
2. Jelli - A compilation site that introduces helpful tools and links to impact measurement methodologies – link is here.
3. A handbook of social accounting - link is here.
4. Sofie method – a Finnish impact measurement system combining Social Accounting and SROI methodologies – link is here.

LITHUANIA
1. General methodology of state impact assessment system, including social impact, which provides the baseline for impact assessment of state funded projects and strategies – link is here.
2. Methodological support for impact assessment provided by the Association of Public Private partnerships – link is here.

POLAND
1. eRPES - IT tool for the evaluation and benchmarking of social economy entities in five dimensions: economic efficiency, cooperation, resources and organizational competence and social utility – link is here. A presentation about the tool can be found here.
2. ProveIt.pl – a tool for measuring various aspects of social economy entities, including the impact of socio-economic, human and social capital (including the contribution of volunteers) – links are here and here.
3. Esometr – a tool for verifying the extent to which social economy entities meet the targets that are placed before them (social and professional integration, social capital, local community) – links are here and here.