# Using Ex-Post Evaluations to Measure Program Sustainability

World Vision's Experience in Kenya and Uganda

## American Evaluation Association poster (2015)

#### World Vision's programs are:

- Multi-Sectoral
- Long-term (approximately 15 years)
- Designed to affect change in children, families, and communities

## But are they sustainable?

### **Defining Sustainability**

Most relevant concepts emerging from the literature included: "benefit persistence", "dynamic sustainability", and "static sustainability".

The ex-post evaluations sought to expand World Vision's current definition and assess a more balanced understanding of sustainability.

Static Sustainability

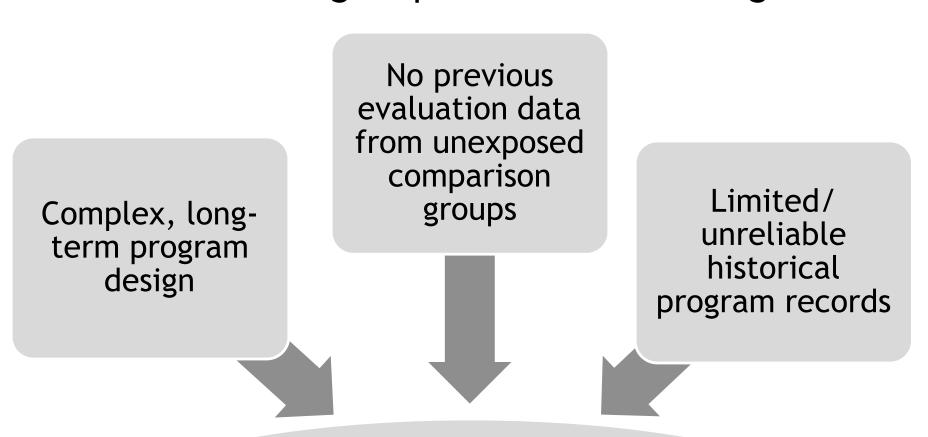
Ability to maintain and improve upon the outcomes and goals achieved with external support after that support has ended<sup>1</sup>.

Ongoing positive changes in services or behaviors that benefit an individual or community that can be attributed directly or indirectly to the project<sup>2</sup>.

Dynamic Sustainability

### Framing the Study

Factors influencing ex-post evaluation design:



Therefore, the study hypothesized a "best case" scenario. If affects were not observed among direct beneficiaries, then they would not be expected for the broader community.

#### **Evaluation focus:**

- Following up with program beneficiaries (individuals, households, groups)
- "Static" assessed in dichotomous manner for infrastructure and community groups
- "Dynamic" assessed using appreciative inquiry and case study approaches

### Sustainability was assessed through two ex-post evaluations:

- Conducted ≈ five years after program closure using mixed-methods among multiple respondent types
- Assessed long-term outcomes among beneficiaries
- Measured extent to which program activities and groups continued and community capacities for promoting child well-being

### Research Questions and Evaluation Methods

RQ 1: What are the long-term outcomes and contribution of programs' work in the current education, health, and employment status of individuals who participated in program as children? Surveys with formerly Surveys with registered children caregivers of formerly registered children who also • In-depth interviews currently cared for with formerly children registered children Individual: Households: and other level of education, economic wellbeneficiaries being and capacity

RQ 4: What has been the value, meaning, and effects for those participating in the program?

Key Informant

Situation analysis

of infrastructure

investment and

leaders

groups

interviews with local

GIS data and mapping

has lue, be hose

level of education, employment, perception of health, and economic well-being

enablers of

sustainability

Societal:
General context
changes,
community
capacity, and

Comm
Infrastru
groups (somunity)
function

Community:
Infrastructure and groups (status and functionality)

to participate in

the development

of communities

 Focus groups with community groups who were part of the exit strategy and caregivers who have lived in the community for the

Community

Capacity

Index<sup>5</sup>

(adapted)

last 5-10 years

RQ 2: (How) have

our programs

enabled

communities to

sustain

improvements in

child well-being?

RQ 3: To what extent have <u>the outputs and/or immediate</u> <u>results</u> of our interventions been sustained in the program area?

### **Promising Tools**

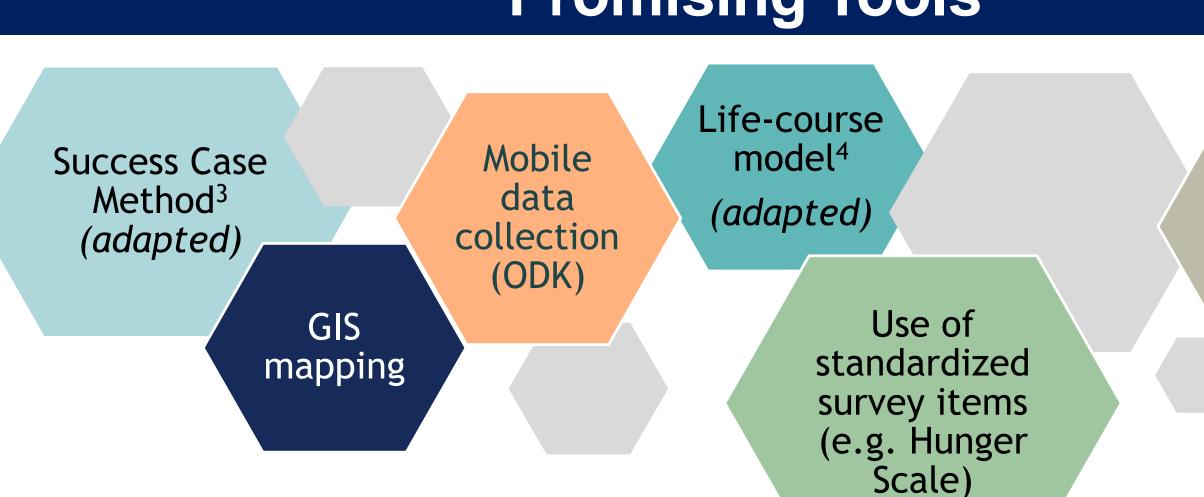






Photo from: Chris Huber, 4/5/2015, Kenya

#### **Key Learnings**

Through ex-post evaluations, World Vision:

- Gained insight into life trajectory of program beneficiaries and potential programming gaps.
- Observed limitations of current organizational definition of sustainability and tested a more comprehensive view of "benefit persistence".
- Improved understanding of factors contributing to sustainability by looking beyond program efforts to improve anticipated sustainability instead to actual sustainability.

### **Practical Considerations**

- Lack of onsite staff and organizational ties to community increases time and cost of evaluation.
- Preparations for ex-post evaluations need to take place at program closure. These go beyond audit compliance.
- There are unique ethical considerations and additional burdens for ethical review.
- Challenges in tracing beneficiaries and groups are both limitations to the study and to the findings in and of themselves.

#### References

- 1. World Vision International. (2007). LEAP, World Vision's approach to Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (2nd ed.).
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- 3. Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2005). The Success Case Method: A strategic evaluation approach to increasing the value and effect of training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(1), 86-101.
- 4. Tafere, Y. (2013). Intergenerational Relationships and the Life Course: Changing Relations between Children and Caregivers in Ethiopia. Young Lives.
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