Power In Partnership:
Reflections on agency, voice and power among evaluators, commissioners and program stakeholders

The attribution challenge

How can we **credibly** test causal claims of multiple actions in complex contexts in a **timely** and **cost-effective** way?

- University of Bath, DFID funded research project, 2012-2015
- The limitations of quantitative approaches: obsessive measurement disorder, cost and inflexibility...
- Qualitative methods suffer from an 'Akerlof lemon problem' - uncertain credibility and usefulness of qualitative approaches weakens demand
- Could establishing a credible benchmark help?

Qualitative Impact Assessment Protocol - QuIP

- Non-profit spin-out Bath SDR operationalised the methodology: research, practice and training

Features of the QuIP

- Relies on **self-reported attribution** (with latent counterfactuals) rather than statistically inferred attribution based on exposure variation.

- **Eclectic**: draws on Process Tracing, Contribution Analysis, Most Significant Change, Outcome Harvesting, Realist Evaluation, Beneficiary Assessment.

- Confirmatory (testing prior theory) **and** Exploratory (open-ended/ goal-free approach).

- Uses a standardised approach to coding of qualitative data, and innovative data visualisation through an interactive dashboard to break open the black box of qualitative data!

QuIP in practice

Stage 1: Design

- Scope co-designed with commissioner, including broad impact 'domains' based on theory of change

- Small purposive **sampling** frame (Bayesian and saturation criteria); individual & focus groups (48+8)

Stage 2: Data collection

- Semi-structured open-ended questioning conducted by trained independent local researchers without knowledge of the project (**double blindfolding**)

Who knows what 'truth'?

Prioritising the views of intended beneficiaries using goal free interview methods; respondents express their views on why change happens, without restrictions of confirmation or social bias.

'What has changed and why did this change occur?'

Stage 3: Analysis

Standardised 3-step data coding and analysis process conducted by qual coding experts:

1. Exploratory (inductive) coding of **drivers**

2. Exploratory (inductive) coding of **outcomes**

3. Confirmatory (deductive) **coding of impact evidence** (attribution) as explicit, implicit or incidental to project actions

Rapid **semi-automated generation of summary tables and visualisations** to aid analysis.

The power of words

Rigorous, judgement-free coding of qualitative data maintains the power of respondents' voices to reach up the hierarchy. Accessible and interactive presentation means quantifying data, but without losing sight of the **words and meaning**.

| Driver of change (D#) | Relationship to the intervention (1-9) | Outcome(s) (OP#/ON#) |
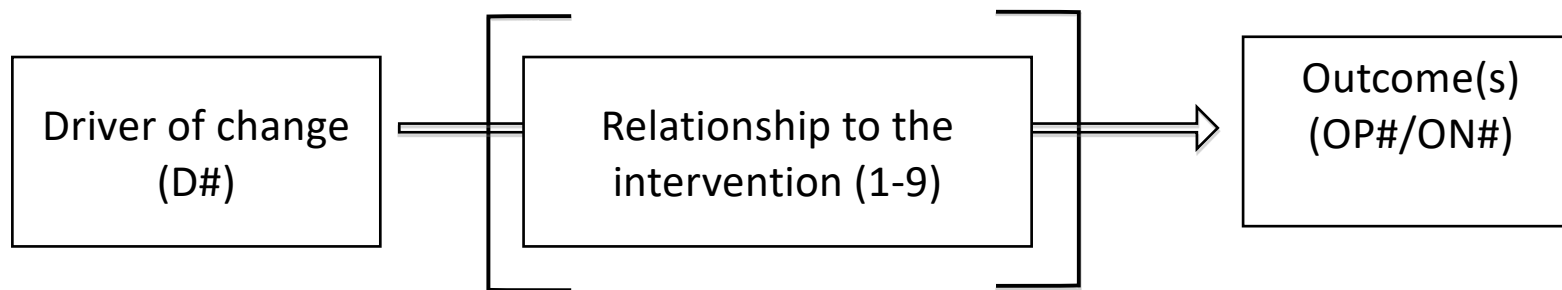
Stage 4: Use of evidence

- Summary report of evidence, starting point for project level **debriefing** between project staff and researchers

- Easy to drill down from summary evidence to raw data for QA, auditing, **peer review** and learning purposes.

- Triangulation workshops, stakeholder feedback & de-briefing etc.

Charlotte Flowers/Tearfund

Handing back power

Encouraging partners and commissioners to really engage with the findings takes the power of judgement away from evaluators and into the hands of those who have the power to effect change. Discussing findings with respondents further shares the power to change.

Clelia Anna Mannino
Director of Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

➢ Importance of using a methodology that allowed the **qualitative impact** of GHSP to emerge.

➢ Presentation of general landscape of positive and negative outcomes was hugely helpful and a way of bridging learning back to our partners.

➢ Unpacking not just outcome but *why* **and** *how* it was happening - critical for linking findings with programmatic improvement.

➢ Adaptive approach to **design and co-creation** process ensured power was shared between evaluation team and commissioners.

➢ Not including recommendations with presentation of findings is key to ensure both **buy-in and engagement from staff** and their investment in truly utilizing the learning.

Charlotte Flowers
Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

➢ The CCM programme is participatory and community-led; putting people's voices first whilst providing an **independent 'reality check'** of change was a good fit.

➢ The research provided a wide contextual picture of the most important causes of changes as reported by participants, enabling a **fuller understanding of cause and effect in that context**.

➢ Tearfund carried out 'unblindfolded' learning events with the communities involved, partners and in-country staff; the knowledge and **power to challenge, verify and act on findings** were given to each stakeholder to influence programme design.

Savi Mull
Evaluation Specialist at C&A Foundation

C&A Foundation

➢ Helped provide insights into how far **respondents attributed change** to the YQP project, within the context that a small sample allows for.

➢ Politics of blindfolding was a challenge in factories; in-country partners feared it could jeopardise relationships with management. The approach was adapted - **partial blindfolding**.

➢ Blindfolded interviews first to map the full context of wider changes, followed by **unblindfolded interviews** and focus groups with key stakeholders to **probe and follow up** on more specific questions about the project.