

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?

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

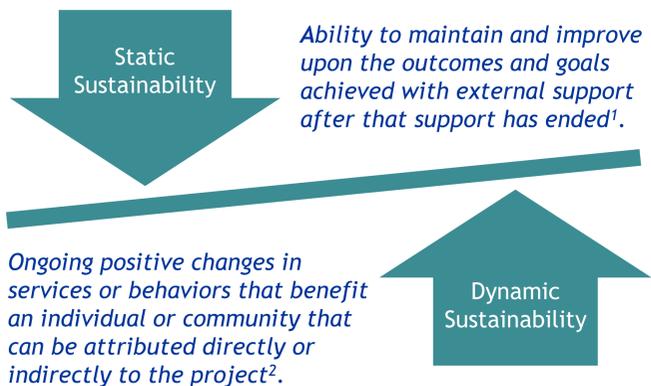


Photo from: Chris Huber, 4/5/2015, Kenya

Defining Sustainability

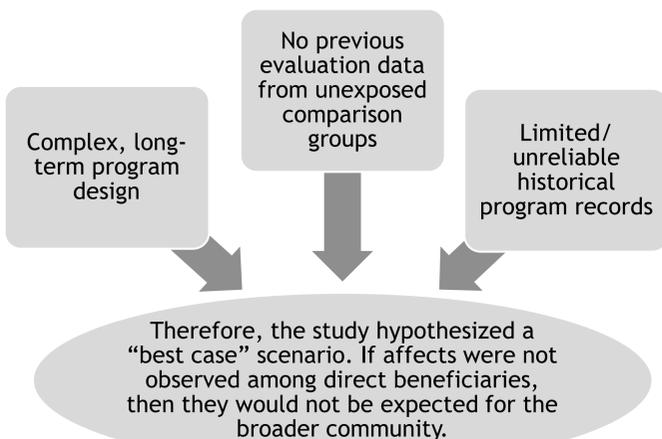
Most relevant concepts emerging from the literature included: "benefit persistence", "dynamic sustainability", and "static sustainability".

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



Framing the Study

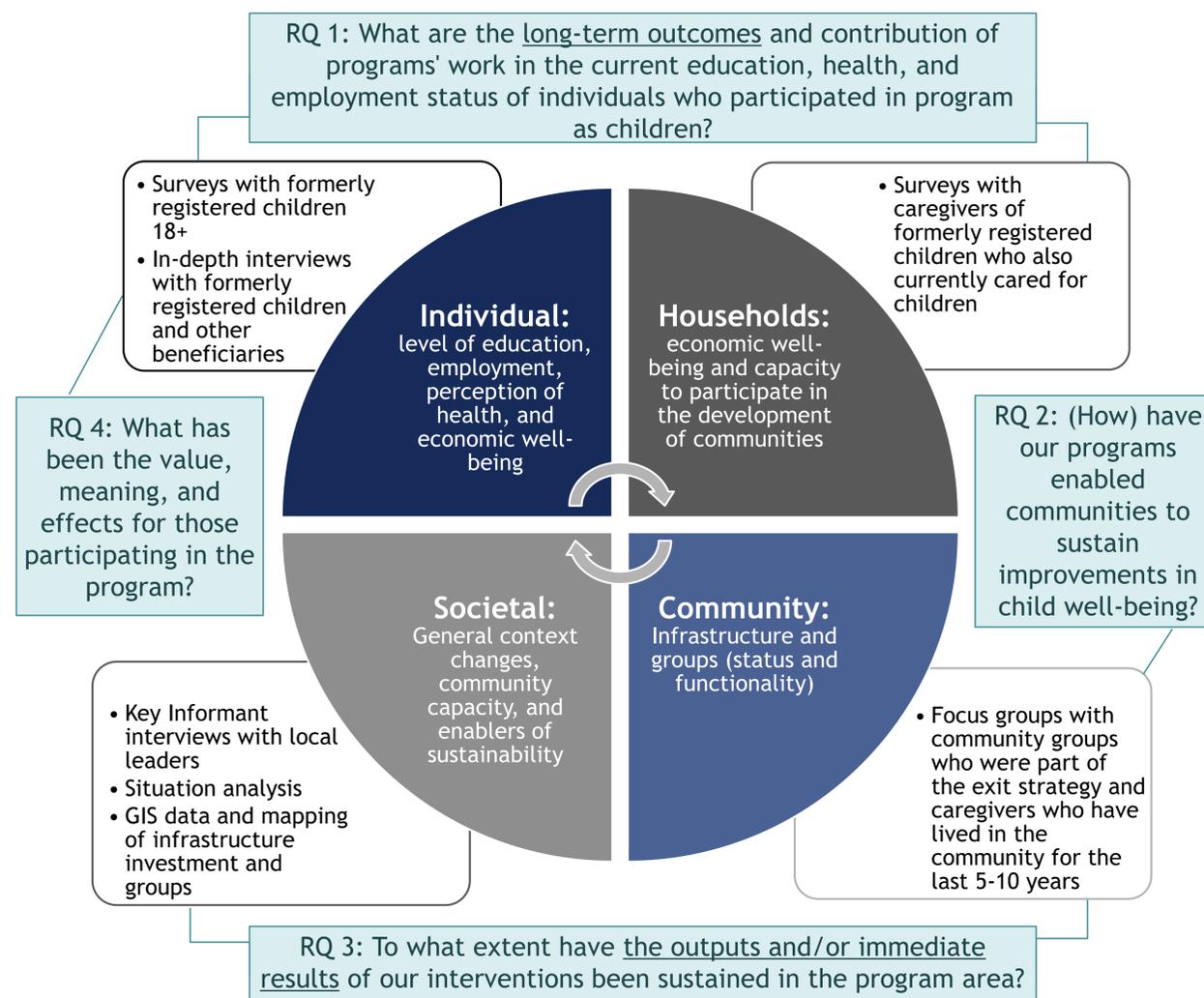
Factors influencing ex-post evaluation design:



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

Research Questions and Evaluation Methods



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

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Promising Tools

