

Guidance Note

Assessing Transformational Benefits in WISER



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Intended Audience and Purpose

This Guidance Note:

- Provides **practical and flexible direction, tools and templates** to help WISER projects in gathering robust evidence and learning on transformational benefits.
- Aims to help projects develop an **evidence base to develop case study(ies) on these benefits**, and thus meet the requirements set out by the WISER Fund Manager in the “Guidance Note on Implementation of WISER Value for Money and Socio-economic Benefit Framework.”
- Recognises that existing project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, plans and contractual commitments are already in place—and **seeks to make it easier for projects to deliver** these, rather than putting additional burden on them.

This Guidance Note is intended for projects that are searching for an easy and intuitive way to measure higher level results, as well as for projects that may be looking to complement their existing methods to better understand and communicate their transformational benefits.

The Value of Assessing Transformational Benefits

Besides helping to deliver on WISER’s monitoring and reporting requirements, the transformational benefits stories captured using this Guidance Note can benefit your project in several other ways:

- They can help you to develop insightful story-based narratives, which can be further used to **showcase your excellent work** to current and future donors and partners, and potentially **create opportunities for replication and funding**.
- They can **support organisational learning** by providing a better understanding of which of your interventions are delivering the expected results and which are not, and why. This will allow you to increase the effectiveness of your WISER and/or future projects.

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- They can also **support learning beyond your organisation and contribute to the global evidence base** on how to best improve climate and weather information services, thereby allowing others to deliver more effective interventions.
- The participatory methods used to capture the transformational benefits will enable you to **actively engage your beneficiaries and stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of results, generate meaningful beneficiary feedback and increase ownership.**

What are Transformational Benefits?

In WISER, transformational benefits are those that accrue indirectly due to the strengthening of the institutional and financial frameworks in which relevant stakeholders (policy makers, meteorological services, private sector) operate.

These benefits are differentiated from those that accrue directly to end beneficiaries (e.g. through improved quality and availability of Climate Information Services (CIS)) and that are typically appraised and valued as part of a socioeconomic benefits (SEB) analysis. An example can help illustrate:

- *Direct benefits:* a project provides regular weather forecasts and severe weather warnings to fishermen.
- *Transformational benefits:* a project creates a community-based early-warning system which does not require external funding to carry on and which is used by other community members to suit their own livelihoods.

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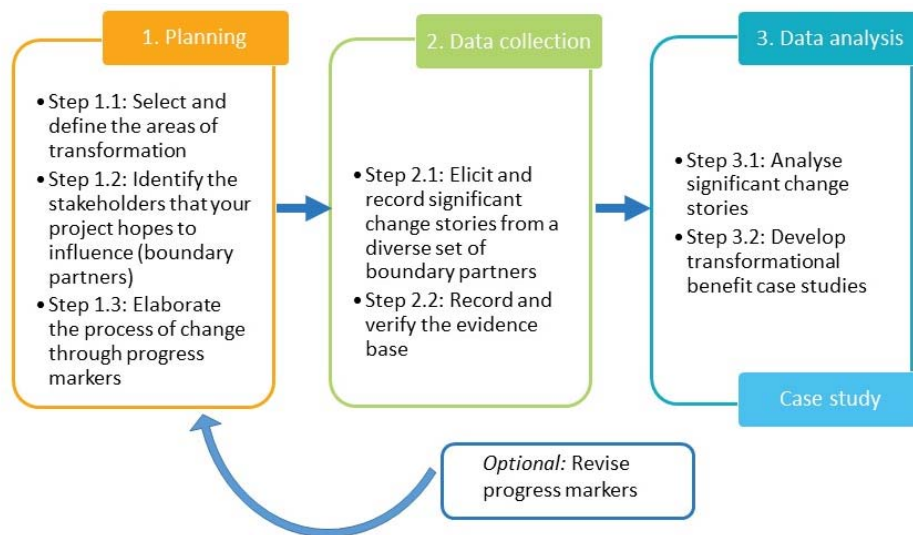
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Method and Tools for Assessing Transformational Benefits

The following section provides a step-by-step guide on documenting transformational benefits through three distinct phases: (1) Planning; (2) Data collection; and (3) Data analysis, as summarized in the figure below.

Figure 1: Overview of step-by-step guide to assess WISER transformational benefits



Key definitions

Areas of transformation are areas where the project expects to deliver change. They are deliberately formulated to be broad and ‘fuzzy’ to allow people to have different interpretations of what constitutes a change in that area.

Boundary partners are individuals, groups or organizations which the project hopes to influence.

Progress markers are the desired changes you expect to see inherent in your project design that link outputs to outcomes to impact and to transformational change.

Significant change stories are short narrative descriptions of change brought about by the project. They are typically provided by project staff and/or boundary partners.

Adapted from Davies, R, and J. Dart. (2005). The Most Significant Change Technique: A Guide to Its Use, and ILAC. (2005). Outcome mapping: A method for tracking behavioural changes in development programs.

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The approach builds on the progress you have already made during the design and inception phases on developing your logframe and theory of change, and on identifying the areas of transformation you will tackle. The guide offers a “story-based” approach (rather than an “indicator-based” approach) to capturing change, which was inspired by the Most Significant Change and Outcome Mapping methods.¹ These methods were chosen for their ease and to help you overcome some of the challenges that traditional M&E methods face in measuring transformational benefits.

Each project in the WISER programme is different, with distinct theories of change and a variety of boundary partners. This Guidance Note, therefore, is intended as general guidance rather than a directive, and we encourage project teams to tailor the method and tools for capturing transformational benefits to their own project realities and experiences.

Phase 1: Planning

Start with planning, using the areas of transformation you already identified, your theory of change, and/or logframes. Remember, you most likely already have the information needed to complete the planning steps, and this phase is about revisiting and compiling these in a robust framework, rather than about generating new content and ideas.

Step 1.1 Select and define the area(s) of transformation: The area(s) of transformation will guide data collection and help narrow down the types of changes you are looking to capture. You can use the “areas of transformation” set out in the WISER VfM Guidance Note (see box on following page), or if you feel that these do not adequately capture what your project seeks to achieve, you can define a new area(s). Whichever approach you decide on, make sure that the principles of equity and inclusion are considered (see box right).

Equity and inclusion principles can support transformational benefits

Projects that avoid perpetuating inequalities of access and use of knowledge; projects that foster equal opportunities for different social groups (women and men, the youth or the elderly, people from ethnic minorities, people living with disabilities) to benefit from CIS; inclusive approaches that create an enabling environment for climate information to support different user needs, are all conducive of transformational changes.

¹ More information on the methodological basis of this Guidance Note can be found in Annex 4.

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Areas of Transformation

National Met Services Strengthening, which can include, for example, development of new business models for Met services provision; establishing new forms of institutional cooperation between Met services and boundary organisations; and/or mobilisation of new financing flows into national Met services.

National Influencing, which can include, for example, influencing policy through enhanced quality and communication of data; influencing of budget processes and resource allocation within climate sensitive sectors; and/or promoting private sector engagement in W&CIS.

Regional Transformation, which can include, for example, strengthening of regional Met services networks and coordination structures; raising the profile and credibility of Met services among pan-African institutions; and/or mobilising investment in regional infrastructure and Met services capacity.

User Engagement, which can include, for example, establishing new forms of institutional cooperation between W&CIS producers and users; addressing gender gaps to ensure that information reaches women and meets their needs; embedding weather and climate information in decision making in different sectors, institutions and organisations; tailoring information to social groups who typically do not have access to W&CIS, to special needs of people who are illiterate, or to those who live with a disability; and/or increased demand for weather and climate services.

Source: WISER. (2017). Guidance Note on Implementation of WISER Value for Money and Socio-economic Benefit Framework

To keep the workload manageable (particularly in smaller projects), we recommend that you select one area of transformation to focus on. That said, this method can be used to track multiple areas of transformation, if desired.

Step 1.2 Define your boundary partners: Next, for the selected area(s) of transformation, define the key stakeholders your project engages or influences to bring about change. The boundary partners are not necessarily direct beneficiaries of the project, and can be individuals, groups or organisations. They might include, for example, national and/or regional meteorological services and civil society organizations. Some diversity in partners is important. Clarity on the boundary partners will help you to develop progress markers under the next step. These partners will also be key sources of the significant change stories you will collect later in the process.

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Step 1.3 Elaborate the process of change through progress markers: This next step sets out the sequence of incremental changes leading toward higher-level, transformational benefits. Most high-level transformational changes take time to materialise and are likely to be difficult to capture before (or even at) the end of your project. Progress markers will be helpful to monitor progress towards transformational benefits and to make sure that you are on track to achieve them. Progress markers also enable you to test your theory of change and learn during implementation.

First, define the transformational benefits that you seek to contribute to under the selected area(s) of transformation. As a reminder, these transformational benefits may already be articulated in your project design documents and will most likely be indirect benefits of your interventions. Some projects might have more than one transformational benefit they seek to achieve under the selected area(s), but we urge projects to limit themselves to a manageable number (no more than 2-3 per area of transformation).

Second, working backward from the transformational benefit(s), set out the sequence of incremental changes you expect to see before the high-level change(s) materialises. These incremental change statements will be your progress markers. It might help to think about the sequence of changes as those that you:²

- *Expect to see:* These define the immediate changes in your key stakeholders you expect to see if your project activities are successfully delivered. They are typically at or just beyond the output level.
- *Like to see:* These define the kinds of changes you will see if your project is starting to have an effect beyond its direct activities and outputs.

Tips for progress markers

✓ Progress markers will describe a sequence of changes in behaviours, actions and relationships that build the foundation for contributing to transformational benefits.

✓ Progress marker statements should always be clear as to which individual, group or organisation the described change pertains to.

✓ The number of progress markers will depend on the complexity and size of your project, but we urge you to limit them to a manageable number.

✓ Ideally, progress markers will be clearly linked to your theory of change. This can be done by noting which results progress markers contribute to under a given area of transformation (e.g. in the progress marker capture sheet – Annex 1).

² These descriptions have been adapted from BRACED. (2015). M&E Guidance Notes: BRACED Programme.

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- *Love to see:* These define and capture the transformational change potential of the project and are likely to be more dependent on sets of key stakeholders and partners as well as a broader set of assumptions about the wider enabling environment for project success. The timeframe for seeing these changes could be after project close.

The key assumption here is that as your implementation progresses you will see a shift in most changes being recorded under “expected to see” to under “like to see” and then to under “love to see.” Some projects might wish to employ a different categorisation of progress markers that better fits their theory of change. However, the concept of defining a sequence of incremental changes that ultimately lead to the expected transformational change should be retained.

A template for capturing your progress markers is included in Annex 1. For examples of progress markers see Annex 2.

Phase 2: Data collection

Step 2.1 Elicit and record significant change stories: You can track your project’s progress towards the expected transformational benefits through periodic collection and recording of significant change stories. Significant change stories are short (from a few sentences to half a page) narrative descriptions of the most significant changes that took place in the reporting period. They should (at the minimum) identify the change that took place, its significance and the project’s contribution to it.

Change stories can be collected through one of two methods or their combination:

1. Change stories can be recorded by project staff who observe or learn about significant changes through their day-to-day work or interaction with boundary partners.
2. Projects can also interview a set of boundary partners either individually or in a focus group about the most significant change(s) they observed during the reporting period.

See the box for tips on how to collect change stories through interviews, and Annex 3 for an interview guide. When eliciting change stories from staff or boundary partners, projects should use a high-level, open question around the area(s) of transformation. This approach gives the story-teller more freedom to focus on changes that matter the most to them, and enable the collection of stories on unexpected and negative changes.

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Projects should decide for themselves what the frequency of data collection should be, taking into account the resources available to them and the expected pace of the change process. We recommend that you collect change stories at least every quarter or six-months to capture information on the process of change and not just the end benefits. Projects might also wish to harmonise the data collection and analysis with their progress reporting schedule. Projects should try to collect at least five short significant change stories at each time of data collection, from a diverse sample of boundary partners.

Tips for collecting significant change stories through interviews:

- ✓ Conduct interviews with a diverse sample of boundary partners (e.g., people working at different administrative or political levels, members of civil society organisations, community members), and ideally with as many women as men. It is important to ensure that different voices are heard; this can also help uncover stories of significant changes that the project team did not necessarily anticipate.
- ✓ Always explain to the story-teller how his/her story will be used (e.g. donor reporting, online publication etc.) and seek explicit consent.
- ✓ Always record who collected the story, from whom (unless the interviewee did not consent to this) and when.
- ✓ Document the story as it is told, as close to the story-teller's own words as possible.
- ✓ Be open to hearing and recording unexpected or negative changes, as well as positive ones.
- ✓ Translate the questions into the local language of the story-teller. You might need to slightly rephrase the question to ensure that it has the same meaning as in the original language.

Step 2.2 Record and verify the evidence base: Make sure that for each significant change story you record, you save the supporting evidence. You might decide to set up a separate project folder for this purpose.

- For change stories collected from project staff, the evidence could, for example, include meeting minutes or unsolicited emails from boundary partners where they describe certain changes. To support verification (see below), project staff should also file additional documentation, such as Memorandums of Understanding between institutional partners, official budgets published for climate sensitive sectors, policy documents, or news stories.
- For change stories collected directly from boundary partners, the evidence can include interview recordings, transcripts or reports.

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Change stories should also be validated, whenever possible. This step is essential to ensure the validity and robustness of the qualitative information collected through this method. The team member(s) best suited to verify the change stories will vary project by project, and will typically include the M&E Officer, Project Manager or Team Leader.

For projects that rely primarily on change stories recorded by staff, checking that adequate evidence backing the stories is saved in the project folder will typically be sufficient. Projects that collect change stories from boundary partners should consider to select a small sample of stories and triangulate their content with secondary sources, such as the documentation identified above for project staff, and/or with the interviewee.

Phase 3: Data Analysis

Step 3.1 Analyse significant change stories: Analysing the significant change stories can inform the selection and development of the transformational benefits case study in the last step. The criteria along which the significant change stories can be analysed will vary across projects, depending on their individual reporting and learning needs, and project characteristics. Some key analyses may include:

- Analysis of the change stories against the progress markers and theory of change, to understand if and how change is happening, and what progress has been made over time toward transformational benefits.
- Thematic analysis of the change stories to see the prevalence of certain types of change (e.g. those identified by a larger number stakeholders) and differences in changes identified across various characteristics (e.g. different geographical locations, boundary partners, types of changes).
- Analysis for positive and negative, and unexpected, changes.

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Optional, but good-practice steps:

Step 3.1A Share the results with the project team and boundary partners: Sharing the significant change stories and key findings with the project team, and potentially boundary partners, can promote learning and adaptive management.

Step 3.1B Revise progress markers: Depending on the findings of the secondary analyses, projects may wish to refine their progress markers. For example, projects might find that their interventions led to change processes they did not originally anticipate and wish to capture these through additional or adjusted progress markers. Changes to progress markers and the reason for those changes should always be recorded by the project team, and you should ensure that the level of ambition of progress markers is maintained. You should also keep a record of earlier versions of the progress marker capture sheet.

Step 3.2 Develop transformational benefit case studies: The WISER VfM guide directs that projects will develop at least one transformational benefit case study (but potentially more) by the end of the project. Implementing this guide will help projects collect the evidence to identify which transformational benefits the project has contributed to and to develop the case study – although projects may also expect to undertake some additional data collection (e.g. key informant interviews, etc.) or incorporate data from other sources (e.g. other monitoring data, etc.) to better understand the change processes and triangulate the findings.

Projects might consider using the significant change stories and information collected over time on progress markers to prepare case studies, for example, around a change process, a boundary partner, or area of transformation. They might also develop case studies that showcase what they learned about how transformational change happens in a given context.

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Annex 1: Progress marker capture sheet

<p>Area of transformation (national met services strengthening; national influencing; regional transformation; user engagement): <Specify area of transformation></p>
<p>Summary of expected transformational benefit: <Briefly describe the transformational benefits under this area of transformation that you expect to achieve if the implementation is successful></p>
<p>Boundary partners: <List the key stakeholders your project engages or influences to bring about change under this area of transformation></p>
<p>Progress markers:</p> <p>Expect to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <List the statements of anticipated change> 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.
<p>Like to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <List the statements of anticipated change> 2. 3. 4. 5.
<p>Love to see:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <List the statements of anticipated change> 2.

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Links to results framework/theory of change:

<Describe which results in your logframe/theory of change the progress markers are contributing to. You might wish to number your progress markers for easier referencing>

Critical reflection and changes to progress markers:

Period 1:

<State the changes you made to the progress markers this period and the reasons behind them. You might also want to describe here the key findings and learnings from the analysis of significant change stories during the period>

Period 2:

<State the changes you made to the progress markers this period and the reasons behind them. You might also want to describe here the key findings and learnings from the analysis of significant change stories during the period>

Period 3:

<State the changes you made to the progress markers this period and the reasons behind them. You might also want to describe here the key findings and learnings from the analysis of significant change stories during the period>

Period 4:

<State the changes you made to the progress markers this period and the reasons behind them. You might also want to describe here the key findings and learnings from the analysis of significant change stories during the period>

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Annex 2: Examples of progress markers

A2.1: Forest Justice in Tanzania³

Expect to see
The project expects to see CSOs raising awareness amongst communities in the areas where they are working on forest governance, forest biodiversity values and linkages between forest management and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
Like to see
The project would like to see CSOs taking individual and joint actions to promote the plight of Tanzania's high biodiversity forests and to highlight forest biodiversity loss.
Love to see
The project would love to see CSOs working together effectively to lobby successfully for adequate protection of Tanzania's high biodiversity forests, specifically that all Eastern Arc forest reserves and nature reserves have management plans that protect biodiversity values and that are being implemented and monitored.

A2.2. Climate and Development Knowledge Network⁴

Expect to see
Groups/countries increasingly identify and agree priorities and desired outcomes in advance of meetings with international climate change negotiations
Group/country delegations plan attendance at different sessions (e.g. based on full understanding of the linkages between them)
Groups/countries spend longer in preparation before international climate change meetings
Like to see
Delegations make a greater number/proportion of interventions and submissions in areas relevant to their national or group interests
Delegates increasingly stand up for their opinions, confront other delegates and their positions, and/or constructively disagree with other delegations
Delegates cite relevant legal precedents or technical research to support their propositions or to challenge the wording in agreements
Love to see

³ Simon Hearn & Kisuma Mapunda. (2012). Strengthening Civil Society in Tanzania - Is Outcome Mapping Helping the Act Programme and Its Partners Influence Change? ODI Publication. Available at: <http://www.accountability.or.tz/sites/default/files/OM%202012-for%20website.pdf>

⁴ Jessica Mackenzie. (2015). RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach (ROMA). ODI presentation at the LSHTM Symposium. (2015). Available at: https://www.researchtoaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/DemoImpactWorkshop_ODI_OutcomeMapping.pdf

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Increased proportion of delegates have technical background and/or have been selected to attend meetings due to their technical backgrounds rather than their seniority
Delegates increasingly chair or provide lead input into an increased proportion of working groups or meetings
Groups/countries/constituencies are asked to enter formal links with other (influential) groups

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Annex 3: Interview guide template

Introduction:

<Insert project name> would like to capture stories of significant change that you directly experienced or you witnessed your key partners and/or beneficiaries experiencing as a result of our work. This will help us to improve what we are doing, enable us to celebrate the successes together as well as being accountable to our funders.

The stories and information collected from these interviews will be used for a number of purposes including:

- <List all the ways you intend to use the significant change stories>
- <List all the ways you intend to use the significant change stories>
- <List all the ways you intend to use the significant change stories>

Consent:

Do you (the story teller) consent:

- To have your name included on the story? Yes _ No_
- To us using your story for publication? Yes _ No_

Interview details:

Name of storyteller: <Insert name of storyteller or note if they chose to be anonymous>

Gender of storyteller:

Organisation and position of storyteller: <Insert name of organisation and position of storyteller or note if not applicable>

Name of person recording the story: <Insert name of person recording the story >

Location: <Insert location>

Date of recording: <Insert date of recording>

1. Tell me how you (the storyteller) first became involved with <insert project name> and what your current involvement is:

<Record the response as it is told, as close to the story-teller's own words as possible>

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2. <Insert the area of transformation specific, high-level, open question around the significant change they experienced>

- An example could be: “Looking back over the last three months, what do you think was the most significant change in the strength of the coordination structure for regional Met services?”
- If interviewees are not able to identify a change in this broader area of transformation, this should be recorded, and the interviewer may wish to prompt the interviewee to ask about change in the progress marker areas.

<Record the response as it is told, as close to the story-teller’s own words as possible>

3. Why this story is significant to you, your organisation or your key partners and beneficiaries?

<Record the response as it is told, as close to the story-teller’s own words as possible>

4. How has the work of the <insert project name> contributed to this?

<Record the response as it is told, as close to the story-teller’s own words as possible>

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Annex 4: Additional information on the basis of the method

Measuring transformational benefits through traditional M&E methods can be challenging. This is because most often these benefits cannot be linked directly to end beneficiary outcomes and take time to emerge due to the long results chains involved. Such benefits can also be difficult to predict in advance, especially for complex or highly innovative programmes where cause and effect relationships underlying the theory of change are not fully understood at the time of inception. Finally, the quantification or monetarisation of transformational benefits is often not possible, requiring robust qualitative methods to capture progress.

The approach included in this Guidance Note was inspired by Most Significant Change (MSC) and Outcome Mapping (OM)—two of a suite of M&E techniques that take complexity into account and have emerged over the past decade. These are typically qualitative methods that are flexible and highly adaptable, yet produce robust information that can be used for M&E purposes. They place a strong emphasis on explaining how change happens (processes and drivers) as well as when change happens (in what situations and contexts). They are also able to cover the ‘messy’ results of projects – including the unexpected results, the intangible and the indirect consequences of development work⁵.

This Guidance Note borrows elements from MSC and OM to adapt an approach that can be more readily implemented within the parameters of WISER projects. For example, unlike the traditional, pure MSC approach, this Guidance Note is not recommending the step of a stakeholder participatory process to select the most significant of the stories, because of the time and burden to project staff. Instead, we are suggesting secondary analysis of the stories collected to inform your understanding of the change process and your selection for a transformational benefits case study.

⁵ Davies, R, and J. Dart. (2005). The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use.

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