

### When to use it

Most Significant Change can be used in two ways:

- > as an **ongoing monitoring tool** to support project/program improvement by assessing perceptions of stakeholders during the project/program;
- > as an **evaluation tool** assess the perceptions of project/program effectiveness after the project/program has ended, combined with other evaluation techniques.

### What it is

It is a participatory storytelling technique used for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. It is especially helpful to unearth unexpected outcomes of interventions which cannot be tracked with indicators.

The tool actively involves stakeholders in searching for significant project or programme outcomes, interpreting them and then deciding what type of change is valuable and needs to be recorded. It can be considered a “story approach” because it tends to answer the following questions:

- > Who did what?
- > When?
- > Why?
- > Why is it important?

### The benefits of using MSC in FAO’s CD interventions

- > It helps capture qualitative aspects of an intervention, especially, as in the area of capacity development, where the impact of an intervention can be described more effectively by qualitative rather than quantitative indicators.
- > It’s highly participatory as it involves stakeholders around a dialogue of what important changes are
- > It helps improving an ongoing program by focusing the direction of work towards explicitly valued directions

### How to use it

The process involves collecting significant change stories emanating from the project/ programme activities and then including designated stakeholders in selecting them. Once changes have been captured, the people sit together, document and read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussions about the value of the reported changes.

- STEP 1.** Jointly define broad domains of change (e.g. decision-making skills, on-farm practice, organizational capabilities, etc.)

- STEP 2.** Collect stories describing change in the identified domains and explaining 'why' that particular change was considered relevant
- STEP 3.** Analyse stories and filter them up through the level of authorities typically found in a programme/organization. Select most relevant stories and indicate the criteria used for selecting them.
- STEP 4.** Consolidate significant stories and share them with programme stakeholders and steering committee, for them to gain knowledge about the (preliminary) outcomes of the programme and to learn which unexpected outcomes are valued or not valued by different stakeholders
- STEP 5.** Identify how often different types of MSC were reported within given periods
- STEP 6.** Use stories to steer programme to better meet needs and move towards valued directions.

### **Example of how MSC has been used in FAO**

#### **SOME EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS:**

- > During the last six months, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place in the area of (...) which has resulted from the intervention?
- > Why you think this is a significant change?
- > What difference has it made already (in your practice, life, etc.) or will it make in the future?
- > How have the CD activities helped individuals learn and change?
- > How have CD activities helped the organization to change? Has it made a difference to the decision-making process, provided incentives and opened up new opportunities?
- > What needs to change in the future to make the intervention more effective?

Adapted by from: FAO CD Learning Module 2 , TOOL 12 / J. Dart and R. Davies, A Dialogical, Story-Based evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique, American Journal of Evaluation 2003 n.24