Distance Monitoring

24th November 2020
14:30-15:30

misean cara
Mission Support from Ireland

Introduction

- Established in 2004, to enable missionaries to facilitate effective development work. Increasingly, it has become necessary to also respond to sudden-onset emergencies and protracted humanitarian crises.

- In 2019, Misean Cara supported 357 projects in 55 countries reaching almost 1.5 million people. The projects were worth over €15.2m and were implemented by 54 members.

- Unlike many INGO's our Members are not 'Partners', they are 'Misean Cara' which has its own constitution to which the Members are bound. However, they are also autonomous charitable entities with their own governance structures completely separate to Misean Cara. This has its strengths and limitations.

- MDO Role - largely based in Ireland. Intermediary between Member projects and Misean Cara Dublin.

misean cara
Mission Support from Ireland

COVID-19: A Paradigm Shift

A **paradigm** is a fixed, accepted model or way of thinking. When a paradigm is established, it resists change.

The paradigm is accepted as correct, and doubt is cast on any evidence that challenges it.

It takes **a shock to the system** (or a genius like Copernicus, Darwin or Einstein) to force a paradigm shift.

A **paradigm shift** fundamentally changes the basic concepts and practices of a discipline.

Kuhn's (1962) cycle of scientific change
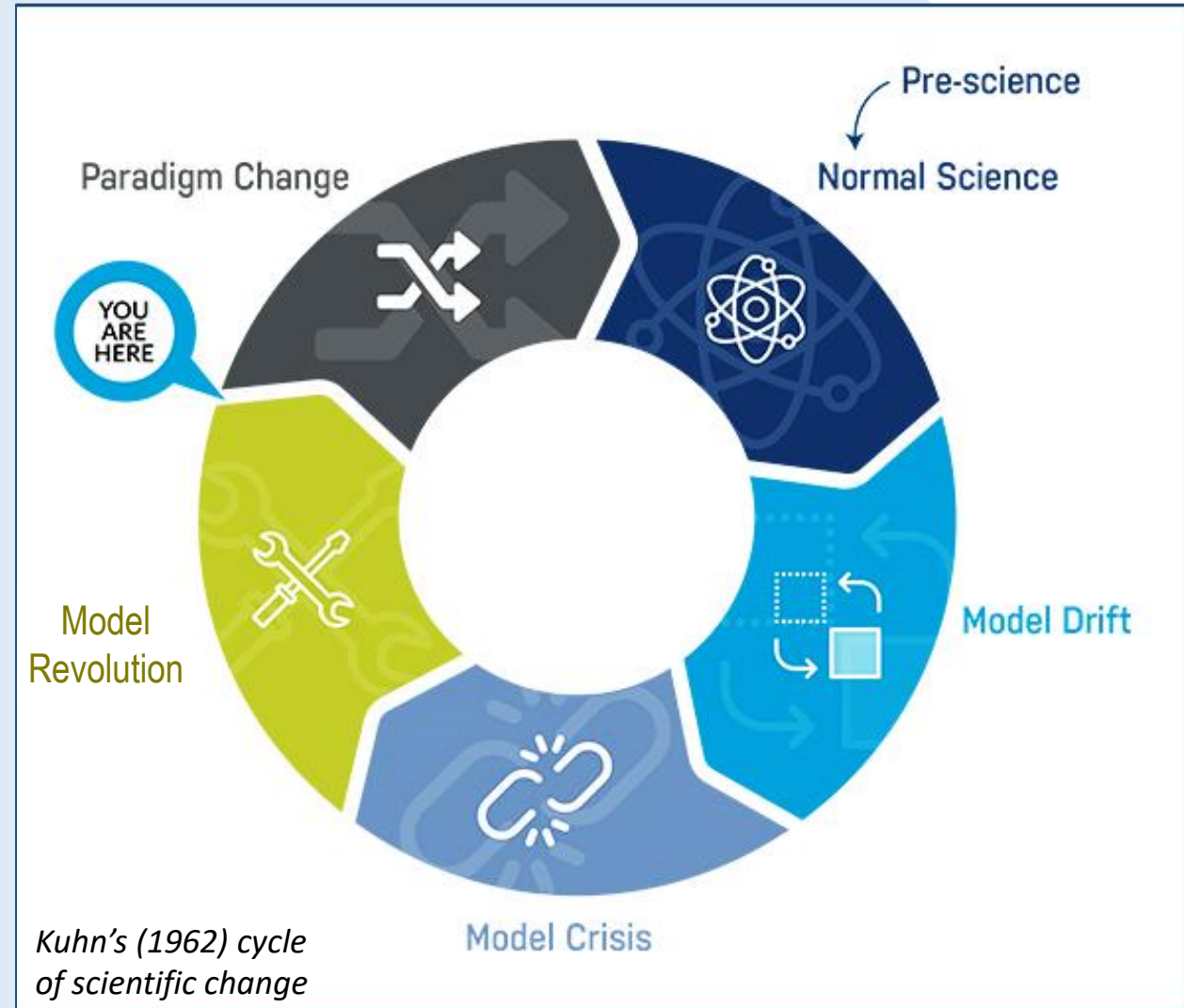
Staff member travels to the project site, where they gather specific information e.g. financial, M&E, safeguarding which is entered into a standardised reporting template or the Safeguarding Advisor travels to the project and completes a more detailed safeguarding specific reporting template.

Considerations for A New Model

- A degree of urgency but also reluctance to move too quickly and risk bad decisions - increased risk to children and vulnerable adults.

- The importance of finding out what we could from other INGOs facing the same challenges in monitoring overseas projects during COVID-19.

- Embracing what's possible: Online engagement e.g. ZOOM.

- Providing flexibility & multiple options to our Members.

Initial Steps

1. Collaboration: Consult Teams, feedback and input to Management Team for decision making and cross-organisation backing; Creation of Distance Monitoring Coordinating Group (April/May 2020).

2. Member engagement meetings (from May 2020) and workshops with stakeholders (via Zoom) to introduce and develop the new approach.

3. Creation of COVID-19 resource database for Members across all areas including safeguarding e.g. UNICEF, Keeping Children Safe, WHO etc.

4. Finalise Distance Monitoring Implementation plan incorporating a pilot phase (July/August).

5. Develop formats and implementation guidelines:

   ❑ **Desk Review Format:** General and safeguarding specific – Members had familiarity as desk review format previously used for safeguarding 2017/2018.
   ❑ **"Project Health-Check":** Semi - structured interview format for application through virtual dialogues with key informants – Project Managers, staff, community members etc.
   ❑ **Stakeholder Testimony:** "Stories of Change" guidelines.
   ❑ **Modified Monitoring Report:** General and Safeguarding specific.

6. Identifying high risk projects for safeguarding specific monitoring e.g. residential, boarding schools, disability, street children.

New Model

Source of information	Type of information provided	Re-thinking for distance monitoring
1. **Written information:** E.g. in MissionLinks proposals and reports.	Facts and figures, results data: targets and actuals. Names, numbers, policies, procedures, activities etc.	☑ "**Desk review**" questionnaire format to enhance and update data in existing reports.
2. **Face-to-face interview/ dialogue:** With project team and other stakeholders.	Confirmation of facts and figures, updating of previous reports. Better understanding of how a project works. First impressions of people involved.	☑ "**Project Health-Check**", done by Zoom using a standardised semi-structured interview format with key informants.
3. **Stories of change, beneficiary testimony:** Words, photos, video.	Outcomes of project as they affect beneficiaries/ participants. Validation of theory of change: how action leads to outcome; sometimes evidence of impact.	☑ **New story guidelines**, specific requirements.
4. **Experience of being present on the project site:**	Confirmation of validity and credibility of information from other sources; impressions of capability and trustworthiness of people involved; observation of troubling aspects ignored or side-lined in other sources.	☒ Deferred.

Plan

TASK	TIMELINE			
	May	**June**	**July**	**Aug**
1. Establish Distance Monitoring initiative: See details of initial actions already completed on previous page.	■			
2. Member engagement:				
2.1 Consult members on development of Distance Monitoring (presentation and discussion at Cap Dev Community plus dedicated follow-up meeting).	■			
2.2 Identify members/projects included in current Monitoring Visit Planner suitable for pilot phase of distance monitoring.	■			
2.3 Contact MDOs and project teams: Introduce and explain the Distance Monitoring scheme and prepare with MDO/project team for implementation.	■	■		
3. Develop formats and implementation guidelines: [*Desk Review* format + guidance; *Self-Assessment Report* format + guidance; *Stakeholder Testimony* guidelines; *Key Informant Virtual Meeting* format + guidance; *Distance Monitoring Report Form* and *Feedback Template*]				
3.1 Initial drafting of all the above resources		■		
3.2 Circulate each draft resource to Reference Group for feedback		■		
3.3 Re-draft and prepare resources for piloting		■		
4. Inter-agency collaboration and sharing: Through Dóchas, network and share ideas with other development actors facing similar monitoring challenges.		■	■	■
5. Preparation for 2020 Distance Monitoring Pilot Phase				
5.1 Confirm allocation of projects to monitoring staff members/mentors		■		
5.2 Confirm timescale in coordination with participating MDOs and project teams		■		
5.3 Draft ToR for each engagement.		■		
5.4 On-line Workshop(s) with stakeholders via Zoom to introduce the new monitoring tools and guidance, and prepare for the new approach.		■		
5.5 Get member agreement and finalise ToR		■		
5.6 Set and agree timetable for monitoring each project		■		
5.7 Send Self-Assessment Report format and guidance, Stakeholder Testimony guidelines, guidance for Key Informants and any other support material.		■		
5.8 Generate new *Distance Monitoring Report Form* for each project involved.		■		

Plan

5.9	Identify key informants for each project and confirm availability for Zoom interview (discuss and resolve internet connectivity issues at this stage).				
5.10	Set up and share Zoom links for Key Informant interviews				
1.	**Implement Distance Monitoring process as planned**				
6.1	Carry out Desk Review of each project using new format and guidance.				▶
6.2	Conduct Zoom interviews as planned. Make detailed notes.				▶
6.3	Receive Self-Assessment by email. Receive Stakeholder Testimonies by pre-arranged media transfer platform. Follow up if late arriving.				▶
6.4	Collate and analyse data, complete Distance Monitoring Report using new report format.				▶
6.5	Draft, review, sign off and send feedback letter.				▶
1.	**Meta-Monitoring:** Set up and implement a system for ongoing monitoring of the distance monitoring, including systematic gathering of feedback from MC staff and mentors, MDOs, and project teams monitored.				▶
1.	**End of year review:** Full evaluation at end of year. Evaluate (a) How can this experience help us improve our project monitoring practice in general? (b) In particular, what part can distance monitoring play in our future strategy?				▶ ▶

Member Engagement and Feedback

- Members acknowledged Misean Cara's rapid and effective institutional response to COVID-19 including financial and other supports e.g. redirection of project funding, emergency fund for COVID-19, Collaboration and support activities via Zoom.

- Members appreciated the "Desk Review" approach, as this was familiar to them.

- Members greatly appreciated the M+E Distance Monitoring Guidelines which clearly articulated each step.

- Internal Member monitoring also restricted - Facilitation of Member mapping for inter-congregational support and monitoring activities e.g. someone from Member A visiting Member B's neighbouring project, and someone from Member B visiting Member A's project - 'Inter-Member monitoring'.

- Commitment and buy in strong from projects for self-assessment activities and seeking new ways to enhance the reliability of this.

- On the whole, levels of communication between Misean Cara and project teams increased rather than decreased.

- Some Members found the transition easier given greater internal resources e.g. in-country personnel, development officers, development coordinators, programme officers or delegates. Therefore, adapting early on implementing in-country monitoring by phone, Zoom, email and keeping track of progress, receiving briefings, helping tackle difficulties etc.

- Although there is great potential in using alternative approaches, Members feel learning from physically visiting the country and the projects would always be important.

Challenges

- Other emergencies coinciding with COVID-19 e.g. flooding in Kenya, some Members having to prioritise basic needs over COVID-19 responses.

- Lack of training on the tools for project staff – who should do this?

- Project teams finding guidance too long and complicated (English not first language); simplified with executive summary.

- Time zones for online meeting scheduling.

- Poor connection & people having to travel to join calls due to internet limitations - requiring people to gather/leave their homes despite COVID-19 restrictions.

- Translation – using bilingual staff or Members.

- Slow process online – very tiring.

- Not a substitute for visiting the project in person. Limits to verification – can't see for yourself.

Strengths and Benefits

- Much easier given previous Member engagement on safeguarding – **Buy in**.

- Self-Assessment format helpful as it clearly outlined MC expectations and served as internal evaluation to the project teams.

- Not as laborious for Members as in person monitoring e.g. accommodation, transport, staff availability.

- Cost effective – Staff don't have to travel and can conduct monitoring on more projects remotely.

- Opening up access to projects in remote/conflict areas that are challenging to monitor in person.

- Possibilities for direct input from children and parents, vulnerable adults.

Next Steps

Longer Term Focus:

1. **Meta-Monitoring:** Set up and implement a system for ongoing monitoring of the distance monitoring, including systematic gathering of feedback from MC staff and mentors, MDOs, and project teams monitored.

2. **End of year Review:** Full evaluation at end of year. Evaluate (a) How can this experience help us improve our project monitoring practice in general?
(b) In particular, what part can distance monitoring play in our future strategy?

3. **Safeguarding Review:** Systematic Categorisation of projects – Level of risk – Monitoring requirements e.g. how often should an education project for children with a residential component be monitored versus a livelihoods projects working with adult men? What depth of information is required/sufficient?

www.miseancara.ie

/MiseanCaraIreland

@MiseanCara

Misean Cara

Valerie Philpott

Safeguarding Advisor

vphilpott@miseancara.ie

(01) 4999129

misean cara

Mission Support from Ireland