Western Cape Monitoring & Evaluation Community of Practice
## Meeting Highlights – 23 March 2021
Virtual Meeting

SETTING THE SCENE

The Coordinator of the Western Cape M&E CoP, Kauthar Conrad, From BRIDGE, welcomed participants to the first meeting for the year. Kauthar gave an introductory overview to BRIDGE, highlighting the purpose of a Community of Practice, and its organisational purpose and values. The purpose of this CoP meeting was to plan for the year with the participants, ensuring that the CoP is as member-centric as possible. Reflecting on what has transpired in the previous years, as well as developments in the M&E space, the following presentations were shared:

OVERVIEW OF TOPICS EXPLORED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS:

Asgar Bhikoo, of the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, listed the following as an overview of topics explored in the CoP, in 2019 and 2020:
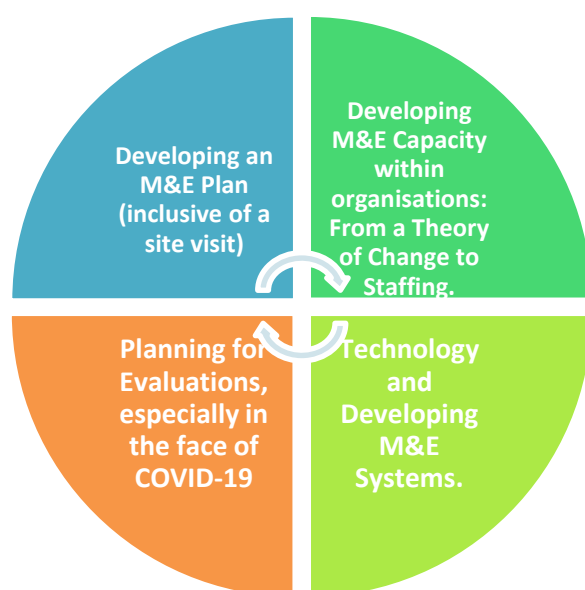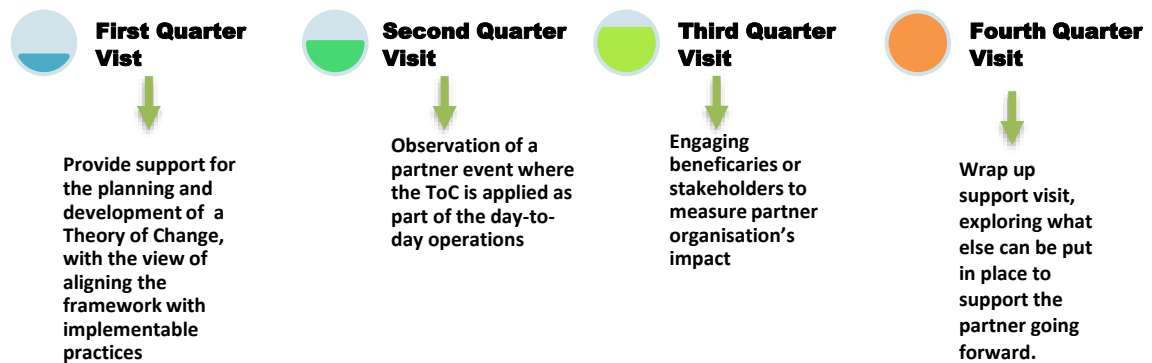

Overview of Topics Explored in The Past Two Years

PRESENTATION BY ANNIZA BURNETT (SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGER, VALCARE)

Valcare is a nonprofit company, with a membership network of about 250 (NPC and NPO) organisations. The organisation also acts as social investment manager for Funds, Trusts, Donors and Corporates looking to support community efforts. This positions the organisation uniquely to be able to both apply for funding and distribute funding. Among the key focus areas of Valcare's social investment division is providing monitoring and evaluation support for partner organisation. The support varies, depending on the extent of the partner organisations need, however the support typically rests on a quarterly visit model as illustrated below.

Valcare's Traditional M&E Support Approach

First Quarter Vist	Second Quarter Visit	Third Quarter Visit	Fourth Quarter Visit
Provide support for the planning and development of a Theory of Change, with the view of aligning the framework with implementable practices	Observation of a partner event where the ToC is applied as part of the day-to-day operations	Engaging beneficaries or stakeholders to measure partner organisation's impact	Wrap up support visit, exploring what else can be put in place to support the partner going forward.

Valcare's Post COVID-19 M&E Support Approach

Following the onset of COVID-19 and it's socio-economic impact on partner organisations, Valcare, adapted it's programmes and developed a 5-month Food-Relief Programme, targeted at member organisations. The programme was managed online (with exceptions made during deliveries) and was able to provide up to 3.1 million meals, in the form of food parcels or vouchers, for about 43 000 beneficiaries. The Food Relief Programme gave grassroot partner organisations the necessary impetus to start engaging more online, giving rise to creativity and adaptation to the online culture. The benfits of adapting to digital engagements include:

- Saving time and money
- A bigger reacher, given that engagements took place online
- Covering more "site vists", creating a knock-on-effect of customised support for partner organisations
- Access to real-time data
- More capacity to emotional support via pre-existing Whatsapp Support line
- Marketing less on Email and more on Whatsapp

Anniza concluded by saying that moving forward, Valcare would be looking to find a balance between face-to-face interactions and digital engagements, in order to a) build and maintain the trust necessary for effective M&E support and b) mitigate challenges around internet access.

MARK ABRAHAMS (SENIOR CONSULTANT, SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE)

Reflecting on what is emerging in the field of evaluations and adapting to M&E practice in uncertain times, Mark Abrahams shared key enabling factor and prevailing challenges, as captured below:

Enabling factors!

- Generally, there is greater awareness of the value of monitoring and evaluation
- There is clearer focus for the evaluations in the Request For Proposals
- Organisations are much more aware if it is a design evaluation, implementation, more formative/developmental or summative, outcome evaluation
- The notion of impact is used more delicately
- Huge contributions to field-building, building the discipline – e.g. Communities of Practice

Some challenges

- Not enough time and resources made available for monitoring and evaluation
- There is still a compliance orientation with some institutions
- Evaluations become technical exercises only
- There is still a lack of learning from the evaluation exercise. Lack of USE of evidence
- Technology not used as enabler(s) and uncritical adoption of some technology.

Mark urged CoP members to grapple with these insights, as actors with a particular interest in the field. This should be considered against the backdrop of how Evaluations emerged and have evolved over time, from the Evaluation Tree, Evaluation Central Station, Outcome Harvesting, Theory of Change Approaches, and beyond. To this end CoP members were invited to Emerging Trends and Methods in International Development Evaluation Events, on 24 March 2021 at 09H00.

BRAINSTORMING SESSION

CoP members were given an opportunity to brainstorm possible topics for the year ahead. The following topics were suggested, with the option of sending more suggestions to the CoP coordinator via email, after the meeting:

- A Peer Learning Approach to the Cop
- Emerging Rrends in the field, such as Outcome Harvesting
- More African Approaches to M&E
- Rapid M&E methods and Techniques, to assist in providing real-time feedback
- M&E of Climate Change
- How M&E can assist in curbing corruption
- Fit for Purpose Approaches: Moving from Compliance to Developmental Approaches

CoP UPDATES

JET Education Services and South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association's (SAMEA) Eleanor Hazell gave the following updates on SAMEA activities for the year ahead:

CAPACITY BUILDING PORTFOLIO

Capacity Building Virtual Workshops
- **SAVE THE DATE: 1-3 JUNE 2021**
- Update your SAMEA profile and click on **SAMEATalk** notifications if you want to be informed about this up and coming event.

Virtual Co-creation event
- **OCTOBER 2021 (DATE TBC)**
- Crowd sourced evaluation challenges to identify solutions for.
- Hackathon open to all (EEs and experienced evaluators), focusing on priority themes (eg aspect of M&E in crisis situations, Made in Africa Evaluation etc, to be confirmed) and using a capacity building approach.
- Teams to identify solutions to challenges, prizes on offer and winning solutions may be developed into products.

For More Information on these and other events go to: www.samea.org.za

CLOSING

Kauthar thanked participants for their attendance and participation, and shared June, September and November as the proposed CoP dates for the year.

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub, as are any other specific knowledge products relevant to ECD. Here is the link to this.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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