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HOW TO DESIGN EVALUABLE ANTI-TRAFFICKING CAMPAIGNS

• SIX BASIC STEPS •

Bremen, April 2017
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Illustrations by Dörthe Jordan

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INTRODUCTION: The rationale behind this manual

Was it worth the trouble? NGO leaders like to know whether or not their campaigns accomplished the intended goals or had the desired impact in the real world, and what favoured and what hampered success. They are keen to learn from experience in order to improve future campaigns. When such learning is done systematically, it is called ‘evaluation’.

Thousands of pages have been written to guide good evaluation. This methodological literature formulates evaluation standards, but focuses on ‘big evaluation’ – professional evaluation by independent evaluators who write consistent, publicly available reports. Large-scale professional evaluation for all campaigns would require disproportionate effort. Consequently, most campaigns end up having no evaluation at all. This manual aims to change this situation by promoting the idea of evaluable campaigns.

Evaluated campaigns can never fail. Even if they do not work out as expected, they contribute to learning.

This manual is a short guide to campaign design with a view to evaluability. Primarily, it is intended for learning within organisations. Additionally it offers ideas on how that learning can be shared. It is designed as short guide for systematic but low-budget internal planning and evaluation, and therefore has its limitations. In particular:

- it is focused on behaviour-changing campaigns – campaigns claiming that individuals can do something to reduce trafficking and exploitation, even if they are neither (potential) victims nor perpetrators. It does not address campaigns for policy change or awareness-raising campaigns;
- it assumes a situation in which a donor is willing to provide funds for, and an NGO considers conducting, a campaign. Therefore, basic problem analysis is presupposed in this manual; and finally,
- a range of funders are already providing good guidance to internal evaluation. This manual is for those who do not benefit from such support.

Key features of the manual

The manual introduces six steps, each consisting of short explanation accompanied by a graph or a list, taking the example of a fictional campaign called the ‘Matchbox campaign’. The manual can be used as guide in deciding whether and how to conduct a campaign. We envisage this as an iterative process – a concrete campaign has to be imagined in order to decide whether or not it makes sense to conduct it. Planning using these steps makes the analysis of experiences easier, as observations have been made which allow the comparison of expected and unexpected results. The six steps are:

1. Reflecting campaign features
2. Explaining the intervention logic
3. Considering the risks and side-effects
4. Searching for indications of effectiveness
5. Questioning costs and efficiency
6. The storing and sharing of insights

We imagine two ways in which the manual could be potentially useful for NGOs:

1. A project organiser could use it as inspiration for the preparation of a project application and, later, of internal project evaluation.
2. An appointed person within the organisation could prepare a group session with internal stakeholders using the six steps as a guide. Ideally, group work would be moderated and the results documented, so that any planning or evaluation includes multiple perspectives.
STEP 1: REFLECTING CAMPAIGN FEATURES

In the design phase of a campaign, you may, initially, only have a vague idea of what you want to achieve, perhaps inspired by others that you have already noticed. Let’s start with this vague idea. Step 1 asks you to reflect on the campaign features, considering five in detail: messenger, message, channel, target group and behavioural objective. These five features are closely interrelated and only make sense when used in combination. You may start with any one of the five – for example, a feature that you consider as fixed because funding is promised on the condition that your campaign is designed to reach out to a specific target group.

Target group and behaviour change

The target group is clearly limited to men who are in an environment where clients of sexual services are expected. These men are therefore ideally placed, with the opportunity, capacity and motivation to be observant and call the helpline if necessary. If the message were transmitted, for example, to an audience of academic women, it would probably have little or no impact, as these women are unlikely to make any observations. Making a conscious choice enhances the likelihood of being able to check, later, if this target audience has been reached.

Messenger

In the envisaged campaign, there are two messengers:

- The **attractive man**, who gives a positive visual image of a potential caller. The man would be appropriate for approaching potential clients, but not for addressing other sex workers.
- The **background messenger** is the NGO that offers the counselling service. You should look at your website through the eyes of a sexual services client and ask yourself whether your organisation is likely to appear trustworthy and credible to him.

Channel

In choosing your channel and messenger, you are automatically targeting a specific audience and excluding others. If matchboxes are chosen, for example, then non-smokers are likely to be somewhat neglected. In the matchbox campaign, therefore, condoms could be added as second give-away item.

Message

The message is the concrete wording that communicates which behaviour is recommended. It has to be understandable and acceptable to the target group. In addition, it has to be suitable for the chosen channel. Campaign messages have to be short and focused in order to attract attention. The message is short enough for the matchbox to be the chosen channel. It does not give any indication of the contexts in which bruises or tears may be observed, but the NGO name on the back clearly indicates this. The table on the next page provides examples of potential characteristics of each feature and questions that may guide your reflections on the campaign.

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The matchbox campaign – a fictional example

This campaign targets men in environments where they have the opportunity to purchase sexual services in Newtown. The target group is asked particularly to look out for indications of potential forced prostitution. In case of suspicion, they should call the helpline of the counselling service ‘Help’. The preliminary message is ‘Bruises? Tears? I do not close my eyes’. Matchboxes will be distributed in nightclubs and similar places in Newtown. The matchbox could carry a drawing of an attractive man on the phone on the front, with the message, phone number and website for more information printed inside.
## Examples and questions for discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Questions for discussion</th>
<th>Messenger</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Behaviour change/action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGO with a reputation for...</td>
<td>Is the target audience likely to consider the messenger relevant and credible?</td>
<td>NGO with a reputation for...</td>
<td>Short appeal only</td>
<td>Websites and social media, namely...</td>
<td>(Potential) clients of services</td>
<td>Do not buy... from...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency with a reputation for...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agency with a reputation for...</td>
<td>Appeal accompanied by an argument</td>
<td>Radio or TV spots</td>
<td>Members of a profession (social worker, taxi driver)</td>
<td>Report observations of... to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person prominent due to...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Person prominent due to...</td>
<td>Argument accompanied by an example</td>
<td>Cinema-trailer</td>
<td>NGO activists</td>
<td>Demand information from... about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person with authentic experience because of...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Person with authentic experience because of...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Direct mailing to...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Offer information or help to...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is the target group likely to:
- understand the message?
- be sympathetic to the message and its style?
- remember the message when the opportunity for action appears?

Is the target group likely to:
- notice the channel?
- accept the channel?

Is the channel appropriate for the message?

Is the main target group concretely defined?
Is the main target group likely to have the opportunity and capacity to act as recommended?

Is it clear what the target audience should do or avoid doing?
STEP 2: EXPLAINING THE INTERVENTION LOGIC

Each NGO and each project has a mission and an idea of how its activities contribute to change in society. Such ideas are not always entirely explicit, accepted or consistent. Adding a new activity is an opportunity to describe, activate or revise such ideas again.

For the new activity, the intervention logic should be constructed. The intervention logic sets out the chain of effects that have to take place in order for an activity to lead to its intended result. Constructing the intervention logic of a campaign is about getting a concrete vision of how it is supposed to work. Side-effects are discussed in the next step.

An exemplary graphical representation

We suggest working out a simplified graphical representation in the form of a flow chart – starting with campaign materials (outputs) and ending with an effect on trafficking in human beings (the ultimate intended impact). Enough intermediate steps should be inserted so that the argument is clear. The break-down should be sufficiently detailed in order to inspire ideas for observation and measurement.

Output: In the example, we suggest that the production and distribution of matchboxes and other give-away items is a milestone. Next – and in order that they do not disappear into a waste-paper basket – visitors need to take them and read the messages.

Immediate outcome: If the visitors accept the matchboxes and read them, the question then becomes whether or not they understand that the campaign is about abuse in prostitution and that they should keep the information in case they see something untoward. Otherwise they might think that it is about domestic violence or that men should not indulge in other sexual relations.

Intermediate outcome: Even if the recipients of matchboxes and other appropriate hand-outs understand, agree and have every intention of helping, they may never see anything suspicious, or they may make observations but not remember to call the helpline. If they do see something problematic and retrieve the helpline information, they still have to decide, in a concrete situation, whether they want to call or not.

Behavioural outcome: If the observers do call, the main aim of the campaign has been realised. A person has had the opportunity, capacity and motivation to make a call and report someone who they believe to be potentially in need of help.

Preconditions

Whether or not the campaign will make a real contribution to the reduction of exploited persons trapped in prostitution then depends on a number of pre-conditions.

The helpline: The callers must have given sufficient information for helpline staff to decide what action to take. Here, it is assumed that they first seek to get in touch with the person in potential need and find out what the supposed victim wants or would find helpful. The staff provide information about people’s rights, an offer to help if the victim needs to escape and support in a police investigation. This way, they do not expose a sex worker to police investigation because a client has misunderstood something.

The police: If the police are informed – which may well be appropriate in direct response to a call – the outcome will also depend on police powers and sensitivity. If the police are unable to establish sufficient proof to arrest the perpetrator and protect the victim, the former could continue to violate people’s right to freedom and safety.
From give-aways in pubs to the reduction of trafficking – an exemplary flow chart of the intervention logic of a campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Immediate outcome</th>
<th>Intermediate outcome</th>
<th>Behavioural outcomes</th>
<th>Immediate impact on exploitation</th>
<th>Final impact on trafficking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational activities</td>
<td>Matchboxes and other give-aways are produced and distributed in pubs and nightclubs</td>
<td>Visitors to pubs and nightclubs receive give-aways and read the message</td>
<td>Readers understand, agree and intend to inform in case of suspicious observations</td>
<td>Those targeted observe something suspicious and report it to the helpline</td>
<td>Cases of exploitation are detected, victims are helped and the prosecution informed</td>
<td>Exploiters can no longer receive new and vulnerable victims of traffickers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Precondition: Helpline is operating well

Precondition: Enforcement is operating well
STEP 3: CONSIDERING RISKS AND SIDE-EFFECTS

Campaigns designed to change behaviour always have side-effects above and beyond the key message. In order to attract attention, campaigns need to be stimulating, usually with a concise image and a catchy slogan highlighting the particular aspect to be covered. This choice unavoidably triggers a series of more or less unconscious associations that contextualise the central intended message, influencing how it is understood and the context in which the memory of the message is activated.

Effects beyond the main intended effect can be either positive or negative and can occur instead of or in addition to it. They can affect the victims, the perpetrators, the groups to which the victims or perpetrators are thought to belong or the organisation conducting the campaign.

Imagining risks and side-effects in the planning phase

Additional beneficial side-effects of a campaign could be: the establishment or reinforcement of cooperation networks, increased support for a favoured policy change or increased donations to the organisation.

However, side-effects can also be negative, and the intervention logic developed in Step 2 is designed for use as a guide when considering them. At each stage, you should ask yourselves ‘What can go wrong? What can be done to avoid this?’ The figure on the next page indicates some typical negative effects that have been raised with regard to anti-trafficking campaigns. Careful reflection on these undesirable effects may help NGOs to reduce or contain the risks inherent in most campaigns, or to drop campaign plans when the risk of collateral damage seems too high.

Pre-testing materials

When planning any campaign, NGOs should allow sufficient time and funds to enable intensive cooperation with the designers of their campaign material, including time for pre-tests with target-group members.

A failure to do this may result in the NGO being pressured into accepting draft material from designers, due to budgetary and time constraints, about which they still have some doubts.

Exemplary considerations for the matchbox campaign

- Give-aways, such as matchboxes, are distributed in night-clubs and similar locations. The owners might accept them, then put them out of sight after the distributors have left. The risk can be reduced by taking time to inform owners of the full purpose of the campaign.
- Guests reading the message may think that it only refers to domestic violence. It is worth considering the addition of the following words to the message – ‘I do not close my eyes to any abuse of sex workers’.
- Could readers mistake it for a sex hotline offering views of abused women? This is unlikely to happen, but pre-testing should be carried out just in case.
- The attractive man as a client on the matchbox cover could convey the message that purchasing sexual services is cool and being advertised. A worried look on the man’s face would be a counter-strategy worthy of consideration.
- Clients could conclude that there is no risk of forced prostitution if they do not see for themselves any concrete indications such as bruises or tears. It might not be possible to include concrete evidence on the give-aways but the campaign website should provide additional information.
- NGOs may find that the campaign creates considerable work for them – for example responding to journalists’ questions and talking to callers who pose somewhat irrelevant or more general questions.
- The helpline could end up initiating police investigations that, in fact, simply cause more problems for the victims without leading to sanctions for the perpetrators if the police are not familiar with standard modes of victim protection.
EXPLORING THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF IMAGES

- Could victims perceive the image as derogatory?
- Could perpetrators perceive the image as cool?
- Are ethnic and gender stereotypes created or confirmed?
- Could target audiences overlook victim groups (men, the elderly)?
- Are false and irrelevant suspicions encouraged?
- Could target audiences overlook perpetrator groups (women, relatives)?
- Could victims subdued by more subtle mechanisms be considered undeserving?
- Could target audiences perceive exploitation as normal and unavoidable?
**STEP 4: SEARCHING FOR INDICATIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS**

*Status quo: monitoring and like-it evaluations*

For many reasons, it is usually impossible to prove the effectiveness of anti-trafficking campaigns through robust social scientific evidence. Being aware of this, many NGOs and funders consider it sufficient to monitor performance: they describe the website created, list how many leaflets were distributed and record attendance at press conferences. Such monitoring is appropriate to check whether the day-to-day business of a campaign proceeds as scheduled.

External evaluators often conduct interviews or surveys, asking whether project participants are happy with their performance and what they could do better in the future. As a result, NGOs often find evaluation burdensome and of little use because, often, they only learn what they already know.

The idea is to produce the best possible evidence, even with limited resources, rather than to discard the idea of evaluation simply because concrete proof of the campaign’s effectiveness cannot be provided.

*In search of possibilities for learning*

Step 4 encourages NGOs to be creative in finding indicators as to whether or not the campaign really worked as intended. Many NGOs actually do this informally; however, with just a little extra effort, this process could be systematically carried out and documented in order to enhance institutional learning both within the organisation and beyond. We suggest using the stages in the intervention logic to search for empirical evidence that the campaign was genuinely effective or whether risks and side-effects materialised.

Any empirical indication is welcomed, provided that it is documented systematically and impartially. The table on the next page provides some general suggestions that can be conducted internally, at low cost, while other ways of obtaining proof require external funds and professional support.

**Example of a low-budget internal evaluation for the matchbox campaign**

**Output:** Firstly, a chart is drawn up showing the names of the establishments targeted and the number of matchboxes distributed – for example, 1,000 matchboxes in 10 pubs and nightclubs.

**Immediate and intermediate outcomes:** A team of two people goes for a fact-finding pub crawl in three pubs, two weeks after distribution of the matchboxes. They count any left-overs and ask the staff about how the matchboxes have been accepted by punters. They may, for example, find that matchboxes disappeared from view in some pubs yet were prominently and permanently displayed on pin-boards in others. The team members go to the smokers’ corner and offer matchboxes to individuals. In each establishment, they ask five people what they think of the idea. After the visit, they compile a short report indicating any staff insights and the number of and expected reactions to left-over matchboxes, together with any unexpected remarks. In this way they can determine if the message has been clearly understood.

**Behavioural outcomes:** Helpline staff always keeps a record of all calls. In the three months after the campaign, they are asked to record whether the helpline was found via the matchboxes or through the accompanying press coverage. A student intern then compares the contents of all calls before and after the campaign, and with and without reference to it.

**Impact:** It is expected that only a few cases of police cooperation and of victims being freed would be accomplished through the campaign. The long-term follow-up to procedures is planned after the campaign, through contact with victims and the police.

Finally, the NGO has the impression that the helpline is exceptionally well known in the city of Newtown. They approach an academic in a nearby university to see if s/he would be interested in jointly undertaking a comparative study in other cities.
# Campaign intervention logic: in search of evidence for institutional learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage in intervention logic</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>→ Immediate outcome</th>
<th>→ Intermediate outcome</th>
<th>→ Behavioural outcome</th>
<th>→ Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign message and</td>
<td>Websites</td>
<td>Targeted persons</td>
<td>Targeted persons</td>
<td>Targeted persons</td>
<td>Changes in exploitation and trafficking, and unintended side-effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distribution channels</td>
<td></td>
<td>exposed to and</td>
<td>understand, accept and</td>
<td>act as recommended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aware of the message</td>
<td>change intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leaflets, flyers, give-aways</td>
<td>Counters on pages and subpages of (e.g. number of clicks, length of stay, country of visitor)</td>
<td>Experiments (e.g. exposure of persons to output and test of understanding)</td>
<td>Exemplary or laboratory observation of behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Press releases and conferences</td>
<td>Number of items distributed – check for left-overs Discussion of reasons for left-overs with contacts at distribution outlets</td>
<td>Group discussion with small number of people</td>
<td>Expert interviews on observations in the field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posters, films, advertisements</td>
<td>Press conference attendance, type and number of media reports</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews</td>
<td>Business statistics of targeted goods, companies or sectors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary data on potential viewers (e.g. newspaper circulation, traffic at poster sites)</td>
<td>Qualitative analysis of mail or social media reactions</td>
<td>Target group survey reporting changes in behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative media report analysis</td>
<td>Target group survey before and after campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Target group survey on understanding, acceptance, attitude</td>
<td>Target group survey before and after campaign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suggestions of potential indicators of effectiveness

- Counters on pages and subpages of (e.g. number of clicks, length of stay, country of visitor)
- Number of items distributed – check for left-overs Discussion of reasons for left-overs with contacts at distribution outlets
- Press conference attendance, type and number of media reports
- Secondary data on potential viewers (e.g. newspaper circulation, traffic at poster sites)
STEP 5: QUESTIONING COSTS AND EFFICIENCY

Dealing with costs and efficiency is usually not the most valued of NGO activities. However, realistic cost assessment is necessary to see a project through to the end and thinking through alternatives helps to get the mission accomplished as efficiently as possible. The table on the next page shows how to sketch out the full costs of a campaign. When making any decision in an NGO, it is a good idea to very roughly work out the indicative values, before going into the more-detailed calculations usually required by a funder. The light grey letters indicate the fictive values of our matchbox campaign example. When assessing the campaign afterwards, these can be used for comparison.

External funder costs. The blue fields contain the external funder’s contribution to the costs of a campaign – for example, staff costs for a part-time position for six months plus the funds for hiring a designer.

Voluntary input. Making rough calculations of volunteer input and any donations of goods and services to the campaign will facilitate explanation of how it differs from other campaigns. In our example, a matchbox producer donated matchboxes and a student intern supported the campaign.

NGO costs. When compiling an application for funding, a contribution from regular NGO funds may also need to be considered, if the funder requires matched funding from an NGO’s own resources. However, some costs are not eligible, and some benefits are not representable in this calculation. From the NGO perspective, it is important to include a rough estimate of all staff hours that go into the campaign, including those for drawing up the application, executive functions like recruiting and guiding staff, potential conflict management, administration or the organising of volunteers and donations (in the example, communicating with the matchbox producer). Unfunded executive tasks are often underestimated. On the other hand, it may also be worth considering whether or not campaign staff could or even already do help out in other NGO activities, even though this may not be representable to the funder. In the example, the NGO estimates the costs of executive work and miscellaneous other workplace costs.

The sum of these costs is the total cost of the campaign. A campaign working out at 25,000 euros costs the funding body just 20,000 euros. Taking into account NGO own costs and any estimated extra benefits such as increased donations due to the increased visibility of the organisation, the financial balance of conducting a behaviour change campaign could display a net benefit for the NGO, as suggested in the example. However, a realistic work-load assessment would also indicate that the NGO must devote considerable input from other sources into the campaign.

Efficiency ratios and alternative measures

Thinking about efficiency means considering the ratio between input and achievements. The example demonstrates how many calls were generated for 10,000 euros of campaign costs. With such an indicator, different campaigns can be compared with one another, and campaigns can be compared to other measures.

Did other campaigns achieve more with the same input? The table gives an example of how the matchbox campaign compares to a similar campaign, i.e. last year’s campaign by the same NGO. What can be achieved with the same amount of money could achieve in victim support.

There is no algorithm for determining what is better, but the calculations help to put questions on the agenda. They can also be used to negotiate with funders to persuade them to set out more funds for actions that are considered more efficient for the mission of the NGO.
### Rough breakdown of the total costs of a campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funded campaign staff</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other funded campaign expenditures</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funder costs</strong></td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuated volunteer time on campaign</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuated goods and services for campaign</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total valuated donated input</strong></td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload of NGO staff for campaign</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work load of campaign staff for other tasks</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other valuated inputs</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unfunded NGO costs</strong></td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost of campaign</strong></td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO income generated by campaign</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total financial balance for the NGO (income generated by campaign minus NGO costs)</strong></td>
<td>+1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Efficiency Ratio

Efficiency ratios can be calculated for different cost units – displaying the funder, NGO or total mission perspective. Result indicators can be chosen for output, outcome and impact.

**What results does the campaign achieve for one euro of costs?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficiency indicator of matchbox campaign</th>
<th>50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>costs</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Efficiency indicator = \( \frac{50}{25,000} \times 10,000 = 20 \)

Multiplication by 10,000 is for easier reading. For example: the campaign cost a total of 25,000 euros and generated 50 additional calls (0.002 calls per euro). Through multiplying this figure by 10,000, this can be expressed as 20 calls per 10,000 euros.

**Using efficiency ratios to think in alternatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matchbox campaign: 20 calls per 10,000 euros, initiation of 5 cases of victim support</td>
<td>Last years’ campaign: 50 calls per 10,000 euros, initiation of 3 cases of victim support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matchbox campaign: 20 calls per 10,000 euros, initiation of 5 cases of victim support</td>
<td>Victim support: 5 victims supported and provided with accommodation for one month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Light grey letters indicate that an example text was inserted.
STEP 6: THE STORING AND SHARING OF INSIGHTS

Documenting evaluative debates systematically for internal learning

Many NGOs have informal internal discussions that are evaluative. They meet, describe and discuss their observations, seeking to find out what went well and what went wrong, and what is known about the reasons why. The results are often documented in written reports of the meetings. In addition, project participants exchange emails during a project with observations that are important for the internal learning process.

However, such insights are rarely readily accessible when new projects are designed – indeed, they may even get lost entirely due to staff changes.

Two steps can make internal learning in an NGO easier, for virtually no extra work:

- create a fixed and safe place for any evaluative content (e.g. an electronic folder) within your project file;
- cut-and-paste evaluative content from other papers (for example meeting reports, notes or emails) into separate documents with a meaningful name – such as MatchboxEvaluativeProtocolExcerpts and MatchboxEvaluativeMailExcerpts – and store in a file or folder; and
- store all evaluation reports in their designated file.

Such a filing system gives newcomers to the NGO easy access to prior evaluative debates. It will also be a relief for ‘old hands’ as they will not have to repeat issues for the umpteenth time! The sole purpose of this exercise is to provide a better institutional record of important experiences.

Before considering a new campaign, evaluative insights into, for example, the matchbox campaign, should be read and fully understood.

Staff recruited for a new campaign should be asked to read the previous year’s campaign evaluation file in preparation for discussion of the current one.

Preparing factsheets with key insights for public learning

As an additional step, we suggest creating factsheets showing evaluative insights. Project participants should list what should be learned from a finished project. Each statement should then undergo evaluation in the discussion – what substantiation can be made to support the statement? Ideally, substantiation – consisting of observations of cases, procedures or statistical developments – rests on a consistent and planned evaluation of the campaign’s expected effectiveness and is complemented by the best possible documentation of unexpected side-effects. In the end, a statement should be discarded, modified or noted down, together with evidence-based arguments to support it and, if necessary, any evidence-based arguments that speak against the statement. The resulting list of statements and their substantiation can be used to:

- improve work on ongoing projects,
- prepare better project applications in the future, and
- share learning with other actors in the field.

Finally, NGOs can decide which elements of the collection of arguments are worth sharing publicly, because they are both interesting for others and accompanied by a fact-based argument. This means extra work; however, NGOs have missions – in this case to reduce the exploitation and trafficking of human beings. Sharing insights from other projects helps NGOs to get closer to such overarching aims. Internal notes in the evaluation file cannot be published nor are full evaluation reports always feasible, so factsheets are an excellent way of sharing information and results. They can be published in blogs or as short pdf files on organisational or project websites or in public repositories.
### Factsheet: Key insights from the matchbox campaign

The factsheet should consist of at least two pages: one page with campaign and organisational details, and a second page containing any lessons learnt and the supporting fact-based arguments.

Light grey letters indicate that an example text was inserted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insight</th>
<th>What observations or data can be brought forward as substantiation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are indications that young boys are being exploited in the field.</td>
<td>For the first time in Newtown, after the launch of the campaign, there were several calls referring to the exploitation of young boys. In one case, following indications from a call, a boy was given temporary accommodation before being helped to travel home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broader awareness-raising campaigns generate a greater workload.</td>
<td>The radio spot 2015 – directed at a general audience – lead to 50 additional calls to the hotline. The matchbox campaign 2016 – which targeted men in nightclubs – led to 20 additional calls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campagnes for a targeted audience are better suited to detecting and helping victims.</td>
<td>The campaign also led to the initiation of support for five victims of exploitation, whereas the radio spot led to the initiation of three cases of support, resulting in greater workload in processing those cases in which help was neither needed nor wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigns also raise student interest.</td>
<td>In the month after the campaigns, three students asked whether they could write their Master’s thesis in the field. Initial phone discussions lasted around 30 minutes each; however, only one student turned up again. This student finally did an internship which was considered useful by both the student and our NGO.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


