Impact evaluations for NGOs: recent developments, possible collaboration SNV and AIID

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Impact evaluation for NGOs (Presentation for SNV, Dirk Elsen & Jessie Bokhoven; Jan 8, 2009)

Recent Developments

Possible collaboration SNV – AIID (Amsterdam Institute for International Development; UvA & VU: Ton Dietz and Menno Pradhan)

Why is impact evaluation so rare?

- Bad results could give ammunition to those who do not support the project
  - Project managers may be better off to keep results ambiguous
- It does not provide the answers needed to make policy decisions
- It is expensive

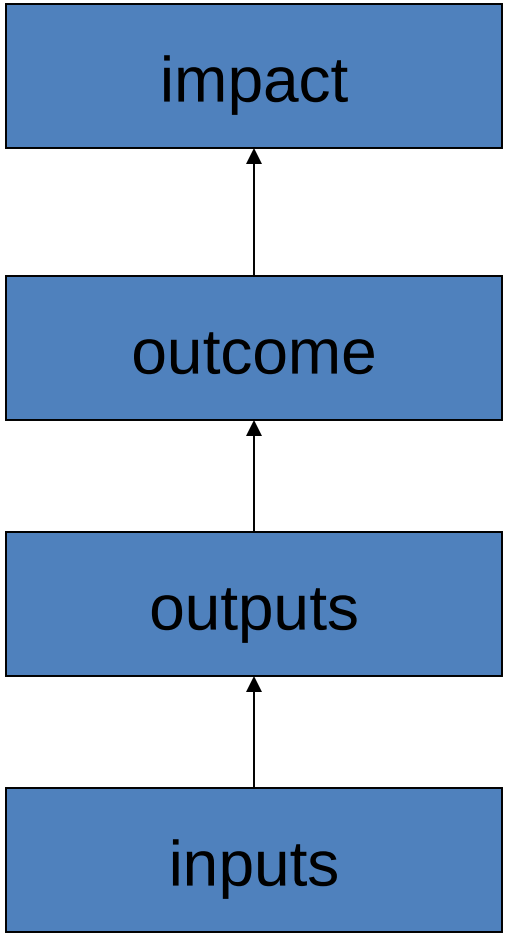
But the wind is changing…

- Aid effectiveness drive has increased demands of funders for impact evaluations.
- With several good examples around, demands for quality impact evaluations is rising.
- NGO project evaluations leading the way

Outline of this presentation

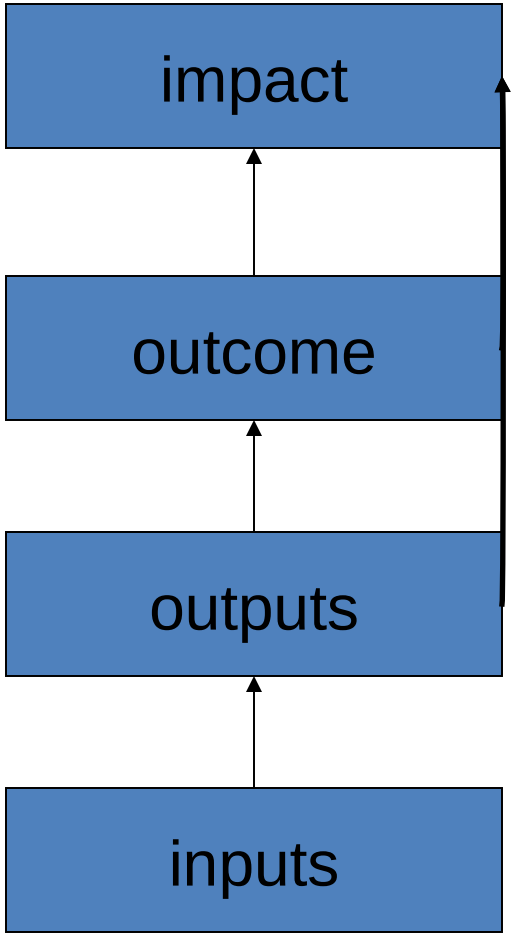
- What is impact ?
- Qualitative and quantitative evaluations methods
- Common pitfalls
- How to strategize impact evaluations?
- Possible collaboration SNV - AIID

From inputs to impact



Source:SNV Managing for Results 2007-2015

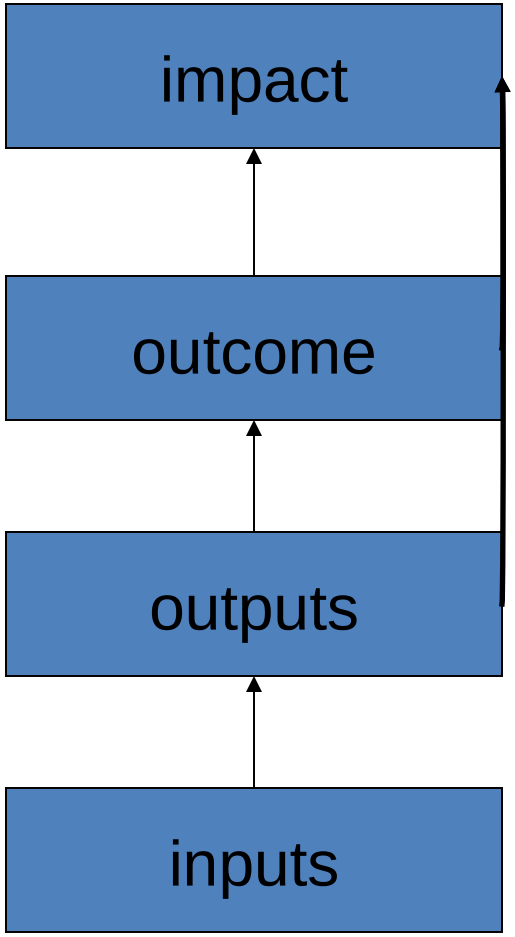
From inputs to impact



Behavior of beneficiaries

Source:SNV Managing for Results 2007-2015

From inputs to impact



Behavior of beneficiaries

Impact:

What would have been the condition of the beneficiaries if there had been no project?

Source:SNV Managing for Results 2007-2015

Qualitative

- Strengths
  - Generate hypothesis / research questions
  - Provide context/depth to analysis
  - Can consider difficult to quantify dimensions
- Weaknesses
  - Small sample size yields anecdotal evidence
  - Interviewer bias

Quantitative

- Strengths
  - Test hypothesis
  - Quantify results
- Weaknesses
  - Cost of surveys with sufficient sample
  - Needs control group
  - Difficult to deviate from research design

Qualitative methods

- Often focused on perceptions among stakeholders about:
  - changes in society (from a reconstructed baseline moment until ‘today’)
  - results of one or more ‘interventions’
  - relationship between overall change and interventions

Qualitative methods

- Often small scale: geographical case (a village, a micro region, a town section) or an anthropological case (a certain group, ethnic or otherwise)
- Often in-depth; flexible design
- Often with the intention to be ‘holistic’ (e.g. combining the ‘capitals/capabilities’ of the livelihood approach)
- Often with the intention to be participatory

Qualitative methods

- Can address issues that are hard to quantify

	qualitative	quantitative
- Direct poverty alleviation	✓	✓
- Service improvement	✓	✓
- Peace and stability	✓	
- Capacity development	✓	
- Institutional change	✓	
- Policy change	✓	
- Changing public opinion	✓	✓
- Changing people's behavior	✓	✓

Qualitative methods

- Can generate ex-ante hypothesis on expected outcomes
- But be explicit about:
  - Depth: chain of results; time factor – sustainability, but how long?
  - Width (leakage effects beyond the micro region; and - the other way around - overall ‘macro’ changes and their ‘trickling down’)

Example of a qualitative evaluation design, with quantitative elements of analysis: basis for formulation of hypotheses

- Tracking local development: AMIDSt/Tamale University Ghana for ICCO, Woord en Daad and Prisma; 2007-2010
- 12 micro-regional studies in Northern Ghana and Southern Burkina Faso to reconstruct the impact of (all) interventions on (all aspects of) change over 30 years: holistic; participatory (n = 12 x 60 people, with focus groups, individual life histories, project inventories; (perceived) project impact assessments)
- Scale makes it possible to quantify qualitative data, and compare these between the micro regions and between areas with recent, 'old', and minimal external interventions

Quantitative methods

- Step 1: carefully defined hypothesis:
  - Did providing remedial teaching to children increase their test scores after one year?
  - Did the sanitation project lead to a sustainable reduction in diarrhea?
  - Does two months of training provide better job prospects (expected income) than one month of training?
  - What is the impact of the exit strategy on the results?

Quantitative methods

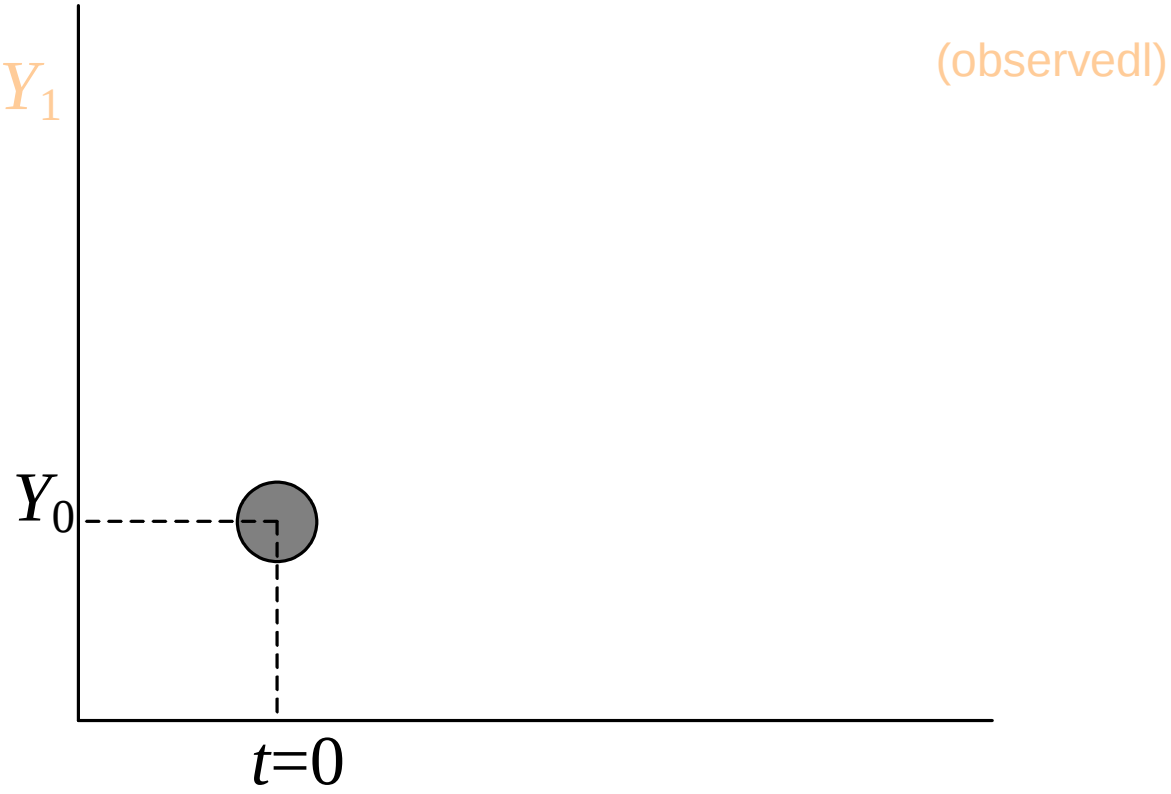
- Step 2: Define a control group
  - Randomization preferred method
  - Unbiased results, small sample size required

- Randomization, and exclusion
  - Budgets often cannot reach all. After some point randomization becomes the fairest method
  - Phased project implementation can be used to randomize

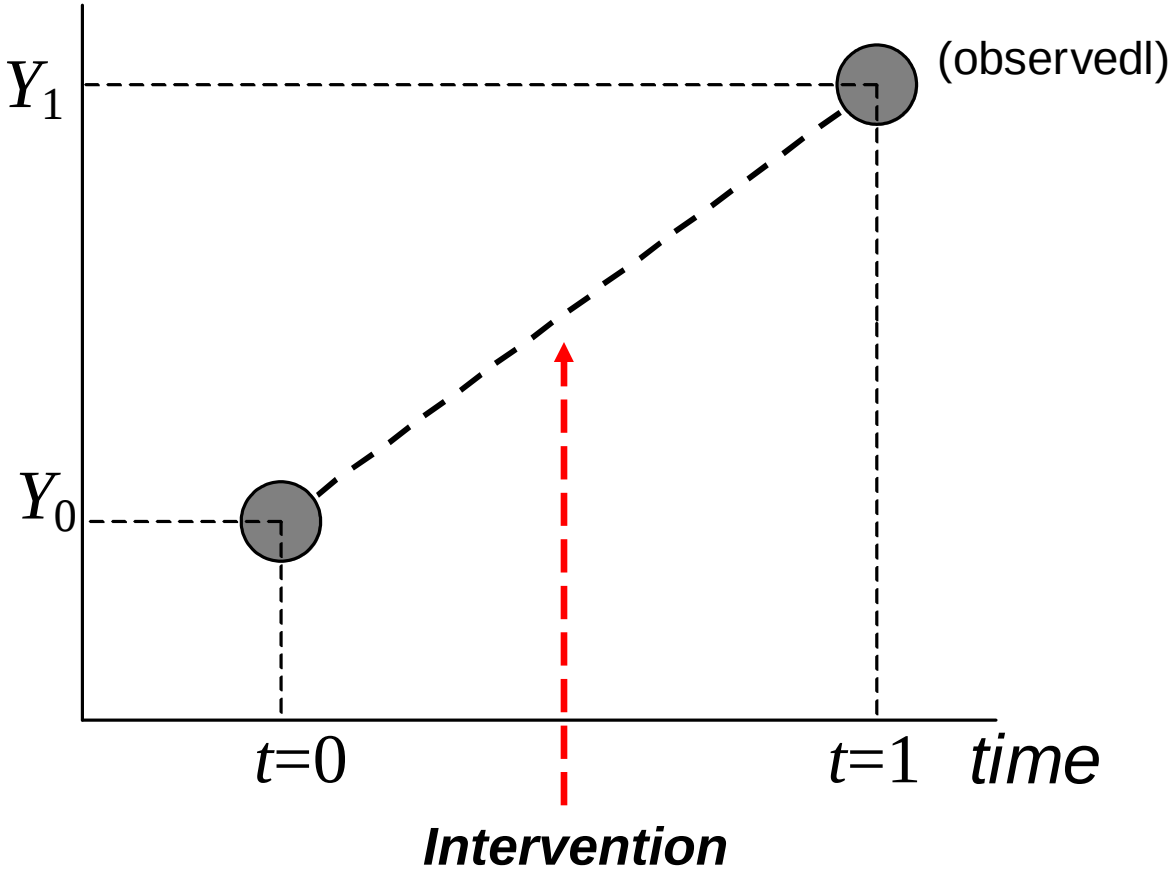
Quantitative methods

- Step 3: Field baseline and follow up survey
  - Impact obtained by difference in difference

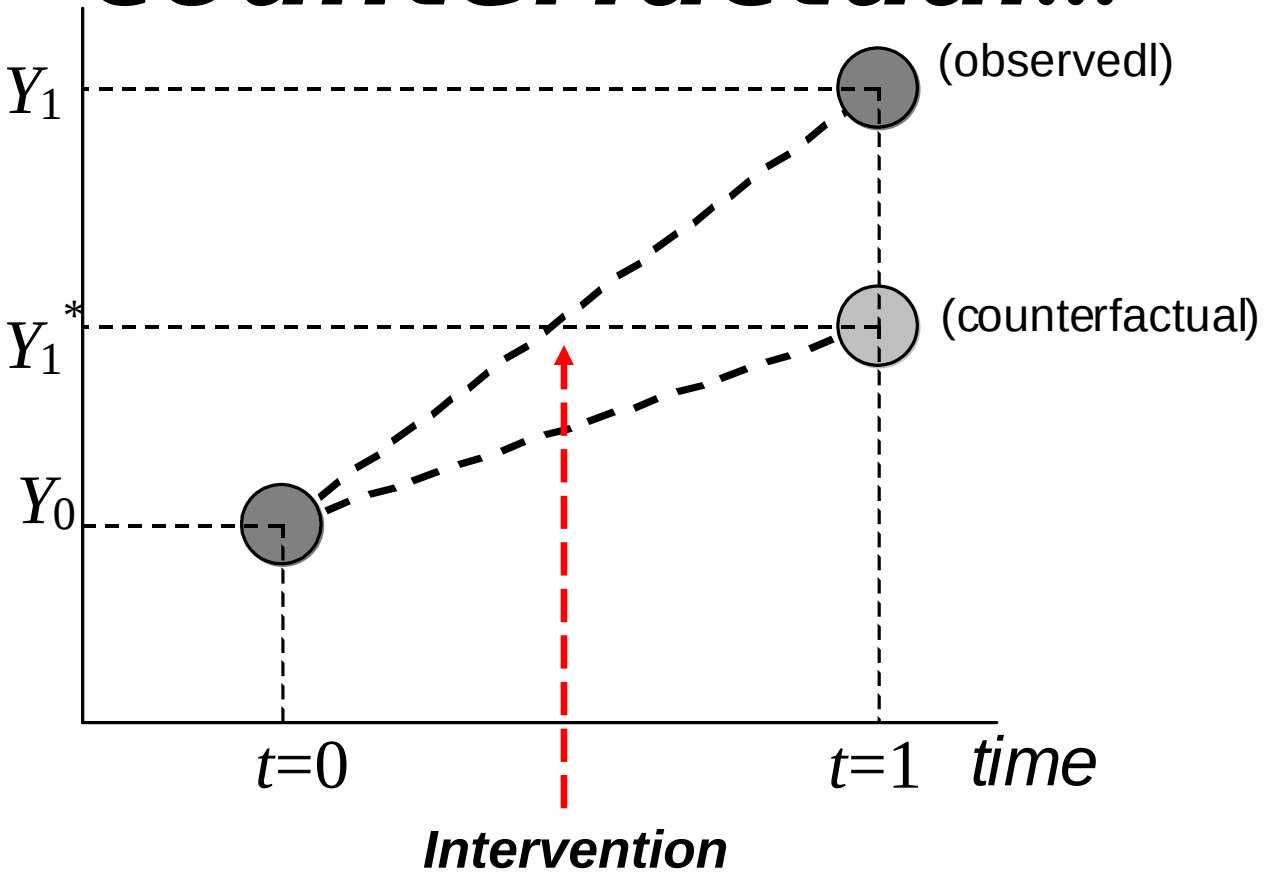
We observe an outcome indicator,



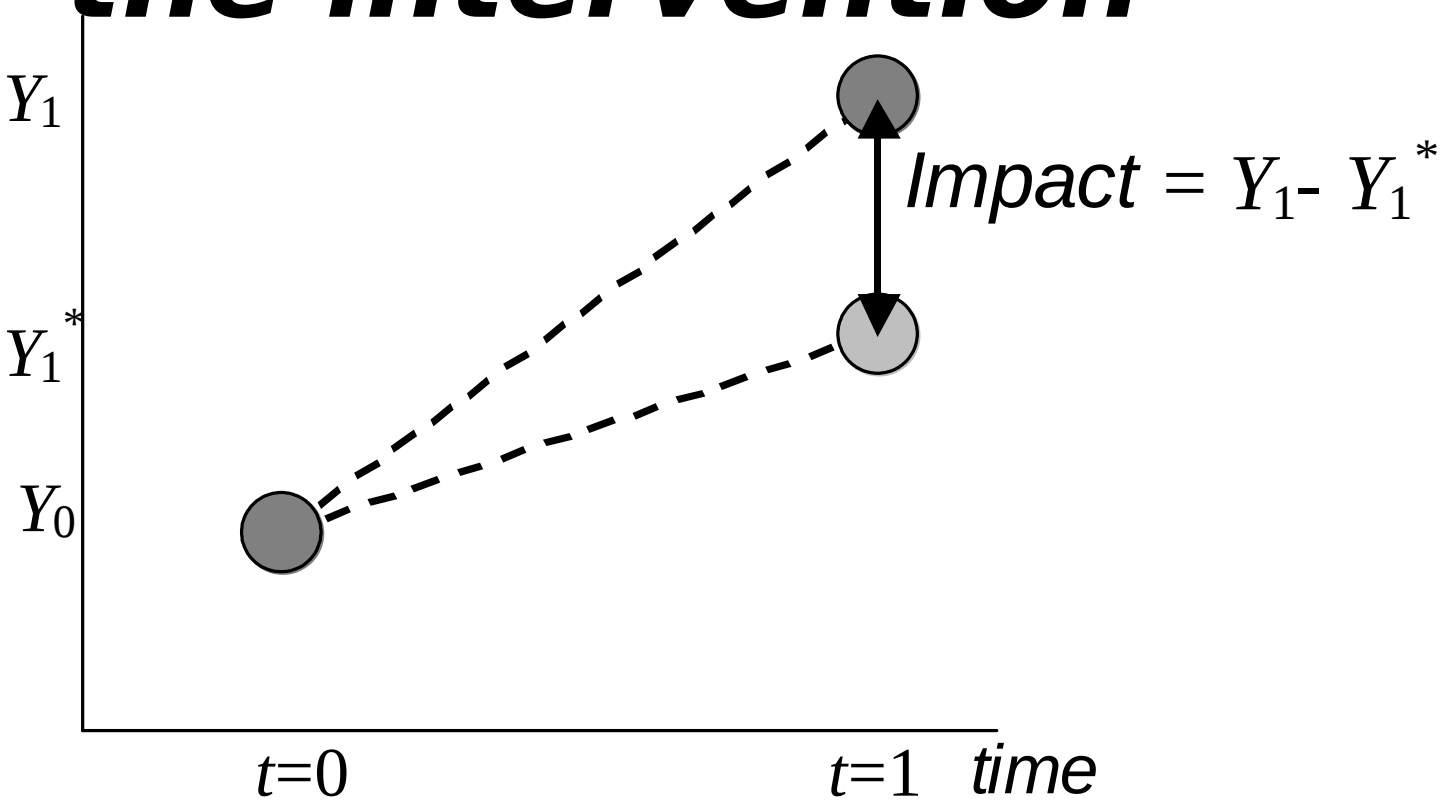
and its value rises after the program:



However, we need to identify the counterfactual…



… since only then can we determine the impact of the intervention



Deworming in schools in Kenya

- Primary School Deworming Project (PSDP), carried out by Internationaal Christelijk Steunfonds
- 75 schools randomly assigned in 3 groups: Last batch received project 2 years later than first group
- If threshold was passed, all children in school received treatment
- Impact:
  - reduced school absenteeism by one quarter
  - No impact on test scores
- Cost effective: the cost per additional year of school participation is only $3.50

Source: 'Worms: Identifying Impacts on Education and Health in the Presence of Treatment Externalities', Edward Miguel Michael Kremer, Econometrica , Volume 72 Issue 1, Pages 159 – 217

Corruption in Indonesia

- Kecamatan Development Project: Large rural World Bank financed CDD project in Indonesia
- Qualitative studies indicated that corruption was most prevalent at village level
- Study tested two alternative ways of reducing corruption
  - Increase community oversight
  - Increase supervision
- On corruption measured by quality of road.
- Impact:
  - Increasing government audits from 4 percent of projects to 100 percent reduced missing expenditures, as measured by discrepancies between official project costs and an independent engineers' estimate of costs, by eight percentage points.
  - No impact of increased community oversight

Source: 'Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia' Olken, Benjamin A. Journal of Political Economy 115, vol 2, 2007

Integrating qualitative and quantitative

- Qualitative studies can be designed in such a way that some quantification of results can be attempted for more robust hypotheses
- An ‘ideal’ sequence is:
  - 1. Qualitative (formulation of hypotheses)
  - 2. Testing hypotheses with quantitative, comparative design
  - 3. Followed by in-depth qualitative ‘further studies’ on outlyers, details, unexpected outcomes

Common pitfalls

- Impact evaluations are often too disconnected from project
- Bad implementation of study, insufficient supervision
- No baseline, Non comparable control group
- Lack of involvement from local stakeholders
- Measurability dominates research design

How to strategize impact evaluations

- New programs / Pilot programs for which outcomes are unknown
  - New methods
  - New target groups
- Alternative project designs
- Plan towards next programming decisions

Possible collaboration SNV - AIID

- AIID could help:
  - Develop research strategy and focus.
  - Advice on hiring of key SNV staff
  - Provide technical inputs and analysis for impact evaluations
- SNV could
  - The above
  - Organize implementation of studies

Beyond impact assessments as such

- For an organization such as SNV the results of impact assessments should play a key role in its overall knowledge strategy: creating a chain of learning loops:
- a) for the local partner organizations and their ‘clientele’;
- b) for local knowledge centers;
- c) for the regional SNV offices;
- d) for SNV as a whole;
- e) for the knowledge sector as a whole (and in the Netherlands)

Feeding a knowledge network

- Accessible results via web-based communication, with possibilities for
  - Raw data storage
  - Results of Primary analyses
  - Results of Comparative analyses (matrix connections)
  - Results of Meta analyses
  - Response mechanisms between participants, and among users

Commitment to Learning hubs

- Create long-term (>15 year) data-collection hubs, together with local knowledge centers, in key regions of long-term project presence.
- Build local knowledge centers
  - Make sure that the knowledge that is generated is also validated and owned by ‘formal academia’ (next to policy, peer and public validation):
  - create conditions for ‘practitioner’s PhDs’ of a selection of SNV employees
- co-author scientific publications for refereed academic journals (and create conditions to do so).