

Measuring CSOs Impact

(and surviving to tell about it in a blog!)

Part 3: Impact culture awareness, sharing and learning

Establishing and nurturing an impact culture is not an easy task, especially when one considers the many push and pull factors, incentives, and disincentives that different systems, processes, and cultures create within an organisation.

Identifying and sharing learnings is surely a first step towards creating an impact culture, and some organisations are successfully doing it. For example, CIVICUS uses a tool, the **Grow Log Table**, to encourage teams to capture their reflections and decide together how to take them forward. Teams share and discuss their learnings while they deliver their work, celebrating successes and sharing mistakes as pieces of advice for others who may think of implementing similar projects or programmes of work.

SOS Children's Villages uses different approaches to sharing learnings depending on the audience and the purpose, but most importantly undertakes check-ins five years after the intervention has taken place to check the extent to which learnings had been embedded into project and programme delivery.

Amnesty International encourages teams to capture their learnings at project and programme level throughout delivery. Learnings are then brought together and analysed quarterly and annually by a central monitoring and evaluation team to provide an insight into the factors that support and hinder the organisation's ability to achieve positive human rights change. Learning sessions open to both staff and volunteers are also held to ensure that the analysis reaches as many individuals as possible. Most importantly, key learnings are then used to inform and shape country, regional, organisational strategies.

Together, these initiatives illustrate different ways that organisations can capture and carry their learnings forward. However, establishing and practicing an impact culture does not end with identifying and sharing learnings to improve project or programme delivery, nor with using them to shape organisational strategies. It also requires a systematic, persistent and purposeful effort to create and protect healthy attitudes towards failure. The organisations that were part of the discussion reflected on how whenever organisational processes, systems and (implicit or explicit) practices, particularly around budget allocation, quality assurance, and decision making, instil and perpetuate a "no-failure" mentality, staff are less likely to share

their stories of struggles, challenges and mistakes. As a result, this mentality can have a knock-on effect on what the organisation, as a whole, can learn and do better. A true impact culture can only be nurtured where enough attention is paid to the way in which internal systems, processes and practises foster or undermine genuine learning.

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