Contribution analysis in practice

About the training

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Prerequisites: Reading a series of short articles (open access book chapters)

Target number: 10 to 30

Technical support: Printing cards used for sessions

Contribution Analysis is a theory-based evaluation approach that helps answer effectiveness questions for complex interventions, with a focus on being useful to policy stakeholders. One specificity is that Contribution Analysis does not assume that expected social, economic or environmental changes are due to the evaluated intervention. Rather, it assumes that any change is the result of a multitude of intertwined causes, including (perhaps) the intervention. So what are the intervention's contributions in that context? In Contribution Analysis, claims about the intervention's contributions are progressively formulated, usually in a collaborative process involving policy stakeholders. The most critical or contested claims are then tested systematically using a variety of methods (which may be qualitative or mixed), and then updated accordingly. The training will review the process of developing contribution claims, starting from expected changes, as well as the practical process of reinforcing or discarding these claims through multiple interactions and tests. The participatory nature of the Contribution Analysis process will also be discussed.

After this seminar, you will be able to:

- Construct and articulate contribution claims that are plausible and testable
- Develop an appropriate empirical strategy to test and refine the various contribution claims
- Recognize features of a robust contribution analysis and elements of an effective and defensible contribution narrative

The 6-hour seminar includes 3 hours of presentation, and 3 hours of hands-on sessions based on a practical case. In there, participants collectively use different sets of cards: to set apart Contribution Analysis from other TBIE approches; cards to fill in to reconstruct a theory of change; identify contribution claims; and cards to suggest ways to test them.

This workshop has been organized several times in the past years, as part of our company's training catalogue; for a VOPE; and for a multilateral development bank.

The trainers have been evaluators for the past 20 years. They have contributed to the development of Contribution analysis and other complexity-informed approaches through evaluation assignments, studies, books and articles, with a focus on dealing with specific challenges such as the evaluators' postures, the development of claims, or

claim testing. In their practice, both routinely train several hundreds persons each year for national and international organisations.

Programme

- 0:00 – 0:15: Welcome participants to the session. Brief overview of how the session will unfold, sharing ground rules
- 0:15-1:15: Seminar part 1. Being useful in context of uncertainty. Evaluating the complex. Theory-based evaluation. Effect-to-cause logic. Plausibility. Causal inference. Narratives
- 1:15-2:00: Participants use a series of cards with brief description of cases and decide when a Contribution analysis would be a possible choice; or another TBIE approach. They share the results with a coffee
- 2:00-3:00: Seminar part 2. Theory-building and theory-testing. Claim-based investigation. Participatory approach to claim building. Q&A + what do you think was strange, surprising, wrong in what was discussed this morning? (on a board/wall)
- Lunch
- 3:00-3:45 : ... what do you think was strange... continued (main findings). Participants work on the case studies and develop contribution claims. They have a series of questions to help them doing so. They share the results.
- 3:45-4:45 : Seminar part 3. Choosing claims to test. Testing to reduce uncertainty. Establish contributions. What is good evidence.
- 4:45-5:30 : Participants discuss how they could test their claims. They use Strateval cards in support of discussion.
- 5:30-5:50 : Contribution stories as policy tools and for policy design. How could Contribution analysis affect your evaluation practice?
- 5:50 – 6:00 : Final Q&A, Thank people for participating