MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TOOL

Template for conducting Most Significant Change methodology

MOMENTUM works alongside governments, local and international private and civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to accelerate improvements in maternal, newborn, and child health services. Building on existing evidence and experience implementing global health programs and interventions, we help foster new ideas, partnerships, and approaches and strengthen the resiliency of health systems.

Suggested Citation

Adapted from *Basic Toolkit: Adaptive Learning in Projects and Programs*[1] by Katie Meyer, with input from Callie Simon. *Most Significant Change Tool.* (2023). U.S. Agency for International Development, MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership.

MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership adapted this tool with Youth for Sustainable Development (YSD) and Youth Advocacy on Rights and Opportunities (YARO) as part of our work on youth-led social accountability in Kenya and Ghana. This version of the tool can be adapted and used by other young people in their own youth-led social accountability work.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE TOOL

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS AND REPORT FORM

BACKGROUND

The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach involves generating and analyzing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant and why. The stories are meant to be short (100–200 words) and characterize the kinds of changes happening in the project area. MSC allows project stakeholders to identify the most critical changes that have resulted from a project, *regardless of whether the changes are those prioritized by the project team or not.* MSC is most useful when applied to those who are close to the ground, such as clients and providers, but it also can be used with higher-level stakeholders such as district officials, managers, and other project stakeholders. MSC uses open-ended questions that follow a specific structure (see methodology section).

MSC uses four basic steps:

1. Developing the question that will be used to guide the stories that will be collected (including the time frame and reference event for people to use when thinking about the changes that have happened, and the perspective of change we want to record).
2. Collecting the stories and deciding which stories are the most significant.
3. Categorizing the stories into major domains, or themes, based on the types of changes identified.
4. Sharing the selected stories with the storytellers, stakeholders, and contributors to facilitate learning.

These steps can happen at a single point in time, iteratively with the same storytellers, with progressively higher-level stakeholders, or in some combination of these options.

METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS

ORIENTATION OF ACTIVITY TO PARTICIPANTS:

- Orient all participants to the MSC process and purpose of the learning activity.

    - This exercise is called Most Significant Change. We will be asking you to share a story based on a prompt we provide. You will share this story first with your smaller group, then your group will select two stories that they feel are the most significant from your group. Next, groups will come back together to share their selected stories and how they chose them. As a larger group, everyone will decide on a final two stories from the stories presented. Then, people will go back to their smaller groups to decide on how to categorize the two stories based on what was discussed in the story. Once decided, your smaller groups will come back together to discuss and confirm the categories as a larger group. After deciding on the two stories and categories, we will have a short debrief on what the stories share in common, how they differ, and why their inputs are important to share with others.

    - The purpose of this activity is to understand how [insert youth partner]'s youth-led social accountability project impacted young people in [insert name of district/sub-county]. This information will be shared with the project team, to inform our learnings from this project, and externally, in a summary report and virtual webinar, to provide evidence and lessons learned from youth-led social accountability work with relevant stakeholders.

- The prompt we will be using for today's exercise is:

  – In your opinion, what is the most significant change that has occurred for youth in [insert project area] since [insert name of youth partner] began implementing their youth-led social accountability project?

  – Please think about this question and what story you would like to share with your group.

  – The story should be around two minutes. We will assign a time keeper to ensure that everyone has a chance to share their story within the allotted time.

FACILITATION STEPS FOR EXERCISE:

1. Split participants into groups (no more than 10 per group). After splitting into groups, repeat the question and make sure everyone understands what they are being asked to do. Provide a few minutes for everyone to think of a story, then ask if everyone has thought of a story. If some say no, provide a bit more time. The transcriber should be filling out the MSC Story Selection & Report as different parts of the form are completed.

2. Once everyone is ready, ask each person to share their story with the person next to them. Participants should take turns telling their stories. When you are done, your partner will tell their story to you. Next, everyone will share their story one by one with their group, providing a name to their story before sharing it. Explain that everyone should be listening carefully as we will be choosing the ones that show the most significant change after we have heard them all. The amount of time for this part of the activity depends on how many groups and people are present.

   a. Once everyone has shared their stories, the groups will select the two stories that they feel are most significant. There are no set criteria for this process, and it is important that the participants themselves decide which stories are most important and why. The group may choose to develop criteria and score the stories, have discussions to reach consensus, conduct open or closed voting, or use a different process of their choosing. They will have 5 minutes to discuss the stories. The transcriber should be going around to each group to fill out Part I of the MSC Story Selection & Report Form.

3. Once everyone has finished sharing stories and selecting their top two stories, ask them to rejoin the larger group. Each group will share which stories they selected and how they decided. Then, similar to the process in their smaller groups, participants will select the final two stories that they feel are the most significant out of the stories shared by each group. Again, there is no set criteria for this process, and it is important that the participants decide which stories are most significant and why. The transcriber should fill out Part II & Part III of the MSC Story Selection & Report Form while participants are discussing how to select the final two stories.

4. Next, the participants will go back to their small groups and work on categorizing these selected stories based on the changes that happen. Provide participants with the handout below on positive youth development. You will ask each group to read some of the domains from positive youth development and see if either of the stories relate to any of the four domains. It is okay if they do not relate to any of the domains. Participants can create their own categories for the stories in addition to the positive youth development domains. It is also okay if they think the story relates to more than one domain and/or category they have created. They can list more than one domain.

5. After groups have agreed on their domains/categories, they will be brought back together as a large group to decide on the final domains/categories for each story. Since each group may have created different categories or chose different domains, it is important that everyone agrees upon the final

domains/categories for the chosen stories. The transcriber should fill out Part IV of the MSC Story Selection & Report Form while participants are discussing the categories/domains of the two stories.

6. Finally, the facilitator will conduct a short debrief from the activity, asking the questions below, providing a summary of the activity, and repeating the overall purpose of the MSC exercise.

   a. Debrief questions (transcriber to fill out Part V of MSC Story Selection & Report Form while participants respond to debrief questions).
      - What is your reaction to the stories that were selected?
      - What do these stories share in common? How are they different?
      - How can these stories contribute to learning around youth-led social accountability work?

   b. Summarize the two stories, the processes the participants used to select and categorize the stories, and any key insights from the debrief session.

   c. Repeat the purpose of the exercise—to understand how [insert youth partner]'s youth-led social accountability project impacted young people in [insert name of district/sub-county]. This information will be shared with the project team, to inform our learnings from this project, as well as externally, in a summative report and virtual webinar event, to provide evidence and lessons learned from youth-led social accountability work with relevant stakeholders. If participants are interested in reading the summative report, they can contact [insert focal point from youth partner].

DATA USE AND REPORTING

Selected stories should be shared with partners and project teams at various levels to facilitate an understanding of how project participants view change within the project:

- At the most basic level, it is good practice to hold a debriefing session with project staff to reflect on the MSC process and findings as part of routine management or other meetings. This could include reflection on story ownership, the possibility of bias within story selection or documentation, and the implications of these issues for the project's use of data.

- Stories may also be shared with MSC participants. For example, if MSC story collection occurs with multiple groups using the same question, each group's selected stories could be shared with all other groups.

MSC STORY SELECTION & REPORT FORM

Date	
Location	
Stakeholder group(s)	
Transcriber name and title	
MSC question	In your opinion, what is the most significant change that has occurred for youth in [insert project area] since [insert name of youth partner] began implementing their youth-led social accountability project?
Was verbal assent and/or consent obtained from all individuals participating?	☐ Yes ☐ No

PART I: STORIES SHARED

Title of story	Selected for first round advancement?	Selected for second round advancement?

PART II: SELECTED STORY DESCRIPTIONS

Write the first story that is selected here (no more than 250 words)

Write the second story that is selected (no more than 250 words)

PART III: STORY SELECTION PROCESS

1. Why was this story selected as the most significant story?

    a. Story #1:

    b. Story #2:

2. What process was used to select this story (e.g., did participants vote, did they have a discussion to reach a consensus, did the selection of this story come with any considerations or disagreements…)?

    a. Story #1:

    b. Story #2:

PART IV: STORY DOMAIN/CATEGORIZATION

1. What was this story's domain or category? Was there more than one domain chosen? Why?

   a. Story #1:

   b. Story #2:

2. If one of the positive youth development domains was chosen, ask participants the following question: In this story, what youth were impacted by youth social accountability mechanisms (if known)? For example, were younger, older, or many age ranges of youth impacted? Were youth with disabilities impacted? Were youth who are unmarried or out of school impacted?

   a. Story #1:

   b. Story #2:

PART V: DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

1. What is your reaction to the stories that were selected?

2. What do these stories share in common? How are they different?

3. How can these stories contribute to learning around youth-led social accountability work?

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT HANDOUT

Positive Youth Development Domain Name	Description
Assets	Youth have the necessary resources, skills, and competencies to achieve desired outcomes. Application to the story: Does this story discuss youth gaining the necessary resources, skills, and competencies to achieve their desired outcomes?
Agency	Youth perceive and have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives, set their own goals, and act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes. Application to the story: Does this story discuss youth making or influencing decisions about their own lives, setting their own goals, or acting upon those decisions to achieve their desired outcomes?
Contributions	Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own and for their communities' positive development. Application to the story: Does this story discuss youth being engaged in the project, changes in health services, and/or positive developments in their community?
Enabling Environment	Youth are surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities and strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure, and protected and to live without fear of violence or retribution. An enabling environment encourages and recognizes youth, while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive. The term "environment" should be interpreted broadly and includes aspects that are: social (e.g., relationships with peers and adults), normative (e.g., attitudes, norms and beliefs), structural (e.g., laws, policies, projects services, and systems), and physical (e.g., safe, supportive spaces). Application to the story: Does this story discuss attributes of an enabling environment? An environment can be composed of many things (relationships, norms, beliefs, attitudes, laws, policies, projects, services, systems, physical spaces). An enabling environment is one that encourages and/or supports youth. Application to the story: Does this story talk about how their environment supported youths' access to services and opportunities to improve their health? Application to the story: Does the story discuss an environment that strengthens youths' ability to avoid risks and stay safe?

REFERENCES

1. Ortiz Echevarria L, Somji A, Ricca J. (2021). *Basic Toolkit: Adaptive Learning in Projects and Programs*. U.S. Agency for International Development, MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership. https://usaidmomentum.org/resource/adaptive-learning-toolkit/

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