

# Not Learning: Failure of Tools or Culture?

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This presentation looks at the experience of the Livelihoods Asset-Status Tracking (LAST)<sup>1</sup> method as a means of quantifying emerging change in the livelihood platform of households on large projects. It combines a PRA judgement-based approach with the analytical rigour of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

The LAST method was designed to provide the management of large, complex livelihood projects with a means of assessing response to treatment in an ongoing way during the implementation period. That is, primarily a monitoring tool for managerial learning. It can also provide powerful evidence for ex-post evaluation.

## **Design requirements were;**

- Periodic monitoring results at all project treatment locations.
- Rapid, capable of large coverage
- Professional learning requirements met
- Indigenous perspective used to guide scoring.
- Capable of geographical and capital asset analysis

## **The Method:**

- Create LAST Assessment Sheet for homogeneous areas
  - Professional criteria for assessment
  - Local means of assessment
  - Graded centile scale from worst to best
  - Word-pictures of stages by capital
- Household Assessments
  - LAST-AS used to calibrate judgements and score household capital assets for quantitative aggregate analysis
  - Regular repeat panel surveys of large numbers of households to detect emerging changes in their livelihood platform.

## **Experiences so far;**

- Seems to work, current sample scales of 4,500 households.
- Capable of quantitative analysis consistent with field observations
- Projects persist with regular assessments
- No ongoing analysis done and no follow-up of unexpected results.
- Used for evaluation only on donor prompting

## **Problems include;**

- The lack of project learning culture with lack of curiosity and where criticism is seen as bad and failure hidden.
- There are sometimes capacity issues with analysis.
- M&E systems are ritualised and overloaded with high status accountability requirements.

## **Conclusion;**

Provision of the right tool without the right managerial culture is inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> Bond R and Mukherjee N. 2002 'Livelihood Asset Status Tracking: An Impact Monitoring Tool?', *Journal of International Development* 14 pp.805-815, Wiley InterScience.

Bond R, Kapondamgaga P.H, Mwenebanda B, Yadav R.P.S. & Rizvi A. 2007 'Monitoring the Livelihood Platform: Reflections on the Operation of LAST Method from India and Malawi', *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, 25(4) pp301-315, Beech Tree Publishing, UK.