SLUM/SHACK DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL

WORKSHOP REPORT

LEARNING, MONITORING & EVALUATION WORKSHOP

APRIL 27-29 2011

MUMBAI, INDIA
BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY:

About us:

Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) is a transnational organization of slum federations, the urban poor and NGOs that work with them, from 33 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. SDI was set up in 1996 and works to build capacities of its affiliates and represent the voices of the urban poor in national, regional, and international levels of how the urban poor can become crucial partners in developing equitable and inclusive cities.

SDI links poor urban communities from cities across the South to initiate, transfer and adapt the successful mobilization, advocacy and problem solving strategies they develop in one location to other cities, countries, and regions. Since SDI is focused on the local needs of slum dwellers, it has developed the traction to advance the common agenda of creating “pro-poor” cities that integrate rather than marginalize the interests of slum dwellers in approaches to urban development.

The hosts of the workshop were the Indian Alliance of National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), Mahila Milan and the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC) who have been collectively producing solutions that meet the shelter, sanitation and development needs of the poor in India’s cities for more than 25 years.

General Purpose of the Workshop:

SDI embarked on a Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation process more than a year ago, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. At a meeting in Nairobi last year, LM&E was first discussed and 5 countries chose to begin an intensive LM&E process with the support of two organizations commissioned to assist in designing the LME process and facilitating it in these 5 national affiliates. In Asia, Sri Lanka and Nepal began the LME process with the support of PRIA, an Indian N.G.O. In Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Ghana were supported in their processes by IPA, a Ghanaian N.G.O. The purpose of this workshop was to share the process that these 5 countries undertook for LM&E and to envision ways in which these processes can be expanded throughout SDI. This workshop was also intended to continue the processes of clarifying and defining what Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation means for SDI. Principles and purposes of LM&E were articulated for SDI as a whole, as well as specific ways in which LM&E might begin and be incorporated into ongoing learning processes.

Workshop Structure:

The workshop was spread over 4 days. The first day included presentations by the 5 countries which have been doing an in-depth LM&E process this past year. The second day we went over the Mind Map of SDI’s activities in 2011, our projects and relationships, making sure everyone
was up to date on the full picture and to fill in any gaps. We then broke up into group discussions about the purposes and principles of LM&E for SDI, and then methods and strategies for implementing LM&E. On the third day, we again split up into small groups, by regional hub, and outlined the specific activities each country would be undertaking in the upcoming year for LM&E. On the afternoon of the third day there was a field visit to Dharavi. On the fourth day, there was a field visit to the federations in Pune, where there is currently an in-situ upgrading project underway.

A lot of important issues were brought up during the workshop, but a few central themes emerged:

- The importance of being able to define for ourselves what M&E is and what it means to us, so that the federations and SDI really own the processes and have a strong internal rationale for it.

- Thoughts on the relationship between working in rural and urban spaces, and possible lessons which can translate between each setting; the importance of M&E relating and reflecting the local needs of the federations and affiliate.

- The foundational importance of the core SDI rituals, savings, enumeration, exchanges, and the ways in which M&E might help strengthen and support these ongoing processes.

- The importance of incorporating M&E into core federation processes, differentiating between M&E for processes and for projects, and actively engaging with it, so that this is something that we do consciously and with commitment.

- The importance of exchanges and the role of regional hubs in supporting M&E.

- That M&E is as much an attitude of critical engagement and reflection as it is a concrete process and that it should strongly reflect SDI’s theory of change.

- The importance of viewing M&E broadly, so that we reflect not just on the number of people saving or the amount of savings, but on women’s empowerment, community organization and strength, advocacy on government policy etc. How we measure these things is also important, as they can be difficult to quantify, ex: how do you measure the empowerment of a community?

A list of central principles and purposes for M&E was also drawn up, as well as specific strategies and activities to guide the federations into the next phase of implementing in each affiliate country.
PARTICIPANTS:

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BROAD THEMES:

What does M&E mean for SDI?

“‘It is an approach to facilitate learning of its partners so that they can support SDI’s mission and goals.’” (Rajesh)
A way for SDI to set a precedent for what M&E processes can be, “SDI should become a bridge between the conventional development management perspective and SDI’s reformulation of how we as a global organization function.” (Sheela)

A process to use and learn from the data we are already collecting, “So we do many things at the community level and grassroots, but don’t have data on it.” (Miurin)

-To evaluate our projects and improve our core processes, “…they didn’t know how to describe the work that had been done. Was it successful? Was it not successful? They had a lot of discussion about this and indicators which could help them describe it better and ascertain whether it was successful or not.” (Raju)

-Empowerment and strengthening process for federations, “That all of this description [in the M&E workshop with PRIA] is the way of self-reflection- that the magic wand is within ourselves.” (Dhana)

-A way to pre-empt externally imposed M&E and develop a process which the federations own, “That is why it is important that we don’t dance for what the donors want – we should take from this process as much as we can, for us.” (Sheela)

-Strengthen our documentation process, “Grassroots documentation of rituals is important too, in that it will help communicate these practices to external groups, inform strategic inflexibility/tactical flexibility.” (Rajesh)

-A process for evaluating SDI’s work, but in a qualitative way, “Instead of them measuring the tools of SDI and the technical efficiency of those tools – savings, enumerations and so on, why don’t we look at indicators for bringing community together, that there can be collective action, that strength has been built.” (Jack)

-A learning experience, for the federations themselves and for other countries as well, through exchanges and supported at the regional hub level.

What are our principles and purposes of M&E?

The most often mentioned purposes were:

• **Review and measure** our progress based on the plans we make – track whether we are on the right path.

• **Learn from our mistakes** after the review and make changes; identify problems and enable us to develop solutions.

• **Strengthen the relationship** between local and regional networks; clarification of roles and responsibilities.

• **Create documentation which empowers federations/participants** – information is power, and also helps to assess/review the federations– build their capacity.
• **Strengthen the credibility and integrity** of the federations in SDI; protection and management of the reputation of the federations and SDI; manage reputational risk.

• **Create chances for mobilizing resources** through monitoring progress; help effectiveness in reaching objectives and translating that into ability to manage our resources well.

The most often mentioned principles were:

• **Ownership** of the process by federations

• **Transparency and accountability** to the federations, Secretariat, SDI as a whole.

• Participatory at all levels, not just the federations but also the N.G.O; increase participation through more communication and knowledge sharing.

• **Commitment to the process**; being consistent and following up on commitments

• **Use data as an opportunity for dialogue** and discussion; more information dissemination.

How does this compare with mainstream M&E and how is it different?

• Mainstream M&E’s primary purpose is accountability for use of funds and it is linked to the project log frame. It is done in a manner that is ‘objective’ in the sense that it is undertaken by outside parties uninvolved with the work being evaluated. It assesses time and cost efficiency. It is the exercise of external judgment.

• Our process includes a focus on learning and participation. It is interested in qualitative as well as quantitative indicators, which are defined and owned by the federations, not be an outside group. We are interested in efficiency and quality, but also in the quality of our core processes, not just our projects. Our process is about self-reflection and is internally accountable, reflecting on our commitments to ourselves as well as our outside partners.

**DAY 1 IN DEPTH – KEY QUOTES:**

On the first day of the workshop, the main activity was to hear from the 5 countries which have done the intensive LM&E process this past year, to learn about the situation in their countries, how they engaged in LM&E and what the other SDI affiliates can take from this process.

Rose opened the workshop, setting the tone for the discussions to follow:

“It is important to understand what this means, when professionals talk about this issue [Monitoring and Evaluation], because most of the time donors and funders come to the federations saying they are evaluating our processes, and we may not understand what they are doing and we just agree on what they are saying to us, unnecessarily. So now we need to clearly
understand the meaning of M&E, in a very simple language so we understand what we want to achieve. So I think we have come here, not just because we were invited – most of the time when we are invited to a professional workshop we expect them to lecture to us. But not this time, here we will talk and tell them and it is up to them to professionalize after. So I think we are here to come up with a document, but a working document for people on the ground that is easily understood by all the federations.”

She continued, “Federations sometimes don’t find donor-led evaluations useful and are then resistant, so SDI has tried to take charge of this process.”

Rajesh from PRIA then introduced their work with Sri Lanka and Nepal, saying

“How SDI wants to create a strong city-wide federations of the urban poor throughout the world and those federations are able to influence policies of the government, donors, mobilize resources, make housing/facilities available for all urban poor. So that is the dream of SDI and so we have to ask the question, that SDI has grown in its strength because of its work, but in my view also because it learned from its work. It learned what it did well and what not so that it could improve. Federations have done this quite successfully. The learning federation that SDI is, is learning within the federation. When SDI enters in partnerships with others, municipalities, gov’t, N.G.Os, professionals, donors etc. then one of the roles SDI plays is that it facilitates learning of its partners also, that they can understand what SDI is trying to do and how it is doing that. When you facilitate learning of others, they ask questions as they are trying to understand. When they ask questions, SDI provides, as best it can, an answer about how it functions. I would like to suggest that SDI looks at its future planning on LM&E, that it learns internally and it is an approach to facilitate learning of its partners so that they can support SDI’s mission and goal.”

Sheela elaborated on this, “We as SDI have the opportunity to transform the definition of professional. Just and educated person is not professional. A person who can do things with an idea of what impact it will have and repeat that process, that is a professional and many of us fit that. SDI should become a bridge between the conventional development management perspective and SDI’s reformulation of how we as a global organization function.”

After these general introductions and remarks, the countries which have undergone an intensive M&E process this past year were then invited to speak about their experience. To give a sense of those discussions, here are some quotes from their presentations which give a picture of what they learned and felt about the process, along with some of the ideas and responses which this brought up:
KEY POINTS FROM THE PRESENTATION BY THE WOMEN DEVELOPMENT BANK FEDERATION (WDBF) IN SRI LANKA AND THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION:

Sri Lanka: “...what we realized was that though they [the federations] work hard, they don’t collect the data. So they do many things at the community level and grassroots but don’t have data on it.”

Sri Lanka: “...from this experience, the knowledge gained from the workshops [with the federation, N.G.O and PRIA] we were able to identify our priorities and formulated the list of activities on a priority basis”.

Sri Lanka: “…this initiated, based on the savings, we have now focused our attention on the effects of urbanization on slum dwellers, so we are now working on forming federations for slum dwellers in these areas: 4-5 cities.

Sri Lanka: “We realized the importance of forming these organizations and we wanted these organizations to consist of slum dwellers themselves and then to have a conference of these groups in October”

Sheela Patel: “So part of what has come out of this is that they are creating a group just for urban slum-dwellers, to separate that from rural savings groups. Also they added layers of organization on the city level, below regional.”

Sundar Burra: “What is interesting too is that out of 79 primary branches, 59 are in rural areas, 60 – 70% of the 55,000 members are rural. But the ngo is functioning only in urban. So the majority of their time/resources is still on rural, savings and credit. But the rural work is more on an individual basis – no collective action. Urban work is all about collective action, so that is an interesting shift and difference between how they are accommodating the urban and rural issues.”

Sri Lanka: “WDBF first worked in rural areas and then later they came to work in urban areas later, as they grew to understand the importance of those areas. There are problems in rural and
urban both, of two kinds: rural areas have land but no resources, including financial resources. In contrast, in urban areas they have money, but no land tenure or habits of savings. So they are entering urban areas with a different view, to encourage savings and get land rights.”

Anna Muller: “Based on this rural urban thing, I think it depends on the federation on the ground, as their needs emerge. It’s not determined by the N.G.O or at the SDI level, it’s about what the federation is prepared to deal with on the ground. In 1998, we did an evaluation and from that we decided to take an inclusive path—as long as everyone works together and saves together. We stimulated the debate, but it was up to them and what they wanted. When we start analyzing the data, we find differences between men and women – in Africa we don’t make a difference, but how can we involve more men in that they represent leadership as well. Women’s savings is not enough alone to get into informal settlement upgrading, we need to look how to involve more men as they are the leadership in these settlements. This is something to be decided on the ground, not here.”

Sheela Patel: “One of the reasons we formed was SDI was because we are aware that federation negotiations are generally around the allocation of resources – it is a political project, more than a management project – that these groups are excluded and something needs to be done”

KEY POINTS FROM THE PRESENTATION BY THE NGO AND FEDERATION IN NEPAL AND THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION:

Raju Lama: “I feel that these workshops have brought home the importance of collecting information, collecting data, collecting documentation. A great deal of work had been done in the past 11 – 12 years, but with that work, we didn’t know how to describe the work that had been done. Was it successful? Was it not successful? We had a lot of discussion about this and indicators which could help us describe it better and ascertain whether it was successful or not.”

Raju Lama: “We recently called people from different areas, just a week ago, to discuss evaluation. What we found was that after this discussion, we are now getting reports from districts which are written. Before, it was entirely oral since there was a shortage of resources, distances in Nepal are great and there’s not money to travel between districts. It’s hard to know whether work has been done etc. But now reports are coming in.”
**Raju Lama:** “There has been a lot of discussions, for example in the rural areas, about what sort of policy should be adopted, how do you go about getting rights from the state, how do you mobilize the rural community, how to you hold discussions with large numbers of people, because these issues are also there in the urban areas – there housing is the main issue. Of course, we know discussion won’t help. After this evaluation exercise, we are trying to find who has gained what and told people to go back to their districts, see what the problems, analyze for themselves- - how do you discuss this issue with the community, with the government—what should the leadership report, how should the report etc. All of this needs to translate into action.”

**Dhana Lama:** “When this process began, we understood that it would be like a magic wand – that it would make everything bad go away. On the first day of the workshop, we thought things would be solved quickly, and realized that PRIA wasn’t going to provide solutions – we realized that we were doing all the talking and that it was our problem to solve. That all of this description is the way of self-reflection- that the magic wand is within ourselves. “

**Dhana Lama:** “Our activities was dominated by savings and loan, but after the workshop we started thinking and are exploring the possibilities of taking up housing and other projects as well. In earlier meetings, we would blame each other, but not there is a more constructive discussion within the federation to find solutions. This has been an achievement and change over a period of time.”

**Sheela Patel:** “The reality is that you have to do LME for ourselves. Donors give you money if your and their priorities merge, and you just have to be honest about your work. Our journey is going to go on, regardless of whether a donor gives money or not. So how can we make the most out of learning from our own experiences and making best use of the LME process and gain confidence to share this with others. We are strong in our belief as SDI that whether the donors or rest of the world agree with us, more people are going into cities, and whether the outsiders wake up to that reality, these problems are going to be happening. We are the early birds to see that poor people have to participate in these issues to make solutions. We have to have the capacity to survive whether we are attractive to donors or not.”
**Sundar Burra:** “We have a situation in Nepal where the NGO just works on urban issues, but the federation leadership is mainly rural. The federation also doesn’t work with slum dwellers who have land title, but the ngo does. Each organization has multiple partners, is working in different areas, supporting some groups but not others. So this is an organizational challenge that you will have to face, as there is some amount of jurisdictional confusion.”

**Anna Muller:** “I think, for me the question is how we create space for types of federations to be heard, or the different sectors of the community. I think one of the problems is that they formalize too fast, because they get into having constitutions determining how the people should behave, while the community hasn’t had enough time to evolve how they will behave. All the constitution should say is that ‘we should reflect on what the need is on the ground’. We should make open space for many people participate; if you give your leadership to committees you make problems.”

**KEY POINTS FROM THE PRESENTATION BY DR. SULLY GARIBA, THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS IN KENYA,UGANDA, GHANA AND FROM THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION:**

**Dr. Gariba:** “We have generated a lot of information, but not yet utilized the power that can be derived from that information.”

**Dr. Gariba:** “…that in this M&E processes it can be “hard to differentiate sometimes between leaders and doers.”

**Jack Makau:** “We went through a process which was for the affiliates to create their own internal rational for M&E, that goes further than donor reporting and becomes an integral part of what we do. Rose said this morning that this is our baby, and the thing is are we persuaded that M&E is as important as planning or surveying. How does it become a part of the process of slum upgrading?”

**Jack Makau:** “Because through the process while we tried to do some of the mechanics of evaluation, I was a little scared by the things the affiliates said were their objects and outputs, and the thing they wanted to be evaluated against. And they put the SDI rituals: savings, negotiation and all that. And so we said, what are the indicators of success and they said the number of savers, the amount saved and so on. And I got very scared – so is it a question of who
does the evaluation or who does the evaluating? So when the external evaluators ask those questions, we don’t like it, but when we ask it’s ok?”

**Jack Makau:** “Instead of them measuring the tools of SDI and the technical efficiency of those tools – savings, enumerations and so on, why don’t we look at indicators for bringing community together, that there can be collective action, that strength has been built. You work with a community that is sitting on private and it wants land tenure, but in that particular context, say Kenya, there is no mechanism for how poor communities can be owner of that land but SDI continues to work with them and explore different ways to do it, even though there is no mechanism in that country yet. But you can still measure the collective capacity of the group, even if there is no concrete success in terms of tenure.”

**Edith Samya:** “Information flow is also important, how to transmit this information down, beyond just the N.G.O and leaders. This has helped us to understand our role as federation members and leaders, vis a vis the N.G.O, enabling us to do proper enumerations and filing and identify more savings schemes.”

**Abu Haruna:** “We realized that the leadership have difficulty putting pressure on the other members, that they don’t have the moral quality to tell the members to pay back their loans or savings. So there was some politics between the n.g.o and community leaders. The n.g.o would come and ask these questions and the federation would make excuses.”

**Abu Haruna:** “So we were given an opportunity to re-define ourselves and our rules, to see where we belong and what we should do – that if someone is strong in a certain area, that they should work in that area. Also, we realized that the gatekeepers hijack most of the completed project that we have – calling themselves founding members. So they made sure that none of the leadership could hold them accountable. So there was a proposal that came out that said that all existing projects should submit their daily activities and expenditure. So we agreed that if a project manager refuses to do this, that means that you are calling for an aggressive auditing into your accounts. And if we audit you and you don’t want to, we will take it up by ourselves.”

**Benson Osumba:** “If we look at the process between the SDI rituals, there is an intrinsic link between savings, organizing and people’s ability to make change. Increasingly, as urban
redevelopment becomes big business, there is an attempt to use the procurement process to displace communities -- seen this in South Africa, Kenya. We don’t do enumerations just to have a database, we do it as part of a mobilization process – savings and social action. So part of this struggle is to convey this to partners like the world bank that these are not discrete processes, that enumerations doesn’t stand on its own, but this is the way that we make change and this is our theory of change. Or else, we would be in a situation where they would just ask the federation to do the BSES in Nairobi, and then contract someone else to design the project and someone else to do the design. So we go out about our changes by connecting one to another.”

Sheela Patel: “Federations don’t just come up and become wonderful overnight, it’s a struggle and also having to deal with what people have been taught – that people don’t care about the group, lie, cheat.. It’s only when the organization persists and demonstrates the value of collectivity that the transformation occurs.”

Sheela Patel: “The stigma that comes from this messy stage can destroy everything though, and so this is why SDI is trying to increase its support of this stage. SDI isn’t sure about how much of this it wants to share with the outside world, because we want to give the federations space to make course correction – and people already have these stigmas against the poor.”

Rose Molokoane: “we talk so much about projects, that we forget about savings –so much of the federations shifted from who they are and compete with n.g.o’s. I realized that all over, the process is ignored and the projects are the priorities for discussion. “

Rose Molokoane: “Every exchange program if it goes to Ghana is for enumerations and nothing else. The next week, enumerations again. What about savings? No” exchange about women empowering each other

Sazini Ndovu: “The measures we are taking now, everyone is a leader. The saving scheme members, you just have to use your savings scheme. In a general meeting that we seat every week, that’s where you ask for a loan and the scheme evaluates you. Everyone debates about it. I am forcing them to open my savings book, to see my contributions and start to vet me in terms of my participation, if I am contributing enough, if I paid back my last loan. So we are using the savings schemes now, and even after savings everyone writes down the total, everyone goes
home with this total – how much we have loaned today, how much has been repaid, so that everyone can see. Everyone can see the attendance, so we can use the saving schemes in this way. You can become a national coordinator when you leave your savings scheme, in your scheme you are an ordinary member, so that way everyone is able to say whatever to you, they can tell you to go and fetch water.”

**Benson Osumba:** “People tend to forget what came before and focus on the present, and that is what happened with most of the savings schemes. We see savings schemes as a tool, but now I talk about a project, greenfield, the revolving fund, but I think that whoever I am talking to can detect that 1 shilling that we started with 11 years ago for savings. All members have to pay that 10%, service their group loans, water savings – these things are always present, but some leaders forget to talk about that and just talk about the bigger things on the other end which savings makes possible.”

**WRAPPING UP DAY 1: FINAL THOUGHTS**

**Rose Molokoane:** “I think what I have realized with this exercise is that the countries that were invited to this exercise, coming together and listening to each other brings us a part of this M&E process, even if we weren’t part of the 5 that did it actively. This also helps us federations to know each other in detail. This morning, listening to Nepal and Sri Lanka, we have met each other at many meetings, but this is the first time that we get a detailed understanding about what is happening in Sri Lanka, Nepal – an intensive exchange, unlike other forums. So even if I go out of this meeting, I know how to explain about these countries in detail, so I think this exercise has given that insight, of ourselves as federations.”

**Dr. Gariba:** “The second thing was to break new ground, but on the base of what Rose has been insisting, recounting why we exist. This was the biggest learning, our reflections backwards on the accumulation of knowledge we have acquired. But we can’t let the genie out of the bottle, to escape and become unwieldy – we must keep focus on the pillars and reflect on those, to make sure that the spin offs don’t take us away from the original vision of the founders of our organizations. In the final analysis, we must make sure that it continues to work towards inclusivity. There will be challenges like in Ghana, but there must be open space where we can be honest about these problems and can use our exchanges to revive our organizations – learning from our experiences rather than a negative thing, particularly in terms of donors. This collective strength and rallying together is important and these processes should be documented some more.”
Nancy Macpherson: “I appreciate that each story is different, this means that you have begun to take ownership of it and integrate it in different ways and I am highly encouraged. You have already overcome the hurdle that many face, of immediately trying to count things. We are under the same pressure as you, for this kind of accountability, so in our own way we share some of this same kind of pressure – to say that it is the change that matters. If we say the purpose of M&E is to improve wellbeing, if we don’t make people’s lives better through these reflections, then we won’t have succeeded in making M&E an effective tool. Seeing you start to grapple with how to do that is a rich experience and it’s not easy. Some of the things that I have heard today that I would like to reinforce: someone said that this is just what we do, except more systematically and rigorously – that is the goal, to bring thing together and ask what they mean. Knowing the needs of your stakeholders and your communities is very important, how to frame these questions and engage different stakeholders in different ways is critical and important. Mapping the change is also important; this is a way to leapfrog forward, to measure and map change, developing theories of change. Make the changes explicit, make it explicit how to know those changes are happening and communicate that. Things that heard less of – I heard a lot of upward accountability but not downward accountability, How is downward accountability going to happen, in an explicit way? Also, supporting the use of data and information for improved governance and decision making. This is maybe one of the harder things – figuring out how this information should influence government etc is a big hurdle.”

Rajesh Tandon: “Normally, an evaluation happens and most of the energy goes to fighting about the report and then it is put on the shelf. So to see a real link between learning and M&E, is very exciting – to hear that the changes are already happening, that these meeting are underway about how to implement these changes, this wasn’t the M&E agenda, but it grew out of this process. Mostly likely you won’t even need to have a final formal report, because you are owning the change.”

Rajesh Tandon: “Grassroots documentation of rituals is important too, in that it will help communicate these practices to external groups, inform strategic inflexibility/tactical flexibility. Secondly, we should also reflect on what M&E should mean for SDI. We talked about this today from the perspective, but maybe we could go into more depth about the internal perspective on this. Also, about what our base principles are for this process. If we develop this, we can plan for the next period to make this process at many more national levels, within an agreed set of principles. Also need to be confident enough to fend off experts, to use these principles to set
the terms of engagement, and to lead the world of M&E, to speak about these issues to the world, about SDIs perspective on these things.“

**Francis Reffell:** “That the field exchange visits are very much essential and close door learning sessions like this are also significant. About field visits, since we started from Ghana, all the good things were going – we could see that it was working, that it was very operational. That is essential for a young federation – if I had seen that all the savings groups are dead, what hope do I have for my own country. These exchanges are inspirational. But I think also this kind of session gives the opportunity for better reflection and for people to be more honest. Today I have a very good impression about Ghana, that we have to maintain this kind of approach, to have sessions like this which are relevant to better understand ourselves. If I am in the field, we won’t be so open about these problems. But today, these issues are clearly shown, people can speak out and challenge others, to be honest and reflective.”

**DAY 2 IN DEPTH - KEY QUOTES:**

For the first session on Day 2, we discussed the Mind Map that SPARC had created for SDI. This outlined the various activities and relationships that SDI is currently engaged in as a group. The categories included: Hubs, External Relationships, Aggregating Affiliate Processes, Projects and Activities, Secretariat Functions and Action and Documentation Projects.

The Mind Map was reviewed and any missing relationships or projects were added. The next session was a small group discussion about the purposes and principles behind M&E for SDI. Each group presented their thoughts and these were compiled into a master list. The points which are in bold were mentioned by multiple groups.

**SDI PURPOSES OF LM&E**

- Review and measure our progress based on the plans we make – track whether we are on the right path.
- Set benchmarks and see whether we achieve them or not.
- Serve as a guiding tool for helping to develop systems within ourselves –self regulation.
- Learn from our mistakes after the review and make changes; identify problems and enable us to develop solutions.
- Strengthen the relationship between local and regional networks; clarification of roles and responsibilities.
• Create documentation which empowers federations/participators – information is power, and also helps to assess/review the federations– build their capacity.
• Facilitate learning between affiliates; increase participation in the process by sharing new ideas and new experiences.
• **Strengthen the credibility and integrity of the federations in SDI; protection and management of the reputation of the federations and SDI; manage reputational risk.**
• Increase the self-reliance of the federations and SDI.
• To remind the federations of their identity.
• Increase the visibility of SDI and expose more information about the federations.
• Help with being accountable to outside groups and to ourselves.
• **Create chances for mobilizing resources through monitoring progress; help effectiveness in reaching objectives and translating that into ability to manage our resources well.**
• **To create unity in the federations; partnership and collaboration between the federations and government.**
• Strengthen downward accountability to our constituencies.
• For SDI at a corporate level to increase standardization and our ability to aggregate and maintain coherence of SDI’s work, shared vision.

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**SDI PRINCIPLES OF LM&E**

• Ownership of the process by federations
• Transparency and accountability to the federations, Secretariat, SDI as a whole.
• Honesty in learning from mistakes and growth
• Making sure that it is suitable to the federation
• The issue of gender has to be reflected.
• Basic standardization of how to capture and aggregate data
• Complimentary role of LME, so it is not something separate, rather it is integrated into things we already do.
• To create a broader process of advocacy.
• Participatory at all levels, not just the federations but also the N.G.O; increase participation through more communication and knowledge sharing.
• Commitment to the process; being consistent and following up on commitments
• Using practical indicators, so that is is understandable to everyone.
• **Use data as an opportunity for dialogue and discussion; more information dissemination.**
• To reflect the participation of the community in all levels – local, national and international.

QUOTES FROM THE DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES OF M&E FOR SDI:

Rajesh: “In fact, mainstream M&E have been writing for the last 30 years against the participatory monitoring of us, they don’t consider it scientific or objective enough. So the problem isn’t with tools or methods, it’s with purposes and principles. So the mainstream ones, to alert you to what the mainstream will expect from you: In the mainstream, there is no Leaning and no Participation – it’s just M&E. Primary purpose is accountability in the use of funds. Second purpose is that it is linked to your agreed log frame. Log frames predict today what we will do 3 years later, trying to anticipate outcomes, impacts and fixes indicators. However, it cannot identify unintended consequences of processes – which is 60% of the outcomes of things I think. So in the log frame, whatever you have committed to your donors, that’s all you focus on. And the third is that it allows you to assess cost and time efficiency, basically the focus is on efficiency—have you used the money efficiently. And then it becomes the basis for planning the next phase/part/stopping funds. – the crisis of second installment. If there is no space to accommodate changes, to talk about failures and learn from that. Principles, that all information should be collected in an objective manner- that people who worked on the project are unlikely to be objective. External exercise of judgment. Normally, information that is collected is quantifiable and this is what you measure – the things that can be counted. Measuring the inconsequential precisely. This does not mean that in the traditional system case studies and stories are not collected, but the focus is to link those things to the log frame. “

Sundar: “To add, not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted, counts”.

Sheela: “So I think that what this means is that we have been turned off by traditional M&E, there was a big book, but instead of just turning away from it we want to propose an alternative. So we look at ourselves as an organization that facilitates a very decentralized process, where people are allowed to be at different levels, different political realities, the thing we do produce different outcomes. Everything is a long process that never fits into the project cycle of the external donor. This is the beginning of what makes us different, and so we need to find a strategy that takes all these things centrally. “
Jockin: “We are trying to say that SDI is accountable to the community, that’s why it is a community based organization. Money is not counted, but it is through money that we are trying to organize the people. If we were just trying to count money, we would be richer than the bank – that is not what we are working for. In Sri Lanka we are having a problem because it is a bank, we are trying to change it is into a federation, which is difficult because it is so rooted in the banking system. But we are struggling on how that could be changed. Problems in Nepal, they are working and will find out what the problem is there, there is a big gap between the community and the N.G.O. These are very important things to learn, sitting and looking at how we are accountable to our community for whom we are working. I used to know, I asked the federation in Nepal why they are coming – it’s because the N.G.O told them to come. I think that we should try and reflect, the federation to reflect how far this exercise can help us, the community especially. Even now, what if the objective of this is different between N.G.O and community? That is completely wrong, they should be the same – that cannot continue, that is not a relation. Like in Nepal, the N.G.O and community is working. The N.G.O is working with a community which is not within the federation, even though the federation is large – why do they work with a community that is outside of this? It would like SPARC working for a group outside of the federation community, working for different purposes. I think the M&E processes, we are all committed to our communities, savings is the base.”

Jockin: “…. I think that all of us here from the federation are depending on the N.G.Os, to strengthen their activities, and to support us strengthening our direction. We must do this evaluation in person, talking with people instead of just using the computers in a centralized way. These thing are required at the N.G.O level, but don’t take away the information collection method on the ground, person to person. You can calculate the money, the assets of SDI and it means bringing however much money to the people – in comparison the donor money is peanuts. We need to use this evaluation, we need to talk about unity, to talk about things starting from the bottom – these are thing we start day 1, we don’t need to announce it all the time. Another part of M&E is how can we change the world’s thinking, how can we develop that process.”

After this discussion on principles and purposes, everyone broke into small groups again, to discuss methods and strategies for implementing M&E in their regional hub. Each regional hub then presented their strategies and plans. Some quotes from the following discussion:

Rajesh: “Second, you said that you want to have a savings audit of all old savings schemes with a view to strengthen then. But what does it mean to strengthen? What does that mean to
strengthen a savings group? That meaning is important to outline—what the different dimensions are – number of members, frequency of attendance, solidarity, trust, some of which will require creative ways of measurement. And this is important because of you don’t specify this, then someone else will in a way that we don’t like. Third, relating to Zambia, and UPF. If your UPF program there involves any external donor, then when you are doing this evaluation keep in mind what may be of interest to the donor also, either in the contract you have signed or your discussions, so you can build that into it already. And then you present it to them, reducing the need or difficulty of externally imposed evaluation. Sometimes this is cities, sometimes municipalities, just think about – start with yourself and then say, which other stakeholders may have interest in this and maybe add things which serve their interest as well.”

**Sheela:** “What is important is for all of us to take on the challenge of both planning and assessing. And also separating out the things that we do routinely and the things that need reflection. So numbers we do routinely – savings is very important. It will be a headache to do the numbers the first time, but after that you can track it. But the reflection, whether it is leading to things, the quality of interaction, does it help strengthen the group, do they do things more than just counting money and growing, that reflection is important too – for the qualitative aspect, the process part. So for each activity and process you will have to make this distinction and look at both parts.”

**Dr. Gariba:** “…while there were important elements of LME in all of this, there was also a lot of the normal way we do business. So if I was a stranger coming into this work, I might not be able to distinguish what the difference is. It is critical that LME is now part of our new consciously, something that we do consciously and get some product out of it, so that we can demonstrate to ourselves that we are holding ourselves accountable and also demonstrate to others that we are being mutually accountable and true to what is in our hearts. So we may want to do things where we bring countries together and review a specific project, doing a conscious review with a product, which is differentiated from our normal processes. – Distinguish between what we normally do and what is extra effort for LME.”

**Nancy:** “Unlike very linear projects, you are trying to bring change through a network which is a challenge in the evaluation field, which is a relatively new thing, in terms of figuring out how to do this. So as you experiment with this, think about at the network level doing as evaluation of the network itself, and how it adds value. Another thing might be to look at policy change, how do you influence policy and what does that look like in our theory of change, what methods we use for that. Looking at the materials that we use and how they influence those changes. Also
impact on livelihoods, and if we could undertake something like that would be of major interest to others. “

**South Africa:** “But if you are serious about LME, it is also what is the attitude you want to be cultivating, what is the orientation you want to be cultivating. And al earning orientation requires critical engagement. And people say that this information that you are gathering information for dialogue and discussion, this is also important for critical evaluation. What are the questions that you can build into your system a reflective element. So this is important as well, to see learning as more than a technical exercise. “

**Sheela:** “Our experience is that like in all systems, there are people who champion them and people who dismiss them. And as our work has begun to come to a level where discussions have a critical momentum, that’s what’s getting us respect. It’s not our principles, the empowerment, which we lament. But we need to think where we have started from, what happens when women with little exposure start visiting new places and doing exchanges. But I think that some of us have started getting tired of saying these things, because people in development don’t maybe want to hear them. So it’s a constant back and forth, and we must continue to talk about these things, the empowerment, the women-centered-ness of our work.”

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**DAY 3 IN DEPTH – KEY QUOTES:**

On the third day of the workshop, everyone again broke up into groups according to regional hub and discussed the specific activities and processes which they will take on during the next year, to begin incorporating M&E into their work.

Each hub discussed their plans and presented them to the group.

There was some discussion about how these activities should be articulated and what should be done, so that M&E is done effectively and yet also in line with SDI’s core principles:

**Dr. Gariba:** “We talked about purpose and principles yesterday, these things need to come to life for those who were here and those who were not here. And the particular subject matter, so if it’s savings to apply these principles specifically to the savings criteria that are part of the SDI ritual, looking at particular savings challenges and issues. These become the particular issues around which review should be centered, so there is some co-design that needs to happen. Because some people were not here, so we need to revisit them in a much larger community, and the N.G.O can be helpful bringing this about. Secondly, the core principles of the particular
area, differentiated between core values of SDI – like savings, and things that are projects. When we start a project, we make commitments at that point, and we can’t forget that, so the review is an opportunity to go back into the documents. Not so much about how you feel about it, but reminding yourself that you have made these commitments. Third and most critical, is to find the learning aspects of it. To make it LME, the learning agenda is important, it is not just about accountability. So core principles, commitments you have made and your learning objectives."

**Sundar:** “Based on our experience in Mumbai and Pune, I think we have produced a video of a lady, a MM leader Savita, what she says is that before I got involved in the toilet construction program, I didn’t know how to read a plan, I didn’t know how to estimate quantities of materials, how to deal with the municipal corporation. What comes through is that a lot of changes took place and these people became much more capable. There was an issue of purchase of materials, and so they formed sub-committees. When they went to the suppliers, they were all men and said that the women should send their men to talk with them and the MM said no, that the women are the ones in charge of this project. So quality is a central issue, but you can also look at the other changes involved in a project like construction, all these other implications.”

**Sheela:** “So it would seem that for each one of these processes, you will set up a plan to do the activities specifically and then also parallel thing, who is going to learn what from this, and then as you do the activity you see whether it goes as you want. Then after, you can invite other people to come share what you did, to learn, and give you new possibilities to explore. So this is the cycle I am talking about. So it gives opportunities to you, and with the beauty of the exchange process, other people are learning as well. The circles of learning that happen, while you are doing your work, how many other people come to learn and watch you and get inspired to do it.”

**Anna Muller:** “I can see that if a new country doesn’t have a base to work with, it will be very difficult to do enumerations and savings, but I was just thinking, because what is the possibility. But you need to be very focused, we had one settlement without saving groups, but we work with them to agree on the process of enumeration and at the same time build savings groups. I know it’s much more complicated on the larger scales, but the countries that support this should be very aware, because if you don’t build the community at the same time, you will become like a consultant coming to do the enumeration. The enumeration may be an opportunity but you need to follow that up with saving.”
**Jockin:** “I think to reflect back on how this whole railway thing got started in India. We did a survey and turned that into a savings scheme and a federation. So the federation then needs information, because how are you going to argue with government without information. So I agree with you, you go in with anything, education, health whatever, you convert that into savings and convert that into a base.”

**Sheela:** “Each hub should also sit with the secretariat to let them know your expectations, and also find what the secretariat needs from you. So we understand what they need to do, either to share news with other hubs or with the outside. The other challenge that we have as SDI is that we are working hard to put all the information together at the national level, so we have goals to say with these core processes what are we saying as SDI. We maybe we should take that as a collective challenge, to see what the hubs can say and what we can say as SDI.”