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Evaluate Development! Develop Evaluation!

Evaluating behavioural change initiatives or interventions is normally done through outcome evaluations. Outcome evaluations measure participant numbers, demographics and reported changes in behaviour, knowledge, beliefs, values or awareness. They also look at finding and funding solutions at an individual level, such as one single community group or priority groups in a specific location.

Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) show that social problems are spiralling from simple, localised area issues to complex, global challenges. Outcome evaluations, while necessary, are no longer sufficient in measuring the behavioural dynamics needed for large scale, systems change. These efforts require new thinking and a movement towards process evaluation work, where reflexivity becomes the norm in assessing how things are changing or not, augmenting outcome evaluations. Reflexive evaluations measure '*what*' worked well, as well as also evaluating '*how*' and '*why*' success or indeed failure happens.

Research Findings
An exploratory study was conducted online through a web survey with partners and associated partners involved in the FP7 Sea for Society project. Through regression analysis, evidence showed support for three reflexive evaluation processes - relationships, knowledge and networking and their respective evaluative constructs. These three reflexive evaluation process consider who-to-engage with, what-to-work-on together and how-change happens on small and large scales. They explain, rather than question, the systems that surround behaviours, power bases and actions.

Policy Implications
Evaluation theorists suggest society has moved into the 'process' generation of evaluation where aggregate statistics no longer suffice as evaluation tools. Reflexive process evaluations allow policy and decision makers to learn from the past to build critical capacity to improve future decisions, actions and behaviours. Without reflexive process evaluations, the major challenges surrounding the achievement of the SDGs will continue to grow in number, in complexity and in scale. Reflexive process evaluations pave the way for policies to stand on the shoulders of giants, building critical relationships, networks and knowledge processes that achieve greater reach, scale and impact.