



National
Children's
Alliance

Alliance
nationale pour
les enfants

**THIRD PARTY MONITORING
OF
CANADA'S PROMISES TO CHILDREN**

November 27-28, 2003

Chateau Cartier Hotel

Aylmer, Quebec

Participants Workbook

Session one – Thursday morning

Objective: To reach a common understanding of why it is important to monitor.

Presentation: Dianne Bascombe, Karen Kidder, Katherine Scott

WHY MONITOR?

Monitoring helps us answer the questions:

- How are all of Canada's children and their families doing?
- How effective are public policies in supporting and enhancing children's health and well-being?
- How are governments doing in meeting commitments made in international and domestic agreements?
- How well are communities doing for children and their families through services and supports?
- How well are communities doing as supportive environments for children and their families? (physical environments, civic engagement, social capital)

Monitoring occurs at all levels, from stories about individual children to studies of international datasets, as we:

- Illuminate the lives of children
- Give a picture of families
- Describe individual services or supports
- Map the web of community services and supports
- Cultivate understanding of the linkages among healthy children, healthy families and healthy communities
- Understand public services at local, regional, provincial/territorial and national

- Hold governments to account for their “promises to children”
- Situate Canada’s children in the international community

Monitoring is the process of tracking descriptive indicators using both quantitative and qualitative data and research:

How are kids doing?

- Outcomes to measure health of all children (e.g. birth weights, injury rates, incidence of respiratory illness, fitness levels, outcome measures for vulnerable groups etc...)
- Family characteristics (e.g. incidence of poverty, percentages of children experiencing family violence etc...)
- Populations at “risk” or “vulnerability” (e.g. food bank use, children in care of the state, sub-standard housing etc...)

How are governments doing?

- Government expenditures on public services (e.g. education costs per student, child care expenditures per province, international comparisons on education expenditures per GDP etc...)
- Progress on government agreements (monies spent on early childhood development, rights and freedoms etc...)
- Legislation, case law and policy review (e.g. are rights promoted?)

How are communities doing?

- Children’s environments (e.g. air quality, playgrounds, safety regulations etc...)
- Quality of services and supports (e.g. program evaluations, education outcomes, health care services, child care, recreational programs etc...)
- Access to “fundamental” programs (e.g. user fees, waiting lists, inclusion of children with disabilities, community mapping of services etc...)

Reporting the results of monitoring fosters knowledge and understanding in order to improve the lives of children and their families by fostering positive changes in:

- Healthy active living
- Healthy environments
- Individual practice in service delivery
- Quality of services and supports
- Accessibility and inclusion of services and supports
- Effective public policy

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is it necessary to monitor?

“Monitoring can also serve to promote social values and raise awareness about various public issues. It can be a powerful tool in the service of the public as pressure is brought to bear on governments to meet the needs of citizens.” (Scott, Kidder, Burke page 10)

In the paper “Third Party Monitoring of Canada’s Promises to Children”, the author talks about how monitoring is essential to research, practice, policy and advocacy. Is this important from the perspective of the work of your organization? If so, how important?

Are you engaged in monitoring? Does your organization participate in data or evidence based advocacy?

Do you consider “stories” or “qualitative research” as legitimate monitoring? Do you use “stories” from your constituencies on the front lines to effect change?

For the National Children’s Alliance, monitoring can provide the foundation of data and evidence-based advocacy. In your experience, is this important for effective advocacy? Do you have a success story?

Session Two – Thursday afternoon

Objective: To understand the roles and responsibilities of third party in monitoring

Presentation: Sandra Griffin “Canada’s Promises to Children”

WHY THIRD PARTY MONITORING?

In a vibrant democracy, the voluntary/NGO sector plays an important role in assuring public accountability for the rights and well-being of citizens.

In Canada there are a number of key commitments at the national level. Keeping these promises would improve the lives of children, youth and their families:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- World Fit for Children
- National Plan of Action for Children
- All-Party Resolution to End Child Poverty
- Social Union Framework Agreement
- National Children’s Agenda
- Early Childhood Development Agreement
- Multi-Lateral Framework Agreement
- Voluntary Sector Initiative

The recognition of the important role of third party monitoring is a part of the frameworks in many of these agreements:

- United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observations has recommended that Canada support third party monitoring of the Convention
- United Nations gives standing to the NGO reports in its process of assessing the compliance of states parties to the Convention
- A World Fit for Children includes a commitment for Canada to “build community capacity for monitoring, assessment and planning”
- Social Union Framework Agreement includes the provision to “use third parties, as appropriate, to assist in assessing progress on social priorities”
- Early Childhood Development Agreement states “First Ministers agree that governments will consult third parties to assist, as appropriate, in developing indicators and assessing progress on early childhood development”
- Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Care commits that “Governments will ensure effective mechanisms for Canadians to participate in developing early learning and child care priorities and reviewing outcomes”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“The current intergovernmental framework that is based on good will alone presupposes that governments will generate the data necessary and publicly report to diverse publics for program and policy choices.” (Scott, Kidder, Burke, page 10)

“Outcomes-based accountability is the use of social indicators to hold agencies and governments responsible for improving health and well-being and achieving their stated goals. Using social indicators to assess accountability requires caution and sophistication.” (Scott, Kidder, Burke, page 14)

What are the implications for the voluntary/NGO sector of the government’s commitments to monitor children’s rights and well-being?

What do you think are the appropriate roles and responsibilities for governments in monitoring? What needs to be done?

What do you think are the appropriate roles and responsibilities for the third sector in monitoring? What do we need to do?

Session Three – Thursday afternoon

Objective: To get a clear picture of the current context of third party monitoring

How are we doing as third party monitors?

At the national level, key third party monitoring initiatives include:

- Campaign 2000 “Report Card on Child Poverty”
- Canadian Coalition on the Rights of Children “How Does Canada Measure Up”
- Canadian Council on Social Development “Progress of Canada’s Children”
- Canadian Institute of Child Health “Health of Canada’s Children”
- Vanier Institute of the Family “Profiling Canada’s Families”

All of these publications have been invaluable for the National Children’s Alliance in its advocacy work for policy change. At the March 2002 symposium the existing excellent models were acknowledged and that there was potential for better sharing. The importance of third party as a priority area for the Alliance was confirmed. But, it was also recognized that there was a need to further develop a framework for third party monitoring for the sector more broadly as the for Alliance specifically.

It was agreed by members of the Alliance that an important value-added to our work as a collective would be the development of “KidsWatch” that would consolidate the outcomes of individual monitoring efforts. This collaborate monitoring report would be based on the Social Watch model in order to help member organizations better tell the story about how children, families, communities and governments are doing. A template as well as tools and resources were to have been developed for replication of “KidsWatch at the community level.

Since March 2002 there has been renewed discussion about the voluntary/NGO sector's collective capacity to monitor. In her recent paper Karen Kidder identifies that "As a consequence lack of sustainable, predictable funding streams, these monitoring initiatives may not all be continued or may become sporadic sources of information". In addition to the funding issue there is an ongoing challenge with data access and availability.

The National Children's Alliance is hoping to undertake a feasibility study on the development of a collective national data strategy that would facilitate access to data. This type of strategy could include options such as: coordination of data collection; identification of data sources; development of collective data centre; dialogue on indicator development; identification of gaps in data; collaborative publications such as "KidsWatch"; and development of public education materials.

The knowledge and expertise of grassroots practitioners are a critical and often unacknowledged contributor to the process of monitoring. "It is clear that those closest to the ground in communities have the best vantage point for assessing performance and for providing feedback to governments on whether investments are meeting stated goals *and* objectives within specific communities or regions across the country."

(Scott, Kidder, Burke page 9) At present there is no mechanisms for sharing the monitoring work at the local level or for individual types of services to give a more comprehensive picture of what is needed.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

“It is clear that there are other complementary ways at the nation (principally), regional and international levels to hold governments and individuals accountable..”
“The option, however, may be not to choose between the UNCRC reporting and other mechanisms, but to use both more strategically (maximizing the influencing potential of data, analysis or partners involved in the UNCRC reporting).” (Save the Children, “A Tool for Change”, page 15)

What do you think are the barriers and opportunities for participating in third party monitoring?

What functions are essential for third party monitoring?

Would a sustainable third party monitoring mechanism be of value to the sector? If so, how valuable?

Do you think that playing a role in third party monitoring should be a priority for the National Children’s Alliance? If so, how high a priority?

“The issue of attribution (attributing a change to a particular service or program or factor) cannot be tackled through a framework of social indicators.”
(Scott, Kidder, Burke page 14)

Session four – Thursday afternoon

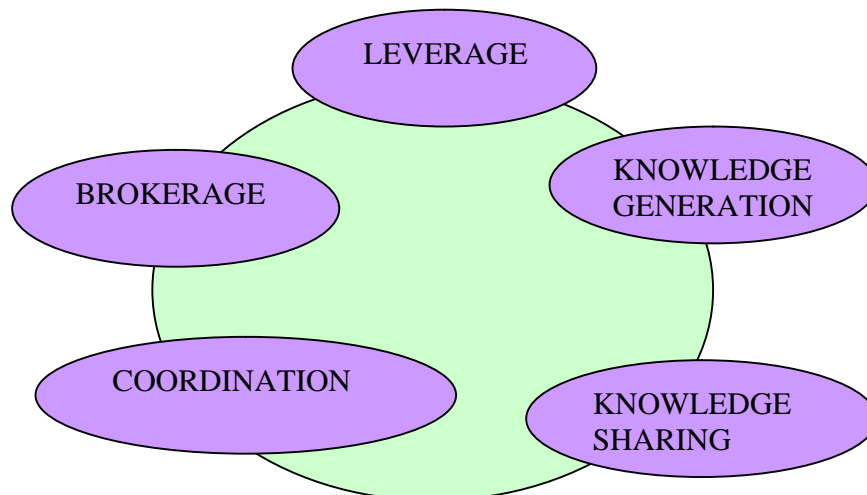
Objective: Identification of functions that the Alliance could undertake as a third party monitor

What is the value-added for the Alliance?

In her paper Karen Kidder looks at the functions for consideration by the Alliance:

- Leverage Function (catalyst for data access, knowledge brokerage and/or research)
- Brokerage Function (facilitators, offering leadership, such as CCSD facilitating common access to information)
- Coordination Function (implementers, ensuring that all organizations involved are working together efficiently and to the best benefit of all)
- Knowledge Sharing Function (consolidators, producing and disseminating materials that share the knowledge acquired through monitoring)
- Knowledge Generation Function (generating new knowledge, materials, stories)

These functions can be illustrated as a wheel of interventions, rather than a ranked list :



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

How should the Alliance contribute to Third Party Monitoring?

What do think about the Alliance taking on functions of: leverage; brokerage; coordination; knowledge sharing; and knowledge generation. If so, what would be the most important?

Should the Alliance strategically respond to the need for increased capacity of the sector to realize its roles and responsibilities in third party monitoring?

Is there a need for collective access to the existing monitoring work of organizations at local, regional and provincial levels? If so, should the Alliance facilitate this?

Should there be more collaboration in existing monitoring initiatives? If so, should the Alliance act as a catalyst for improving data access and building collective capacity monitoring?

Should the Alliance act as a consolidator of monitoring work undertaken by member groups? Do you think that KidsWatch has potential as an advocacy tool that does this?

Session five – Thursday Afternoon

Objective: Establishment of criteria for the “Action Plan”

What are the criteria for decision-making?

The National Children’s Alliance works as a collective based on consensus. In developing any new initiative or plan of action it is important to make sure that the criteria for decision-making are compatible with the operating principles of:

- Respect for independence and collaboration
- Focus on issues that can be better addressed collectively, rather than individually
- Focus on outcomes
- Maintain an open table with respect and goodwill
- Keep room at the table for critical thinking and disagreement
- Speak as a collectivity only when a consensus has been reached
- Keep government and media interventions strategic
- Manage input and consultation effectively

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What needs to be taken into account by the Alliance in determining the “value-added” in third party monitoring?

What criteria should we use in developing an Action Plan tomorrow?

Friday Morning

Developing an Action Plan

Advocacy is for policy change is the reason the Alliance came together. Monitoring is the foundation for data and evidence-based advocacy. Based on Thursday's dialogue it is now time to identify the next steps for the Alliance in monitoring.

In March 2002 the Alliance convened to examine the implications of the ECD agreement on third party monitoring. Although the scope of our discussion today is much broader it is useful to recall the outcomes of that meeting.

In March 2002, the participants suggested that the Alliance explore the strategies listed below:

- Promote the good monitoring models across Canada (particularly Manitoba's).
- Develop a consensus around what the scope of the monitoring should be and the potential role of a third party monitor.
- Develop a model framework for monitoring the ECD Agreement in a popular report card format, and explore ways and means to support the provincial and territorial coalitions to use it and influence decision makers. Move towards a common tool.
- Explore the Auditor General idea.
- Develop alternatives to ECDI monitoring such as developing videos, publicizing best practices and conducting letter writing campaigns to hold provincial governments accountable to the expenditure of EDCI dollars. There would be different appetites for these kinds of activities.
- Help provinces and territories by sharing information, research and best practices, and by providing a research base for legitimacy and strategies as to how they might move the children's agenda forward in their communities.
- Develop a marketing strategy to promote and broadcast what the Alliance and its provincial / regional members are doing in this area. For example, produce a national poster like "Where's Waldo?" but rather: "Money? Show me the money!"

Pierre Lacroix will now take us through a process of identifying priorities for action based on the "roles and responsibilities" of the Alliance and the functions that it could undertake for each of the roles. Criteria will be used to make recommendations on action items within each role.

Potential "Roles and Responsibilities" for the Alliance:

1. Monitoring (e.g. identification of indicators, data collection and research)
2. Reporting (e.g. publications, public education)
3. Advocacy (e.g. federal government)

Possible functions for Alliance within each role:

- Leverage
- Brokerage
- Coordination
- Knowledge Sharing
- Knowledge Generation

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

What is the action strategy for next steps for the Alliance?