RAPID Outcome Assessment

The RAPID Outcome Assessment (ROA) is a learning methodology to assess and map the contribution of a project's actions on a particular change in policy or the policy environment. It is a flexible and visual tool that can be used in conjunction with other evaluation tools and methods.

The ROA draws significantly from Outcome Mapping as it focuses on key actors that the project is directly influencing and the progressive changes in those actors. It also draws from other methodologies such as Episode Studies, which focuses on working backwards from a policy change to determine the factors that contributed to it; and Most Significant Change, which helps to identify and prioritise the key changes.

The ROA methodology has three main stages. The first stage is a preparation stage, during which a document review and a series of informal conversations are carried out to develop a draft picture of the project's history and the intended changes. The second stage is the workshop during which the key policy change processes are identified by the stakeholders. The third stage involves a follow up process that allows the researchers to refine the stories of change, identifying key policy actors, events and their contribution to change.

Stage 1: Background research and preparation

1 The first step, as in any learning process, is attempting to develop a basic understanding of the situation. This will involve a review of project reports, project papers and research products, newspaper references/articles, relevant literature to the subject of the project and the policy environment before and after the project.

2 Conversations with relevant project staff and stakeholders will contribute to step one to identify overall policy objectives, the key actors and events that were targeted and the range of strategies used.

Stage 2: The ROA workshop

1 The aim of the workshop is to map behavioural changes in key actors and build a map of influences. The ROA team must consider who has to be invited to the workshops, how many workshops are necessary and how long will they last. The workshop will typically include the project team, key stakeholders and other external experts; the more diverse the participants the better.

2 The workshop will cover the following (see below for further detail):
    a. Defining the policy environment at the start and end of the project/period;

    b. Identifying key actors, which may be individuals or institutions, and clustering into groups, for instance, 'Civil society Organisations', 'Donors', the 'Private Sector'.

c. Characterising actors' behaviour (i) now and (ii) at given start point in the policy process;

d. Establishing a timeline

e. Mapping key behaviour changes along the timeline;

f. Mapping (i) key project activities/changes, and (ii) external influences (events, influences, trends, shock) along the same timeline;

g. Determining the links/influences between the actors' behaviour changes and the identified events, including project activities, external influences and other actors' behaviour change.

Stage 3: Triangulate and refine conclusions

1 The ROA team should use the information gathered in the preliminary stages as well as the workshop to develop stories of change that describe the contributions of the project to the observed outcomes.

2 Use the timeline to identify informants to follow up with in-depth interviews. This will help to confirm the linkages and influences determined in the workshop and to assess the nature of the contributions to change.
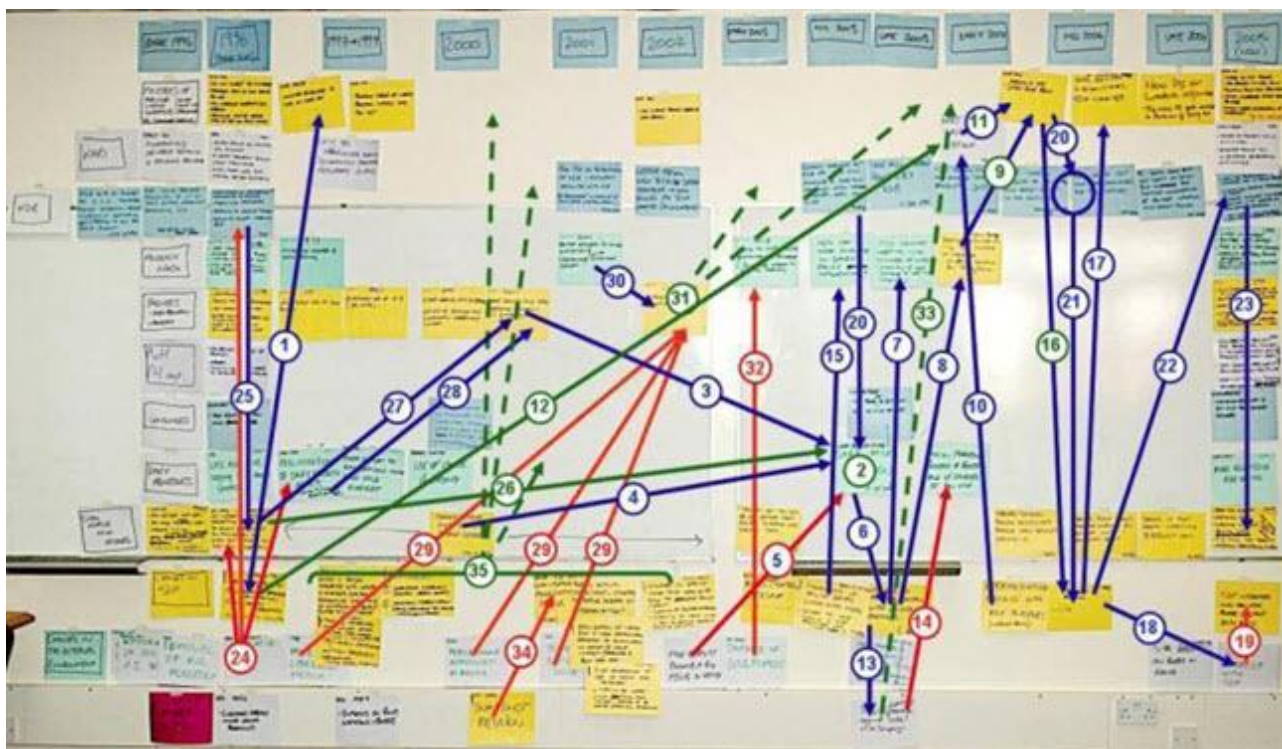

Figure 1: An outcome assessment map from a workshop in Kenya

Key stages of the RAPID Outcome Assessment

Step 1: Describe the policy environment at the end and beginning of the timescale.

Step 2: Identify key policy actors and 'boundary partners' that were considered influential in the process.
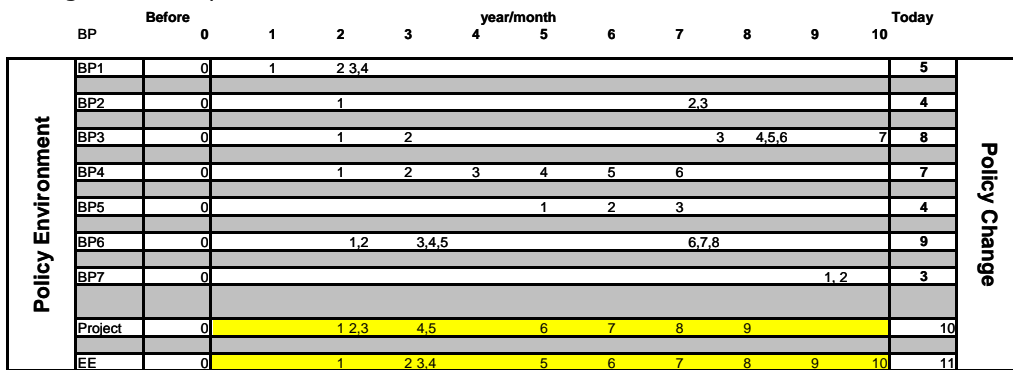

Step 3: Describe (i) the behaviour of the key actors/boundary partners that contributed to the change in the policy environment or policy, and (ii) the behaviour at the beginning of the timescale or project.

Step 4: Map the key changes in behaviour for each of the key actors/boundary partners from the start of the timescale (or project).

	Before	0	1	2	3	year/month 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Today
BP1		0	1	2 3,4									5
BP2		0		1					2,3				4
BP3		0		1	2				3	4,5,6		7	8
BP4		0		1	2	3	4	5	6				7
BP5		0					1	2	3				4
BP6		0		1,2	3,4,5				6,7,8				9
BP7		0									1, 2		3
Project													
EE													

(Policy Environment — Policy Change)
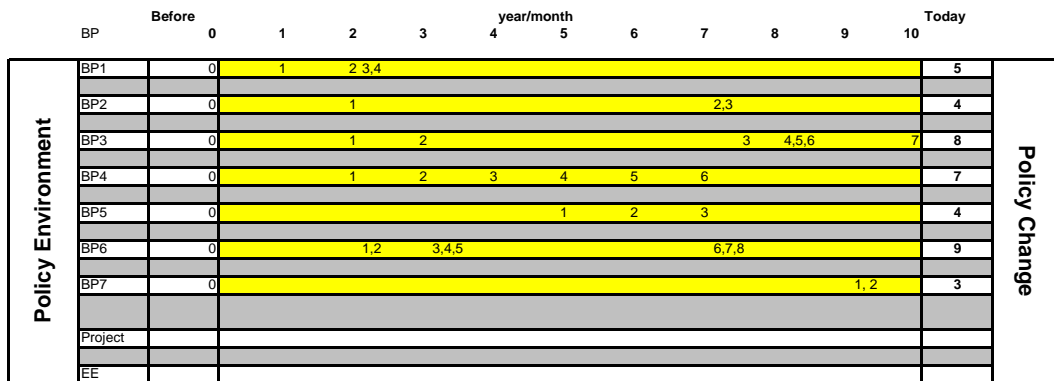
Step 5: Map (i) the key changes in the project including organisational changes, outputs and changes in behaviour, and (ii) external influences including actions of strategic partners and other exogenous partners, during the same period.

	Before	0	1	2	3	year/month 4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Today
BP1		0	1	2 3,4									5
BP2		0		1					2,3				4
BP3		0		1	2				3	4,5,6		7	8
BP4		0		1	2	3	4	5	6				7
BP5		0					1	2	3				4
BP6		0		1,2	3,4,5				6,7,8				9
BP7		0									1, 2		3
Project		0		1 2,3	4,5		6	7	8	9			10
EE		0		1	2 3,4		5	6	7	8	9	10	11

(Policy Environment — Policy Change)

Step 6: Determine level of impact/influence of (i) the project on the changes in behaviour of the key actors/partners and (ii) of external influences on the changes in behaviour of the key actors/partners and the project.
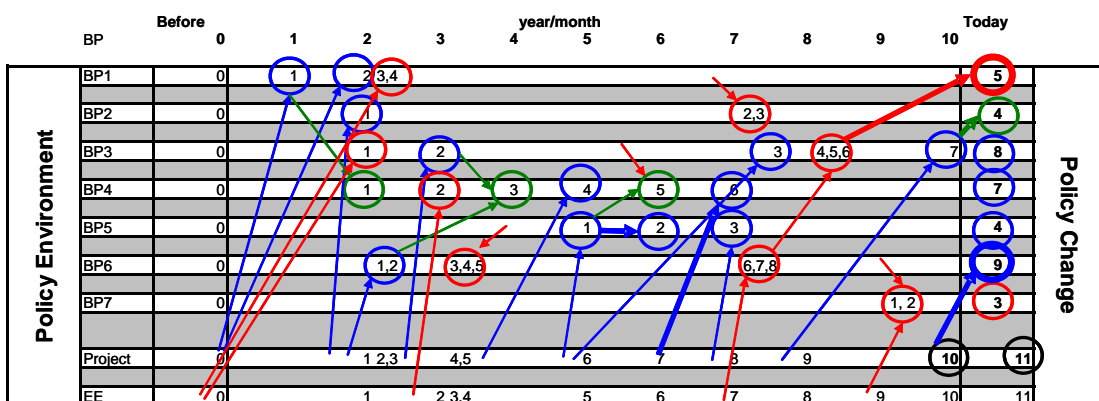
Findings are refined through in-depth interviews and further literature review, to assess the real contribution of the project on the policy change.