Learning to Learn

Learning amongst Social Accountability Monitoring Practitioners

Summarised findings of an internal report by Lindelwa Nxele.

This report tracks the use of the **Social Learning Framework** as a tool for measuring the impact of the **Public Service Accountability Monitor** Approach to Social Accountability Monitoring in Southern Africa.

For the full report go to: http://psam.org.za/research/1465199470.pdf

Why Social Learning?

Social Learning argues that people do not need to be in a classroom to learn – they learn from each other whenever they interact and share ideas. They don't only learn through observation and experimentation but collective consciousness assists individuals to become receptive to new knowledge and change.

Learning is a process that allows people to grow and contribute towards the greater good of the community that shapes them.

Learning is dependent on people being in a particular state of mind and being willing to change their behavior.

The **Social Learning Theory** encourages information sharing that assists community members and networks to:
- Learn from each other
- Help each other with challenges
- Create knowledge together
- Keep each other informed on current trends
- Stimulate change
- Offer development opportunities

Learning is not regarded as a linear process, but is a series of individual or holistic values which are adopted at different stages of a process and in different ways. This is the significance of community, as it offers combined diversity of experiences. In the PSAM context, the community comprises of the trainers adopting the PSAM approach. This report details their experiences of adopting the PSAM approach and how the Social Learning Framework can be used to measure the impact of that approach in different contexts.
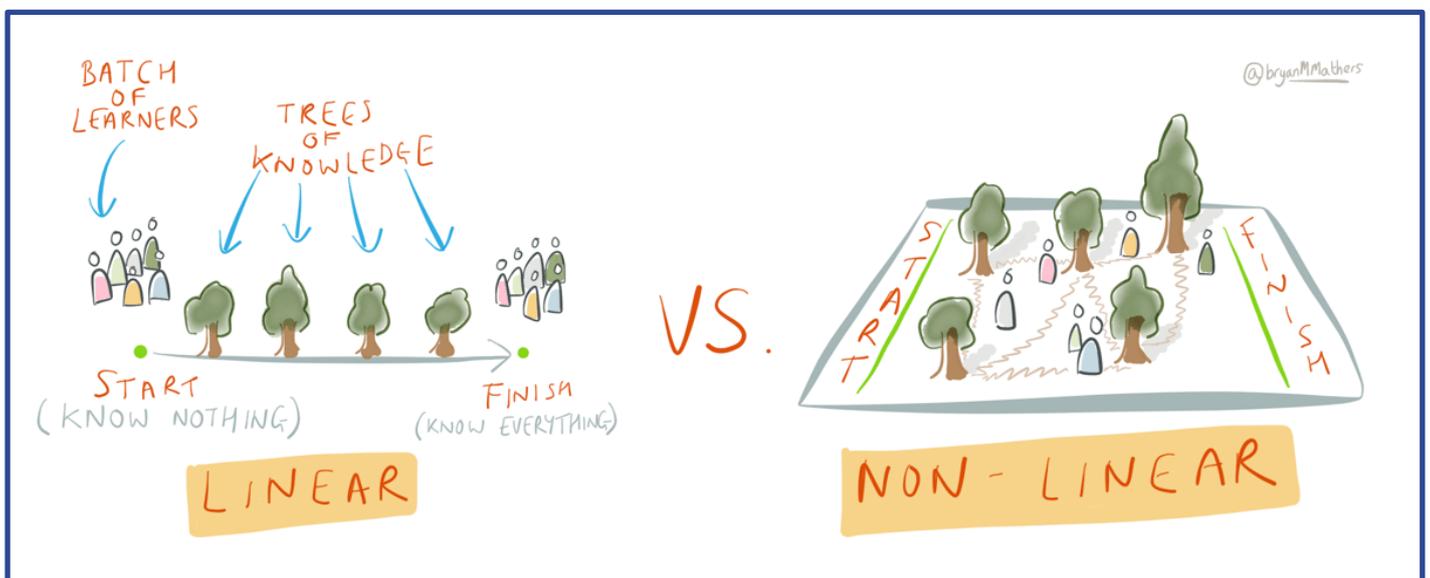
The Social Learning Framework was used to understand how and what the social accountability practitioners learn. The SL Framework illustrates learning values associated with 5 developmental stages: Immediate, Potential, Applied, Realised, and Transformative.

Similarly to learning, these stages are **not always linear**, values can be observed from the transformation or applying of ideas alike.
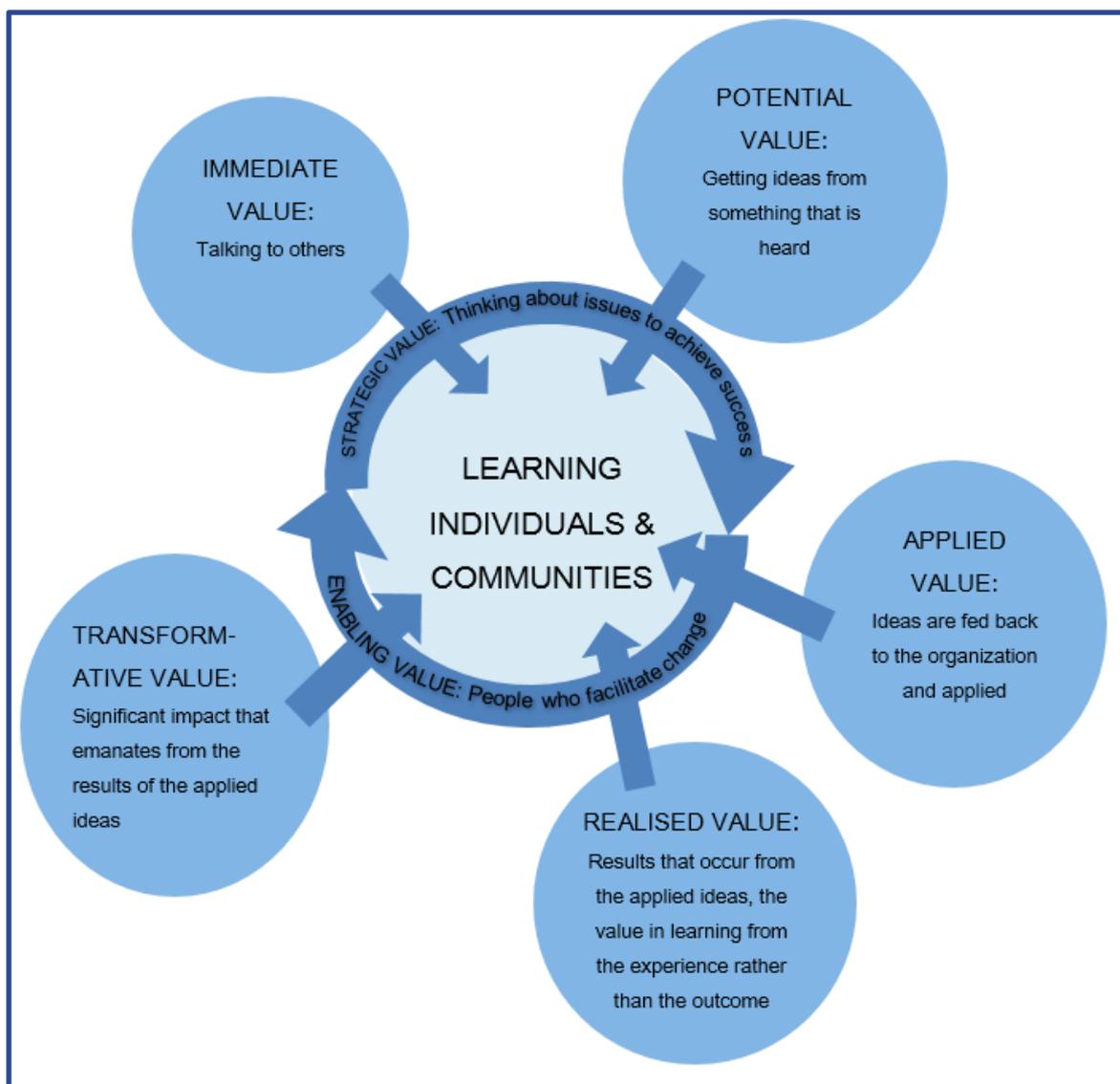
Practitioners learning – What are SAM practitioners learning about the work they do?

APPLIED VALUE: Learning to Practice

When applying the PSAM approach – CONTEXT MATTERS
SAM Practitioners said:

"**We provide a generic approach, but with simplified language, we have adapted it for people's level of literacy.**"

"**We focus on the sectors our audience work in. Participants determine the content of the course, so we simplify the course, especially for those in rural areas.**"

"**The approach was simplified and translated to the local Shona language. We focus on oversight, which is of direct interest to participants.**"

"**We have aligned the tools with local policy frameworks. We involve everyone. After training, participants get to engage representatives of the government.**"

APPLIED VALUE: Learning to Practice

Choosing an approach that makes you think about your practice in different ways can help you overcome contextual challenges:

SAM Practitioners said:

"**We are focusing on empowering the citizens, by teaching them that if they don't get their services then the government is abusing the citizen's rights.**"

"**The Parliament has started distributing local level circulars.**"

"**We focus on educating people about rights, to help them understand their role of oversight.**"

"**The important thing for us is to ensure that the documents necessary to monitor the system are available, what tools we can use to request them, and what relationships we need to create in order to ensure we find a way towards realizing our rights.**"

REALISED VALUE: Learning from Experience

Perceived changes due to the implementation of the PSAM approach:
SAM Practitioners said:

"**The government officials' behavior has changed, they now allocate funds to projects to make sure they happen, they appreciate citizens' engagement and the PSAM approach that makes them understand their role and relationship with civil society.**"

"**The district we work in was mentioned as the best performing, other districts now approach us to assist…The parliament has improved public participation. We have been invited to assist design guidelines for oversight structures.**"

"**There has been an increased activity on the demand side. We help with their own action plans and teach them the PSAM system so that they can integrate it into their everyday work. People need to see it as their own, rather than something from outside.**"

"**A woman who was once so shy is now the one that leads conversations with government officials. The fear is gradually lost, and individuals are empowered.**"

Learning is a continuous and on-going process:
SAM Practitioners said:

"**Behavioural change is what we want to see. To see citizens able to demand their rights without fear, and the supply side to ensure their rights are realised.**"

"**Partnerships are important because we learn from each other. We need to change how we think and learn to be pro-active.**"

"**Some people believe you can only apply the PSAM approach in the small context, but it actually assists you to understand how various actors are connected, and you can use that in any sector, you just need to connect the dots.**"

"**The learning partnership in Zimbabwe is trying to consolidate the work. There are different strengths in the sectors we work in and coming together will give us more expertise.**"
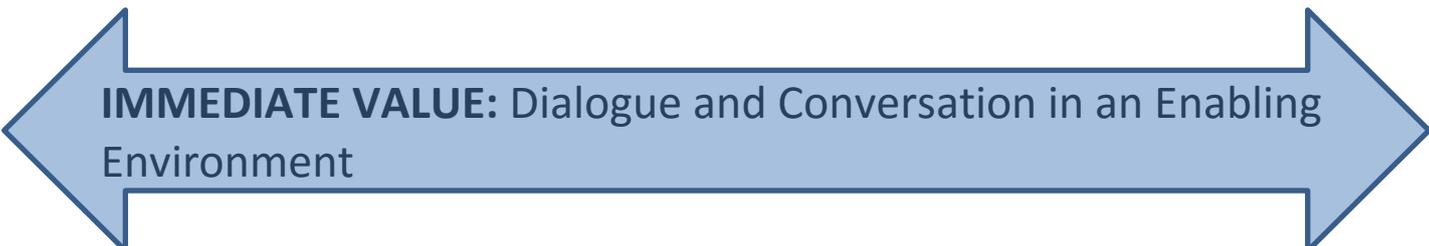
Maintaining COP connections and communication to foster learning and support one another:
SAM Practitioners said:

"**Annual meetings will not be enough…we are going to need support and advice of the network members. Therefore, it's necessary to have a platform for continuous engagement, preferably an online platform.**"

"**WhatsApp is a good instant platform to notify people about what is happening and get quick advice.**"

"**We suggest that if someone has a manual, they share it with others, so that we can all learn.**"

"**We should also try online mid-term meetings where people can give feedback and discuss their projects. This will motivate people to actually do the work and it will motivate individuals to know that they have the support.**"

"**We need to have and define our common goal, this will put us in a position to negotiate with one voice when dealing with global actors.**"