



Outcome Harvesting

A Developmental Evaluation Inquiry Framework Supporting the Development of an International Social Change Network

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

One of the 10 questions addressed in the opening chapter is this: What methods are used in developmental evaluation? The answer is that *developmental evaluation does not rely on or advocate any particular evaluation method, design, tool, or inquiry framework*. Methods can be emergent and flexible; designs can be dynamic. In essence, methods and tools have to be adapted to the particular challenges of developmental evaluation. This chapter exemplifies how that is done, featuring an innovative approach developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau and colleagues (including coauthor Goele Scheers) called *outcome harvesting*.

Based in Rio de Janeiro but working internationally, Ricardo Wilson-Grau has become deeply engaged with developmental evaluation, contributing to both its theory and practice. As coeditor Michael Quinn Patton wrote the *Developmental Evaluation* book, Ricardo provided extensive feedback and contributed the “acid test” for determining whether developmental evaluation is an appropriate approach—that is, whether those working to bring about change face uncertainty and complexity (Patton, 2011, p. 106). Ricardo developed outcome harvesting for precisely those situations where social innovators do not have plans that can be conventionally evaluated because either what they aim to achieve, and what they would do to achieve it, are not sufficiently specific and measurable to compare and contrast what was planned with what was done and achieved; or they have to cope with dynamic, uncertain circumstances; or both. This complexity is the “nature of the beast” in contexts where social innovators are attempting to influence changes in the behavior of societal actors over whom they have no control, as is

typically the case in major systems change initiatives. Outcome harvesting is thus an evaluation approach that collects evidence of what has been achieved and then works backward to determine whether and how the efforts of social innovators and their interventions contributed to observed and documented changes.

A second major contribution of this chapter is demonstrating how emergent and highly dynamic networks can be evaluated. Networks have developed as one of the primary ways social innovators connect with and support each other to bring about change. From the moment we began discussing what kinds of cases we wanted to include in this volume, we knew it would be crucial to include an exemplar of a network evaluation. Networks present different challenges, compared to evaluation's usual task of determining the effectiveness of projects and programs. Innovative networks require innovative evaluation approaches, which is how outcome harvesting and developmental evaluation became integrated. Indeed, outcome harvesting emerged, in part, from Ricardo's active participation in the worldwide network of hundreds of evaluators using a related approach, *outcome mapping*. The use of networks as a form of social organization has exploded with the rise of the Internet and with the increased understanding that many significant issues are global in nature—such as climate change, human trafficking, endangered species, economic development, human migration, new and potentially epidemic diseases, and (as in the case in this chapter) preventing armed conflict. This chapter features a developmental evaluation of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), using outcome harvesting as an inquiry framework; coauthor Paul Kosterink continues to steward the use of the findings. Preventing armed conflict is, on the face of it, a dauntingly complex endeavor. This example demonstrates that the initiatives of a dynamic global network enmeshed in real-world complexities at all levels can be evaluated and thereby be accountable for concrete, verifiable, and significant results. This is breakthrough work. Read on.

This is a story about how the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) used *outcome harvesting* as a developmental evaluation inquiry framework to support its emergence as a collaborative social change network operating in complex circumstances. To this day, there does not exist a tried and proven network model for organizations such as GPPAC, much less a ready-made mechanism for tracking its performance and learning from its successes and failures. Therefore, GPPAC had to create them.

In 2006, GPPAC adapted the methodology of *outcome mapping* to the needs of a global network, and from 2009 onward, GPPAC integrated outcome harvesting into its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. This enabled the network to move away from the prevailing “What is planned needs to be achieved” mode, and toward learning from what is emerging in order to continue developing. Today the network systematically registers, reflects upon, and learns from the planned and especially unplanned *developmental* outcomes of its autonomous affiliates and the *development* outcomes of the United Nations (UN), regional intergovernmental organizations (such as the League of Arab States), state actors, the media, and academia. Thus outcome harvesting has supported GPPAC's continual innovation in what it is and what it does.

Preventing Conflict through Global Action

GPPAC (pronounced “geepak”) is a member-led network of civil society organizations from around the world that are active in the field of conflict prevention and peace building. GPPAC seeks a world where violence and armed conflicts are prevented and resolved by peaceful means. GPPAC works toward a fundamental shift in how the world deals with violent conflict: moving from reaction to prevention. Founded in 2003, the network consists of 15 regional networks of local organizations, each with its own priorities, character, and agenda.

GPPAC informs policy by connecting civil society with key decision makers at national, regional, and global levels. As a network of peace builders, GPPAC presents civil society analysis of conflicts from a human security perspective, generating knowledge and fostering collaborative mechanisms to prevent violent conflict. GPPAC builds capacity through learning exchanges on conflict prevention, involving civil society practitioners, state institutions, UN representatives, regional organizations, and other key actors. In addition, since its inception GPPAC has had an internal strategic focus that concentrates resources on its own development—on strengthening the network.

In Exhibit 10.1, the fruits of GPPAC’s multipronged efforts are exemplified. It was to support this development that, initially, Goele Scheers (as the client) working with Ricardo Wilson-Grau (as the external developmental evaluator) employed outcome harvesting, although we only came to realize that our concerted efforts could be called *developmental evaluation* when the approach was presented in Michael Quinn Patton’s (2011) book.¹

GPPAC’s Special Challenges for Global Peace Building in Complex Situations

When Goele Scheers joined the Global Secretariat of GPPAC in 2005, the network was using the *logical framework* approach (commonly known as the *logframe*). There was great dissatisfaction with the approach, however, as it turned out to be inappropriate for GPPAC’s M&E needs. As do other networks,² GPPAC faces a high degree of environmental and operational complexity (Scheers, 2008). There are two principal reasons for the complexity: uncertainty and diversity.

First, GPPAC faces a high degree of *dynamic uncertainty*. The actors and factors with which GPPAC has to contend change constantly and in unforeseeable ways. Thus the relationships of cause and effect between what the network plans to do and what it will achieve are simply unknown until the results emerge. All

¹Ricardo was one of four evaluators who read and provided feedback to Michael Quinn Patton on the manuscript of *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (Patton, 2011).

²GPPAC was eventually featured as a *global action network* in Steve Waddell’s (2011) book *Global Action Networks: Creating Our Future Together*.

EXHIBIT 10.1

GPPAC Outcomes in 2012–2013

Strategic Focus	Network Strengthening and Regional Action	Action Learning	Public Outreach	Policy and Advocacy
Thematic Priorities				
Preventive Action	<p><i>The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) employed GPPAC conflict analysis to train personnel as its Regional Early Warning Focal Points in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.</i></p> <p>Representatives of the League of Arab States announced plans to open up the organization to civil society and strengthen cooperation channels.</p> <p><i>The League of Arab States appointed a Secretary General's Special Envoy for Civil Society and established a Secretariat for Relations with Civil Society.</i></p>		<p><i>The UN Secretary General's 2013 Report on Human Security acknowledged GPPAC's role in advancing the human security concept.</i></p> <p><i>The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) agreed to officially partner with GPPAC to produce an SSR e-learning curriculum on the UN Learning Portal.</i></p> <p><i>The UN Secretary General invited GPPAC to speak at the UN High-Level Event on Human Security.</i></p>	
Dialogue and Mediation				
Peace Education				
Human Security				

GPPAC members operate in an environment subject to innumerable variables—political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and ecological—that influence the network’s collaborative activities globally, regionally, and in over 100 countries. In addition, GPPAC has 12 categories of internal actors³ and hundreds of stakeholders with varying missions, ways of working, forms, and sizes—national and multilateral, governmental and civil society. The network operates with a Global Secretariat, 15 Regional Secretariats, and dozens of national focal points representing affiliated organizations. The 15 Regional Steering Groups have 5, 10, 15, or more independent member organizations, which enter and exit with such fluidity that GPPAC does not know at any given moment the exact composition of its membership.

Second, GPPAC member organizations and their representatives have a *diversity* of motivations and resources, as well as varying levels of commitment—of course, within the unity of their common purpose to work together to prevent conflict and build peace. Indeed, the conviction that they cannot achieve some political objectives by working alone drives GPPAC members to participate in the network. The 200-plus member organizations participate in GPPAC of their own free will. At most, one or two staff members of a regional network are paid part-time by GPPAC; all other staff members volunteer their time.

³GPPAC members, GPPAC regional networks, thematic focal points, thematic working groups, Regional Secretariat, Regional Steering Groups, International Steering Group (ISG), Global Secretariat, Program Steering Committee, ISG liaisons, GPPAC board, and regional liaison officers.

The complexity is heightened because many of GPPAC's stakeholders, from regional staff to donors, have expectations (especially of management) that are rooted in the organizational realities they know best, those of their home institutions. In GPPAC's case, these are primarily nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or government offices. In addition, donors and strategic allies tend to expect GPPAC to function as if it were a more conventional civil society organization. These stakeholders confront a dilemma, however, because networks are not NGOs. As a result of the complexity, when GPPAC contributes to an outcome, the effect may be direct but is often indirect, partial, and even unintentional, and usually comes about through the concerted actions of other actors (sometimes unknown to each other) along with GPPAC's initiatives. Also, an outcome generally occurs some time—even years—after the GPPAC activity. This means that the conventional M&E practice of comparing what has been done and achieved with what was planned is of dubious value to GPPAC or its stakeholders.

Initially, GPPAC tried to manage according to these conventional expectations, but they clashed with reality. This complexity made it extremely difficult—essentially an exercise in predicting the unpredictable—to develop a results-based framework such as the logframe, which produces a causal chain (scheduled inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → impact) in which results are predefined in specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound terms. Furthermore, reality changes so quickly across the network that within months plans prove not to be useful guides for action, and much less bases for learning and accountability.

Due to the nature of GPPAC as an international network, the implementation of its strategic plan, as well as of monitoring and evaluation, hinges on the buy-in and support of stakeholders. Therefore, by 2005, these dilemmas had to be resolved. GPPAC had realized it required an alternative approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluation (PM&E) if it was going to be able to assess efficiency and effectiveness in a useful manner and be accountable to its stakeholders.

Customizing Outcome Mapping for Planning and Monitoring

Therefore, even while commitments to donors required that the Work Plan for 2007–2010 (European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 2006) be a 4-year logframe with 21 targets, 85 worldwide activities, and hundreds of activities in the regions, GPPAC began to explore alternative PM&E approaches.

In 2006, Goele introduced a customized application of outcome mapping, a PM&E methodology developed by the Canadian International Development Research Centre.⁴

Outcome mapping was relevant for GPPAC for three reasons. First, outcome mapping would allow GPPAC to plan to adapt to continual change and take into account unexpected results. Second, the approach focuses on contribution and not

⁴The International Development Research Centre's outcome-mapping methodology is a results-oriented but very flexible methodology whose principles and procedures are readily adaptable for an international social change network's PM&E needs. See Earl, Carden, and Smutylo (2001).

attribution, which for GPPAC is important because conflict prevention and peace building come about when a multitude of actors interact to achieve change. Thus it is usually impossible to attribute this change to an intervention by a single actor. Furthermore, the essence of a network such as GPPAC is not the sum of its parts, but the interaction among its parts. Consequently, much of GPPAC's added value lies in the relationships among its members and contributing to the work each one is doing. Third, outcome mapping focuses on outcomes that can be the actions of key social actors that GPPAC helped *prevent* from happening, as well as those that GPPAC influenced to happen (Aulin & Scheers, 2012).

For the 2007–2010 Work Plan, GPPAC used outcome mapping to formulate *outcome challenges* for its five global programs.⁵ These objectives presented what the social actors that GPPAC aimed to influence to change would be doing differently, and how, when, and where they would be doing these things, by 2010. A distinction was made between *internal* outcome challenges (related to the GPPAC actors) and *external* outcome challenges (related to actors outside of the network that GPPAC was trying to influence). GPPAC also agreed on up to 15 *progress markers*⁶ for each outcome challenge per global program, and agreed to monitor progress on these markers by using a customized version of the outcome-mapping monitoring journals. By 2008, however, Goele realized that progress markers and outcome mapping's monitoring journals were too cumbersome for the network.⁷ Nonetheless, GPPAC desperately needed to track what it was achieving in order to be accountable to donors, as well as to improve performance. This led Goele to ask what today we recognize was a developmental evaluation question: What monitoring and evaluation tool would be compatible with outcome mapping, but would

⁵An *outcome challenge* is a goal in outcome mapping that describes the *ideal* changes in the behavior, relationships, activities, and/or actions of the actor the program is trying to influence. An outcome challenge is visionary and describes what the intervention will achieve if it is very successful. For example:

The Network Program intends to see autonomous GPPAC Regional Secretariats functioning as the heart of the Global Partnership, taking initiative and leadership in driving regional GPPAC processes, and actively shaping the global agenda and processes. The Regional Secretariat will be hosted by an organization in the region actively engaged in conflict prevention and peace building that has the capacity and institutional infrastructure to coordinate and administer the regional network, fundraise for and facilitate implementation of the Global and Regional Work Plans in the region, facilitate processes embedded in local realities that foster ownership of GPPAC in the region, and interact with the broader GPPAC network—nationally, globally, and other regions in the Global Partnership.

⁶*Progress markers* are a set of graduated (“expect, like, and love to see”) indicators of changed behaviors for the subject of an outcome challenge that focus on the depth or quality of change. For the GPPAC outcome cited in footnote 5, the network *expected* that by 2007 its Regional Secretariats would “fundraise and acquire the necessary resources (financial, skilled human resources and office) to implement the Regional Work Plan.” GPPAC would *like to see* the Regional Secretariats “planning, monitoring and evaluating the regional process including regular reporting,” and would *love to see* them “facilitating credible national and regional processes through which National Focal Points are established and Regional Steering Group members are selected (transparent and inclusive processes).”

⁷Eventually GPPAC would conclude that making a full-fledged outcome-mapping strategic plan (*intentional design*) was too time- and money-consuming, and that the actual benefits would be minimal. In a network where spaces to meet and discuss planning are limited, and the context is rapidly changing, planning has to be kept light. GPPAC members now mainly focus on developing and agreeing on common outcome challenges and strategies. See Aulin and Scheers (2012).

encourage (if not ensure) the participation of voluntary, autonomous, and very busy informants in identifying and reporting the outcomes they were achieving, both intended and especially unintended?

To pursue an answer, Goele hired Ricardo⁸ in 2007 to develop a baseline study of the network-building program (Wilson-Grau, 2007), and from 2009 onward to support the ongoing innovation of the methodology. Although neither of us explicitly talked of our engagement as an exercise in developmental evaluation, with hindsight we realized that it turned out to be the beginning of long-term developmental evaluation support for the ongoing development of the GPPAC network and especially of its PM&E system.

Introducing Outcome Harvesting for Evaluation

In late 2008, Goele decided to lead a Mid-Term Review of the 2006–2010 strategic plan, with support from Ricardo who had continued to contribute to GPPAC’s understanding of the complex challenges of monitoring and evaluating its work (Wilson-Grau, 2008). The overarching review question that GPPAC decided should guide the collection of data was to be this: “To what extent were GPPAC’s activities contributing to strategically important outcomes?” We were to focus on internal and external outcomes achieved by GPPAC regions and working groups in 2006–2008. Therefore, we seized this opportunity also to explore an alternative tool for monitoring and evaluating the work of GPPAC.

Independently of GPPAC, Ricardo and his coevaluators had been developing an instrument over the previous 3 years that would eventually be known as *outcome harvesting*. This is a tool inspired and informed by outcome mapping, which he had used to track and assess the performance and results of international social change networks similar to GPPAC, as well as the programs of the Dutch development funding agency Hivos (whose policies were similar to those of GPPAC’s donors). The essence of the tool was to focus on outcomes as the indicators of progress; it constituted, as the UN Development Programme (2013) came to describe it, “an evaluation approach that—unlike some evaluation methods—does not measure progress towards predetermined outcomes, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.” For the GPPAC Mid-Term Review (Scheers & Wilson-Grau, 2009), Goele acted as an internal evaluator and Ricardo as an external evaluator to apply the principles of what would become a six-step tool, although at the time we did not refer to the process as *outcome harvesting*.

We defined *outcomes* as the changes in the behavior of social actors (*boundary partners*, in outcome-mapping language) that GPPAC influenced but did not control. In recognition of the uncertainty and dynamism generated by complexity, these changes could be expected or unexpected, as well as positive or negative. GPPAC’s contribution to these changes could be small or large, direct or indirect.

⁸Ricardo was having a similar experience introducing outcome mapping into the Global Water Partnership (www.gwp.org).

In addition to formulating the outcome, we briefly formulated its significance and the way in which GPPAC contributed to the change.

As the name implies, at the core of outcome harvesting is the collection of data. Between March and September 2009, Goele and Ricardo engaged every GPPAC region and program manager through email, Skype calls, or personal interviews—including field visits to central Asia, eastern and central Africa, and South Asia—to help them identify and formulate the most significant outcomes. In total, 14 GPPAC regions participated in the harvest.

In the light of GPPAC's uses for the outcomes, and in recognition of people's limited time, we asked each region or working group to identify up to five outcomes that they considered to be the most significant in 2006–2008. The idea was to have a representative sampling and not an exhaustive inventory of outcomes achieved, simply because working retrospectively would make that exercise too time-consuming.

The outcomes were of two types:

1. *Internal outcomes*: demonstrated changes in the actions of GPPAC members that strengthened and developed their collective capacity to achieve GPPAC's purpose. These outcomes enhanced meaningful collaboration among members, the functionality of network secretariats, and the improvement of GPPAC members' own practices. They were (and are) important bricks in building a strong network capable of influencing external actors.

2. *External outcomes*: similarly demonstrated changes in individuals, groups, or organizations outside the GPPAC network that represented significant contributions to conflict prevention and peace building.

The GPPAC members identified a potential outcome and then did the following:

- *Formulated the outcome*: Who did what that was new or different? Specifically, they described who changed; what changed in their behavior, relationships, activities, or actions; and when and where this occurred.

- *Described its significance*: They briefly explained why the outcome was important for GPPAC. The challenge was to contextualize the outcome so that a user of the findings would understand why the outcome was important for conflict prevention or peace building.

- *Described how GPPAC contributed*: The members indicated why they considered the outcome a result—partially or totally, directly or indirectly, intentionally or not—of GPPAC's activities.

In the end, we harvested 68 outcomes (an average of 3.3 for each of the 14 regions reporting); the number per region varied from 1 to 11. (See Exhibit 10.2 for an example of an outcome.) The variation was due to different factors. Generally, regions where the GPPAC network is not strong or not fully operational reported fewer outcomes. Also, people reported the changes that were foremost in their minds, and these tended to be the most recent outcomes or those that were

EXHIBIT 10.2**Example of a GPPAC Outcome**

Description: In 2008, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC) incorporated civil society organizations' recommendations regarding the importance of accountability and human rights training for the security services in its semiannual review of peacebuilding in Burundi.

Significance: The review is a valuable tool for civil society to encourage both the Burundian government and its international partners to attach conditions to their technical and resource support to the security services, particularly the intelligence service, to address ongoing human rights abuses. (The recommendations concerned human rights abuses in Burundi in 2007–2008.) As a result of the UNPBC's recommendations, international actors pledged support for security sector reform. This fact demonstrates the rapid response capacity of the civil society organizations and their ability to speak with one voice, as well as the recognition by the UNPBC of the organizations' role in the country's peace-building process.

Contribution of GPPAC: GPPAC member WFM-IGP (based in New York), along with the Biraturaba Association (the GPPAC national focal point in Burundi), organized briefings for the UNPBC with Burundi-based civil society organizations and international civil society experts on Burundi, followed up by a position paper and lobbying aimed at the 2008 draft report of the UNPBC. The added value of GPPAC was in connecting the New York UN arena with the local and national level in Burundi. While channeling the voices from local organizations in Burundi strengthened WFM-IGP's advocacy in New York, the Biraturaba Association and its Burundi network were able to directly access the policy makers in the international arena.

most memorable. The quality of the outcomes also varied: The average length of the formulation of the outcomes was just under one single-spaced page and averaged 450 words each, but many if not most were poorly written. One standard criterion for an outcome in outcome harvesting is that the formulation be sufficiently specific and measurable to be verifiable. In the course of the review, GPPAC decided that identifying the sources would suffice, although some outcomes were verified with independent, knowledgeable third parties. For example, for the UN Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC) outcome in Exhibit 10.2, we spoke with the head of the UNPBC in Burundi. In the light of the Mid-Term Review's process use to develop GPPAC staff capacity in identifying outcomes, it was more important to involve people in formulating outcomes even if these were imperfect than it was to burden them with crafting sounder ones. Thus, for example, some outcomes did not have specific dates, although it was understood that they occurred some time between 2006 and 2009.

The First Strategic Innovations Supported by Outcome Harvesting

The “proof of the pudding” of outcome harvesting as a developmental evaluation tool is that the process and findings usefully answer a developmental evaluation

question. The review process demonstrated that outcome harvesting was a compatible and a viable means to monitor and evaluate what GPPAC actors were achieving throughout the network. More specifically, to what extent did the 68 outcomes answer the review questions in a manner useful for the ongoing development of GPPAC? The strategic decisions GPPAC took on the basis of information from the review are outlined in Exhibit 10.3.

All these strategic decisions were incorporated in the GPPAC Strategic Plan for 2011–2015. In addition, GPPAC members reflected on the outcomes gathered through the Mid-Term Review. Under Goele's guidance, they looked at what had emerged for their specific program and discussed the next steps for their GPPAC work.

The process, however, highlighted important structural challenges for PM&E in GPPAC. First, time is perhaps the most precious nonrenewable resource of a network such as GPPAC. This Mid-Term Review took twice as much time as planned because GPPAC members did not deliver their outcomes within the planned time frame. In part, this was because GPPAC's peace-building activists had higher priorities than M&E. Thus, although we worked with informants in crafting their outcomes, their limited time was a major constraint. Second, and also related to time, informants tended to remember and report the most important and most recent outcomes, to the detriment of smaller, incipient, and earlier changes. Third, when an outcome was a result of GPPAC's influencing change in a social actor with whom the network was collaborating, informants were hesitant because they were concerned not to be perceived as claiming they had influenced a behavioral change in someone else. Fourth, there was an issue of political sensitivity because GPPAC's advocacy and campaigning were often ongoing at the time when outcomes were harvested.

A different complication was language: Informants were formulating outcomes in English, which for the majority was their second, third, or fourth language. Also, the harvesting process revealed a communication problem independent of the informants' native language: Regardless of variables such as education, profession, occupation, and available time, most people are not comfortable in expressing themselves in writing even in their native language, and few do so well.

Further Integrating Outcome Harvesting into the GPPAC PM&E System

Through the Mid-Term Review and follow-up by Goele, the essence of outcome harvesting had been woven into the evolving GPPAC PM&E system. As Goele says, "Instead of reporting on the outcome-mapping progress markers, the Global and Regional Secretariats were charged from 2009 onward to harvest outcomes: report every year on changes in social actors, their significance for conflict prevention and how GPPAC contributed." Also, due to the high turnover in GPPAC staff, the network implemented ongoing training of new staff to identify and communicate outcomes and how they were achieved. Goele, as the PM&E coordinator, coached

EXHIBIT 10.3**GPPAC Strategic Decisions Informed by the 2006–2010 Mid-Term Review**

Review findings	Strategic decisions
GPPAC's outcomes in 2006–2008 mainly contributed to the mission of “building a new international consensus,” “promoting peace building,” and most notably “pursuing joint action to prevent violent conflict.” It was too early to conclude what GPPAC members were contributing to the eventual impact that GPPAC envisioned.	1. Resist pressure from stakeholders to describe in detail the “impact” GPPAC will achieve. That is, GPPAC will not pretend to document the fundamental changes in the lives of people that result from the network's contributions to dealing with violent conflict, and specifically to a “shift from reaction to prevention.” GPPAC will be accountable for contributing to changes that are upstream from sustainable development and human security.
GPPAC programs were generating more outcomes than were the regional activities.	2. Intensify the support to regional activities, including funding, but avoid the Global Secretariat's being seen simply as a donor. 3. Establish a better connection between the programs and the regional activities.
The contribution of GPPAC to outcomes was through GPPAC-funded activities, but also from members' being part of a global network.	4. Define networkwide criteria for what constitutes a “GPPAC activity” versus members' other conflict prevention and peace-building activities.
A third of the outcomes demonstrated the motivation of GPPAC members to drive the network by getting together to exchange and collaborate, take on leadership roles, and carry forward activities without help from the Global or Regional Secretariats.	5. Develop criteria for regional affiliate sustainability goals as a means to decide when and where current GPPAC activities are no longer necessary.
GPPAC was suffering from the common tension in networks around the right mix of centralized and decentralized decision making, fund raising/disbursement of funds, and responsibility for implementation of activities.	6. Set up a Program Steering Committee. 7. Allocate more resources to translation. 8. Define mutually agreed-upon criteria for allocating funding, and strictly and transparently enforce their application.
GPPAC was generating outputs and outcomes through its regions and programs, with, however, significant differences in quantity and quality. Nonetheless, although this diversity was expected in a dynamic network, the problems were not minor.	9. Give more resources to network strengthening.

them all and supervised the development of the system. During regular monitoring and learning meetings, the program managers and network members discussed outcomes. They reflected on trends and patterns in the outcomes, discussed next steps, and formulated suggestions for strategic decisions. The Program Steering Committee that was set up as a result of the Mid-Term Review used this input to make the nine strategic decisions presented in Exhibit 10.3.

In spite of the Global Secretariat's training and coaching, however, by 2011 it was clear that inconsistency in the reporting of outcomes continued to be problematic across the network. A useful harvest of outcomes from beginning to end continued to consume a great deal of both clock and calendar time. Furthermore, in complex and dynamic circumstances, the usefulness of outcomes has a very short half-life. Not only must they be harvested in a timely manner, but also in GPPAC, the right way to learn systematically from the outcomes through periodic monitoring meetings was still emerging.

Throughout the network, monitoring meetings consumed much time and many resources. People would rather spend money on a content meeting than on discussing outcomes. Consequently, the next developmental evaluation question GPPAC posed was this: "To what extent is GPPAC overcoming its weaknesses and building on its strengths to develop as an international network?"

A new opportunity arose that same year to pursue this question systematically and to hone the outcome harvesting tool as it had been integrated into GPPAC's PM&E system. The GPPAC PM&E cycle included an external evaluation of GPPAC's program. Goele contracted with Ricardo and a coevaluator⁹ to carry out this major 2006–2011 evaluation, to provide substantial evidence of what outcomes GPPAC had achieved and how.¹⁰ Although this exercise was going to be used for accountability with donors and would therefore serve the purpose of a summative evaluation, Goele made it very clear that Ricardo and his colleague were evaluating a network and a program that were in development and constant innovation. It was above all a part of GPPAC's own monitoring and learning cycle; the process and findings, like those of the Mid-Term Review, would serve the development of GPPAC too. Consequently, Goele avoided calling it a *summative evaluation*, and today we all consider it to have been a *developmental evaluation*.

For the evaluation terms of reference and the evaluation design, Goele and the evaluators agreed to use outcome harvesting, which GPPAC had started using in 2008 as described above.¹¹ By 2011, Ricardo had evolved outcome harvesting from a simple data collection tool into a six-step developmental evaluation *inquiry*

⁹Natalia Ortiz was the coevaluator. She is an independent consultant, based in Colombia, who advised GPPAC on its use of outcome mapping.

¹⁰Since both Natalia and Ricardo had been working as consultants to support the development of the GPPAC PM&E mechanisms, the ISG weighed the propriety of their serving as external evaluators. The ISG decided that the danger of conflict of interest (they would be evaluating in part the results of a management system they had helped create) was outweighed by the importance of their understanding of GPPAC and its evolution over the years in a rapidly changing environment.

¹¹GPPAC ISG members developed a systems map for GPPAC globally under the guidance of Peter Woodrow, during their meeting in Buenos Aires in 2008.

framework. (For more on inquiry frameworks, see Patton, 2011, chap. 8.) Thus Goele and the evaluators agreed to use this full-fledged tool to design the evaluation. This was in addition to using it as the instrument with which to collect data on outcomes, which since 2009 had increasingly been the established practice in GPPAC.

What this meant practically was that while the 2006–2011 evaluation (Ortiz & Wilson-Grau, 2012) was the responsibility of external consultants, it was focused on the needs of the *primary intended users* (see Patton, 2012), and it was participatory.

The evaluators' role was that of facilitators in a professional, systematic, data-based joint inquiry with GPPAC actors globally and regionally, rather than as detached external experts wielding "objective" measuring sticks.

As noted above, the full-fledged outcome harvesting inquiry framework consists of six steps. (Goele and Ricardo had followed only the third step in the Mid-Term Review.) A description of these steps and their use follows.

1. Design the Outcome Harvest

The primary intended users of the 2006–2011 evaluation findings were the GPPAC board, management, and global and regional staffs. They were to *use* the findings of the evaluation to adapt and strengthen the 2011–2015 strategic plan. There were two important *process uses*: (a) further developing the GPPAC PM&E system by building the capacity of staff at the global and regional levels of GPPAC to identify and formulate outcomes; and (b) stimulating a learning environment in the GPPAC network. Furthermore, the broader audience for the evaluation included GPPAC donors, especially the Dutch and Austrian governments.

In outcome harvesting, the questions that guide the next five steps are derived from the users' principal uses; they must be *actionable* questions (i.e., ones that enable users to make decisions or take actions). For the GPPAC evaluation, Goele and the evaluators agreed on four questions. We focus here on the one that involved an assessment of the network-strengthening strategy of GPPAC:

Strategic effectiveness—What patterns or features did the evaluators find in the way GPPAC contributed to its outcomes, and what did those patterns suggest about how effectively GPPAC works?¹²

¹²The other three questions were as follows:

- GPPAC's results—The impact of GPPAC's outcomes. How did the behavior, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with which GPPAC works directly change? What are the most successful pathways of change?
- *Theory of change*—To what extent do the 2006–2011 outcomes support the assumptions in GPPAC's rationale for its strategies, the social actors it aims to influence, and the outcomes to which it aims to contribute?
- *GPPAC's current performance*—In the light of what GPPAC members consider is the level of performance of, on the regional level, networks, steering groups, and secretariats, and on the global level, the ISG, board, Program Steering Committee, working groups, and Global Secretariat, what areas should be strengthened in the next 5 years?

2. Gather Data and Draft Outcome Descriptions

As explained earlier in the chapter, both GPPAC programs and the environment in which they operate are highly complex, open, and dynamic. Faced with this evaluation challenge, a linear, cause–effect mindset of comparing what was done and achieved to what was planned would not have been useful. Therefore, without concern for what had been planned as activities, outputs, or outcomes, Ricardo and his coevaluator simply identified and formulated approximately 250 potential outcomes extracted from the 51 reports for 2006–2011 on file with the GPPAC Global Secretariat, including the Mid-Term Review.

3. Engage Change Agents in Formulating Outcome Descriptions

The evaluators then communicated virtually with the GPPAC Global and Regional Secretariats to support them in reviewing our draft formulations and answer questions aimed at turning them into verifiable outcomes. Paul Kosterink played an important role in this process by facilitating the participation of the 15 staff members in the Global Secretariat. Those GPPAC change agents consulted with others within the network with knowledge of what had been achieved and how. They suggested additional outcomes. Working iteratively with the evaluators, together they whittled down the outcomes to 208.

By the end of April 2012, the evaluators had a set of solid outcomes that represented a considerable quantitative improvement over those of the Mid-Term Review (see Exhibit 10.4). Overall, there was a threefold increase in outcomes harvested. With the exception of two regional affiliates, all regions appreciably increased the number of outcomes registered. Equally important, the length of each outcome was slashed by more than half, to an average of 215 words. The evaluators, instead of compiling them into what would have been 75 pages of outcomes, stored them in a Drupal database so that the information could be more usefully managed.

Qualitatively, the evaluation deepened and broadened the harvest of outcomes, which, in contrast to a sizable number of the Mid-Term Review outcomes, were concise enough to be quantitatively and qualitatively measurable. Each outcome was sufficiently specific that someone without specialized subject or contextual knowledge would be able to understand and appreciate the “who, what, when, and where” of things that were being done differently. Equally important, there was a plausible relationship, a logical link, between each outcome and how GPPAC had contributed to it. That contribution was described in similarly hard and measurable terms—who did what that contributed to the outcome. The outcomes were qualitatively verifiable.

Even though the Mid-Term Review had only requested up to five outcomes from each informant for 2006–2009, and the 2006–2011 evaluation attempted to harvest *all* significant outcomes that each informant knew of since 2006, the sources of outcomes were basically the same—program managers at the Global Secretariat and regional liaison officers. Thus the increase in the number of outcomes harvested was an indicator both of improved capacity on the part of GPPAC actors to influence change and of improved reporting on outcomes.

EXHIBIT 10.4**GPPAC Outcomes**

Outcomes by source	Mid-term review	Evaluation 2006–2011
Regional Secretariats	47	165
Caucasus	1	12
Central and Eastern Africa	11	16
Central Asia	3	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	8
Middle East and North Africa	2	6
North America	2	6
Northeast Asia	4	22
South Asia	5	16
Southeast Asia	6	14
Southern Africa	3	0
The Pacific	1	18
West Africa	1	9
Western Balkans	4	31
Western CIS	2	4
Global program	21	43
Total	68	208

Note. CIS, Commonwealth of Independent States (an organization of former Soviet republics).

4. Substantiate

Evaluation in general, and identifying and formulating outcomes in particular, will always have an element of subjectivity. For example, when a person who identifies a change in another social actor is also responsible for GPPAC's activities that are intended to influence that change, there is an undeniable element of bias. Similarly, different people will have different knowledge of what happened and different perspectives on how GPPAC contributed. Therefore, outcome harvesting strives for more objectivity by providing for substantiation of outcomes in a way that enhances their understanding and credibility.

Initially, the evaluators proposed to check on the veracity of the evaluation's outcomes through a random sampling of independent third parties with knowledge of each outcome. In the end, however, in consultation with GPPAC, the evaluators decided against substantiating the outcomes. These were deemed to be sufficiently accurate for the uses of the evaluation, for these reasons:

- a. The outcomes were reported in documents produced by the GPPAC activists who contributed to the outcomes.
- b. All informants understood that the external evaluators could verify their outcomes.
- c. Two or more GPPAC program and regional staff members responsible for contributing to the outcomes cross-checked 177 of the 208 outcomes. An additional 25 incomplete outcomes¹³ were excluded from the data set.
- d. The evaluators examined all 208 final outcomes to ensure that there was a plausible rationale for what was reported as achieved and the reported contribution of GPPAC.

Furthermore, although the outcomes were not exhaustive of GPPAC's achievements in 2006–2011, GPPAC and the evaluators also considered that they were representative of the network's most significant achievements, and therefore a solid basis for decision making and accountability to donors.

5. Analyze and Interpret

The evaluators also involved the program managers in classifying the outcomes (with their critical oversight, of course). They placed the classified outcomes in the Drupal database in order to be able to make sense of them, analyze and interpret the data, and provide evidence-based answers to the useful harvesting questions.

GPPAC's stakeholders' interest went beyond aggregating outcomes; the stakeholders wanted to understand the process of change the network was supporting. This was one of the values of outcome harvesting for this evaluation.

For example, with the GPPAC Western Balkans regional network, the evaluators compiled the majority of its 28 outcomes into a two-and-a-half-page story of how this network had influenced peace education over the years 2008–2012.¹⁴ In Exhibit 10.5, we extract a single year, 2010, from that story. (The numbers in brackets in this exhibit refer to the outcomes.)

Mixed-Methods Interpretation of External Outcomes

Outcome harvesting's *analysis* function is about aggregating outcomes into clusters, processes, patterns, and stories of change. The *interpretation* function is to explain what the outcomes, and the stories, mean. In the GPPAC evaluation, the interpretation involved answering the evaluation questions. The relevant question for the Western Balkans was this: To what extent did the 28 outcomes contribute

¹³That is, a change in a social actor was identified, but it was unclear whether it was an output or an outcome, or GPPAC's contribution was unclear.

¹⁴Even this is a partial story—what the GPPAC regional network in the Western Balkans achieved in terms of *outcomes*. The full story would include the *contribution* of GPPAC to each outcome, as well as its *significance*.

EXHIBIT 10.5**One Year in an Outcome Story**

In 2010, practitioners-teachers and Ministry of Education representatives from the Western Balkans and Western Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) regions wrote articles that they collected into a booklet, which the Development Center for Information and Research in the Ukraine published. The booklet consists of various methodological materials on peace education (PE)—experts' texts either on voicing the need for PE or on certain topics related to PE. [131] This same year, the Serbian Deputy Minister of Education committed to follow-up on recommendations on the integration of PE programs outlined in the Declaration on Joint Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations in the Field of Peace Education (signed in 2009). [124]

In July 2010, the Montenegrin assembly incorporated school mediation into the new law on education. Article 9b of the law highly recommends school mediation as a tool for conflict resolution. [269] And then in September, the Ministries of Education from Serbia and Montenegro officially supported the GPPAC-sponsored art competition by sending letters encouraging both teachers and pupils to participate in the competition. [139]

to change in the willingness and ability to act of the different actors playing roles in the Western Balkans conflict prevention system? For this question, the evaluators used a complementary inquiry framework—*complex systems change* (Patton, 2011, pp. 240–243).

During Ricardo's visit to the Western Balkans GPPAC affiliate in Montenegro, Regional Steering Group members agreed with him that the system they were working to influence had three dimensions: the components of the system and their *interrelationships*; the different *perspectives* on those interrelationships; and the *boundaries* determining what components made up the system and which interrelationships and perspectives were taken into account (see Exhibit 10.6).¹⁵

These dimensions would vary, of course, from system to system. In the Western Balkans system, the components might be the same as in other regions of the world, but the interrelationships between, for example, civil society and governments would necessarily be quite different. In addition, the perspectives on the boundaries—on who was in and who was out of the system—would vary.

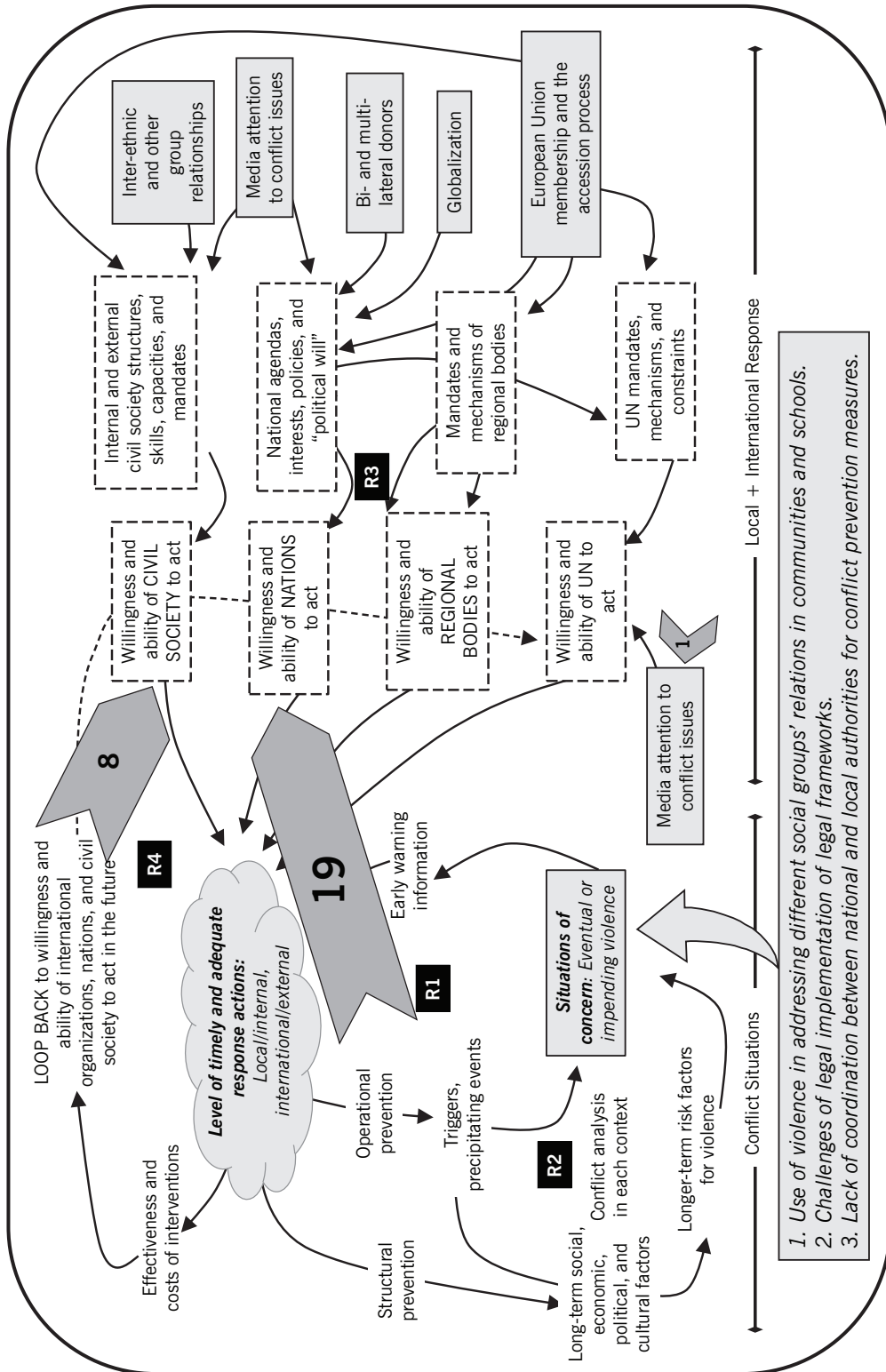
The 28 outcomes of GPPAC in the Western Balkans tell an impressive story of how a group of dedicated women¹⁶ influenced change at two tipping points in the

¹⁵See Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011, pp. 18–23). The idea of the systems map was based on work by Peter Woodrow of the CDA Collaborative Learning Project, Boston, Massachusetts, together with GPPAC members in 2008.

¹⁶All but one of the RSG members are women, as are the GPPAC team members. They explain that the absence of men is not due to the fact that men in the region have both historically and recently been warriors, as an outsider with superficial knowledge of the region might assume. Rather, the women believe that by and large men throughout the region have been traumatized by war and by the reality that no one was a victor, since NATO imposed peace by force of arms.

EXHIBIT 10.6

Complex Systems Change: The Dimensions of the System in the Western Balkans GPPAC Affiliate



system: the willingness and ability of nations and civil society to act. Two-thirds of the outcomes related to state actors, and the majority were focused on influencing the national and municipal schools and educators. (In Exhibit 10.6, the numbers in arrows refer to outcomes.) Intertwined with 5 years of influencing state actors to make changes in their policies and practices that would represent a more significant process of peace education in the Western Balkans, the GPPAC regional network influenced complementary changes in civil society and one change in the media. In other words, this successful, ongoing story of introducing peace education, including mediation, into the Western Balkans required working simultaneously to influence civil society, the education system, the media, and government.

Internal Outcomes as Evidence of Network Strengthening

Since 2006, GPPAC had made great efforts to consolidate as a true network, including a restructuring of investment to strengthen the regional networks. Notably, in 2009 GPPAC received the ISO 9001 quality management certification given by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service, the sole national accreditation body recognized by the UK government to assess, against internationally agreed-upon standards, organizations that provide certification, testing, inspection, and calibration services. To assess the degree of success, financial analysis was combined with the outcomes data. GPPAC's income between 2007 and 2010 increased by 80%, but the direct allocations to strengthen the regional networks increased by 750%. Although as a percentage of GPPAC's overall budget the investments to strengthen the regional networks were in low single digits, the rate of increase was greater than the increase in investments in the global programs or the Global Secretariat (Exhibit 10.7).

EXHIBIT 10.7

Direct Allocations to Regions for Network Strengthening, 2007–2011

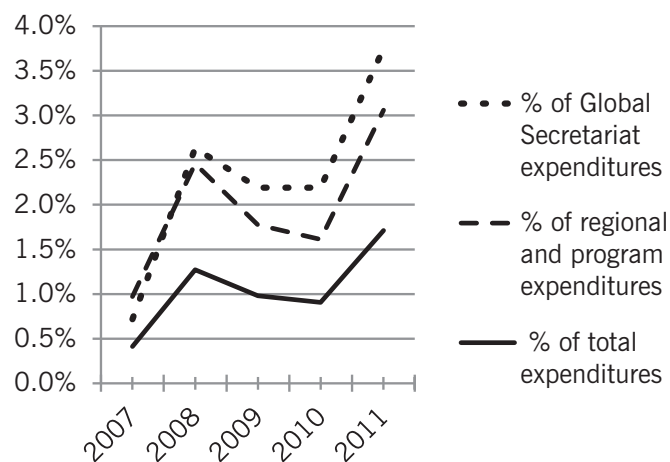
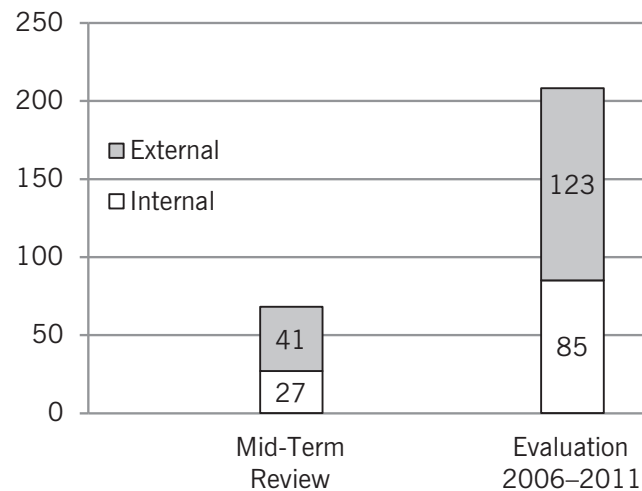


EXHIBIT 10.8**Internal and External Outcomes, Mid-Term Review and 2006–2011 Evaluation**

In 2006–2011, GPPAC progressively consolidated both its internal structure and its internal functions; it also improved the practices of its members through greater exchange of knowledge and experience and more collaboration between them for lobbying, advocacy, and actions. The increased investment in strengthening the regions corresponded to the hefty increase in internal as well as external outcomes harvested during the evaluation (Exhibit 10.8).

In sum, the use of outcome harvesting enabled the evaluators to harvest outcomes from a sufficiently diverse group of GPPAC staff members to ensure that the findings (a) were sufficiently representative of the most significant changes achieved by GPPAC, and (b) would permit evidence-based answers to the evaluation question of GPPAC’s effectiveness in 2006–2011.

6. Support Use of Findings

The last step in an outcome-harvesting process is to raise issues that have come up in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; to propose evidence-based points for discussion to the users; and to support them in making use of the findings. In collaboration with Ricardo and his coevaluator, Paul prepared the workshop to discuss the findings and follow-up of the evaluation with the board and Program Steering Committee. In the GPPAC evaluation, half of the recommended points for discussion were developmental evaluation questions for the continuing development of the network’s PM&E system:

- a. How can GPPAC ensure that everyone who is accountable for outcomes and everyone who must use them give due priority to PM&E?
- b. Since complexity means that at the moment of planning, much is uncertain and unpredictable because the cause–effect relationship between what actors do (activities and outputs) and what they will achieve (outcomes) is unknown, what is the right balance of involving people in GPPAC in monitoring and evaluation versus planning?
- c. What alternative ways should GPPAC consider to identify outcomes that will ensure (i) harvesting the significant outcomes in as close to real time as possible; and (ii) processing them in a manner that involves analyzing and interpreting them so that they are available to inform decision making in a timely fashion?

As with the Mid-Term Review, the usefulness of the evaluation’s findings to GPPAC was evidenced by the strategic decisions GPPAC’s leadership took to further strengthen the network (see Exhibit 10.9).

Supporting Ongoing Strategic Innovation

In sum, through the use of outcome harvesting, we were able to serve a developmental evaluation function of introducing innovations into the GPPAC PM&E system, and thus contributed to developing GPPAC as a social change network. Between 2009 and 2012, Ricardo served as an external developmental evaluator to support Goele and Paul as internal GPPAC developmental evaluators. Goele and then Paul were able to influence a change in the network’s emphasis from extensive planning to ongoing tracking of and learning from outcomes, through interaction among a variety of GPPAC actors. This is a process Paul continues. We used outcome harvesting as an inquiry framework, formulating what we eventually came to see as developmental evaluation questions, and then generating outcomes to answer them. Goele and Paul worked with GPPAC leaders and staff through an interactive learning process to use the findings to improve their policies and procedures.

In addition to the possibilities and advantages of using outcome harvesting to generate real-time evidence, this case shows that learning from M&E findings was a key to GPPAC’s development. The use of such findings needs to be planned and organized carefully. It was the close cooperation between Goele and Paul (representing GPPAC and working internally) with Ricardo (working externally) that enabled GPPAC to overhaul its PM&E system and generate useful and timely learning to enhance its development. Today outcome harvesting and the internal developmental evaluation function continue to support the network as it copes with an uncertain and dynamic environment for conflict prevention and peace building.

In conclusion, through a multiyear developmental evaluation process, GPPAC learned that outcome harvesting led to a variety of significant advantages. As Paul summarizes these advantages, the network was able to develop a PM&E system that enables GPPAC to do the following:

EXHIBIT 10.9**GPPAC Strategic Decisions Informed by the 2006–2011 Evaluation**

2006–2011 Evaluation findings	Strategic decisions 2012–2014*
<p>In spite of considerable improvement in some regions, outcome reporting—and learning from the outcomes—continued to be deficient.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest human and financial resources in harvesting regional outcomes through direct interaction and dialogue, rather than through written reports only. 2. Store outcomes in a web-based GPPAC Monitoring Information System.
<p>GPPAC was influencing four of the six external social actors it had targeted: state actors, civil society, traditional and new media, and the UN. The business sector had not been influenced, and it was too early to expect outcomes for the regional intergovernmental organizations (RIGOs).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Recognize that the business sector is not a priority for GPPAC in the foreseeable future. 4. Give special attention to monitoring GPPAC outcomes influenced by the RIGOs.
<p>The evaluators found sufficient evidence to question, but not to conclude, whether GPPAC was overstretching organizationally and in its programming.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The network took up this finding and translated it into two related questions: “Are we spreading ourselves too thin?” and “Should we focus on a few common issues?” These were further addressed in strategic planning meetings of the network in 2012 and 2013. An increased focus is noticeable in the 2014 operational plans, and in the process to formulate the next 5-year strategic plan.
<p>Among the consequences of the limited outcomes was that the evaluators could not conclude whether GPPAC’s theory of change was validated. The strategies were working; the targeted social actors were being influenced; expected and unexpected outcomes were being achieved; there was evidence that GPPAC was influencing the system of interacting actors and factors that is the source of conflict and an obstacle to peace building. Nonetheless, there was not enough information about outcomes achieved over time to assess in a conclusive way whether the assumptions—and they are the heart—of the theory of change were well founded.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Define individual theories of change for the priority issues and processes in the strategic plan for 2016–2020. 7. Support regional networks to formulate theories of change for their regional priorities.

(continued)

*By the GPPAC board and Program Steering Committee, unless otherwise stated.

2006–2011 Evaluation findings	Strategic decisions 2012–2014*
<p>GPPAC’s achievements have principally been in three areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Influencing the policies and practices of state actors that promise to change the practice of reaction to prevention of conflicts. Mobilizing civil society (organizations in particular, but the general public as well) to engage with state actors and the UN. Developing the GPPAC network on the global and regional levels. 	<p>8. Decide that linking local, regional, and global levels should be one of the leading strategic principles for the network.</p>
<p>GPPAC’s four strategies were being effectively applied. They were influencing outcomes. For some of the substrategies, however, either it appeared premature to try to understand (because they were so new), or there was insufficient evidence to understand how some strategies might complement and reinforce each other in achieving the same outcome.</p>	<p>9. The global programs and the 15 regions reviewed their strategic progress in 2013 on the basis of harvested outcomes from the PM&E system. This new Mid-Term Review was set up to be “light” and participative, with the emphasis on reflection, learning, and adapting the current strategic plans, and on formulating new priorities where necessary.</p>
<p>GPPAC’s performance as a network itself was better than good, and reasonable for a young, international network. There were numerous suggestions identified for ways to improve; most were obvious, but quite a few were novel.</p>	<p>10. Conclude that GPPAC is “on the right track,” and yet “we can and should improve” and take next steps in the process to become an experiential, self-learning organization.</p>

- Identify achievements more quickly and more comprehensively.
- Enhance learning about success and failure, rather than serving as a mechanism of operational or budgetary control.
- Appraise collectively the progress in the development of the network itself.
- Serve as a mechanism for accountability to internal and external stakeholders.
- Preserve the historical memory of the common processes that gave birth to and sustain the advocacy network.

Equally important is GPPAC’s recognition that it makes much more sense to focus on what is emerging than on what is planned; thus the network devotes less time to the planning and more time to the monitoring and evaluation in PM&E. Also, ongoing annual developmental evaluation has demonstrated itself to be more useful to the network than conventional formative and summative evaluation. Outcome harvesting has proven to be suitable for evaluating and learning from complex change processes. And, lastly, GPPAC members and management have found that they can be accountable for results that lie between what they do and the conflict prevention and peace-building impact to which they ultimately aim to contribute.

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