SAS$^2$ Evaluation Report

Ricardo Ramirez Communication Consulting

Guelph, Ontario

May 2008
Executive summary

The objectives of this report are to assess the impacts of the SAS\(^2\) project on the research or consultative practices of collaborators, and to assess how the approach has been disseminated through training, publication, and collaboration. This report is primarily directed to the SAS\(^2\) authors, to provide them with an outsider’s view on both achievements and challenges, and to situate these in the wider context of participatory action research.

SAS\(^2\) is a holistic social assessment system that combines stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and ownership through collaborative inquiry and negotiated action plans. The theory of change behind SAS\(^2\) emphasizes process over product. The approach challenges the linear approach that is prevalent in conventional development planning. From a theoretical perspective, SAS\(^2\) expresses a constructivist paradigm; from a development one, it is coherent with Another Development.

As the second phase of SAS\(^2\) comes to an end, I have found evidence of four key contributions: it has provided people with new capacities, supported project proposals designed with SAS\(^2\) tools, developed case studies that report on the way the tools are being applied; and supported the evolution of projects. There is a small but growing body of evidence that points to its impacts on people’s livelihoods. SAS\(^2\) has achieved a “proof of concept” in the eyes of the practitioners interviewed. Many are very pleased with the power and potential of this approach. Those with previous and relevant experience in participatory action research said that SAS\(^2\) is more structured, more rigorous, and better able to build capacity among partners.

SAS\(^2\) is a process-oriented approach that is learned through apprenticeship. As the SAS\(^2\) authors develop a strategy for broader dissemination, challenges arise as to how to do this. These challenges include: determining the criteria for selecting the most promising contexts to focus energies on; differentiating the audiences and targeting training and publication efforts accordingly; and making it explicit what can be achieved, by whom, through each level of training.

Despite these challenges, I appreciate SAS\(^2\) as a relevant approach in the context of Another Development. Approaches like SAS\(^2\) will play an increasingly central role as development shifts its focus from *products* (e.g. production technologies) to *processes* of generating collective knowledge (e.g. understanding and negotiating production objectives while adapting to environmental climate change impacts). Approaches like SAS\(^2\) lend themselves to innovation and capacity development with the active involvement all actors and their skill base.

Among all users, SAS\(^2\) was praised for how it embodies a constructivist approach, one that shines when participants cogenerate knowledge. The power of this approach is that it enables dialogue. Interviewees who are involved with academic institutions underscored the significant challenge of introducing SAS\(^2\) into the “Ivory Tower.” The case of the UNA in Honduras is noteworthy—SAS\(^2\) went from being a project to becoming part and
parcel of the university’s commitment to integrate teaching with research and extension work. The NGO experience of CEBEM in Bolivia is also relevant. Its efforts to change the academic world from the outside have been considerably more difficult. The forthcoming publication of a SAS² Guide may help to overcome this type of barrier.

SAS² establishes a way of doing development that challenges the status quo. It acknowledges how little is predictable. It provides ways to make flexible, negotiated adjustments as contexts change. Matching tools to context is one challenge; making the right choices under time constraints is even more demanding. Like other constructivist approaches, SAS² is learned through apprenticeship. Managing time and having the confidence to experiment with the tools may be the Achilles heel of the approach, something that only experience can overcome.

This challenge is not unique to SAS². Other collaborative learning approaches such as RAAKS and Collaborative Management share this challenge. Continued mentoring and developing communities of practice are avenues to increase peer-to-peer learning. The SAS² Communities of Practice remain fragile so far, but all informants believe in its potential. The accreditation approach that has been developed will increase quality control, but it may also stymie creativity; this is something that will be worth monitoring during the next phase.

As the second phase of SAS² draws to a close, one could ask, what is needed to nurture the achievements? Can the seeds that have sprouted grow on their own or do they need more watering? Practitioners in both Latin America and South Asia highlighted the importance of moving SAS² from the NGO world to government organizations as a way of increasing its coverage. Some informants felt that continued funding was needed, while others were proud to show examples of continued SAS² work without IDRC funding.

The SAS² authors compare SAS² to PRA and suggest that the former has improved over PRA in rigour and relevance. It might be better to compare SAS² not to PRA but more to RAAKS and Collaborative Learning. These approaches, along with others, shift attention to multiple perspectives, negotiation, complexity, and collaborative work. I underline that the SAS² authors have made significant advances on three fronts: the theoretical grounding of the approach, the systematic organization and testing of existing tools, and the incorporation of more and complex tools from other fields.

Several practitioners plan to introduce SAS² into the curriculum of their learning institutions. Making “service learning”¹ a practice in universities that embrace SAS² will be most relevant as a means of integrating action, research, and capacity development. Service learning is the niche that will allow academia to incorporate process-oriented methods, as long as all partners have an equal say in the design of joint projects.

Some informants expressed two concerns with SAS²: time and complexity. One informant suggested the need to package SAS² based on degrees of complexity. He suggested a continuum, starting with examples of brief, accessible SAS² events where a small number of simple tools work well.

---

¹ Service Learning refers to practical projects done by students with partners in the community.
**Recommendations**

- Guides and case studies should be developed and tested by the Ottawa team (and/or their partners) with potential users. They need to be developed with a clear sense of the audiences who will use them, the workshop context, and with explicit variations for different types of events. At the very least, they should differentiate the two major audience groups: academia versus non-governmental organizations and consultants. Guides that are made available outside of a workshop require a clear statement advising readers about the inherent limitations of such publications and the challenges of learning without immersion.

- During the November 2008 SAS² International Forum (Celebrating Dialogue), challenge participants to develop categories of users and criteria to select the most promising contexts to work in. Identify the organizations that are best positioned to embrace SAS² and those that can become trainers of others. Reflect on who is in a position to be choosy (i.e. be proactive and selectively reactive) and who is not, and the risks and opportunities involved in becoming more selective. These reactive and proactive criteria will be different across each community of practice. Consider developing a competitive fund, similar to CURA, where community-university partnerships that include service learning would be awarded more points.

- Seek a balance between the cognitive and the affective sides of learning. Create incentives and mechanisms to collect more narrative accounts of what people felt, did, and learned from SAS² activities. The Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology provides a structured system to categorize and select stories. An MSC exploration could be the basis for a graduate thesis.

- Communication efforts should focus on capturing examples of people demonstrating the skillful means. Once the audience understands these, it will use the tools as the mechanisms, and become less toolbox oriented. Communicate the inherent limitations of tools and frameworks.

- While SAS² builds on other methods and concepts, the SAS² “label” can lead to confusion about its identity as it hybridizes with others. Even though the second S in the name refers to Systems, the SAS² label is understood by some as a contained approach. Include a Scenarios session in the November 2008 SAS² International Forum to explore the benefits and the risks of hybridizing SAS². The focus would be on labeling, some form of temporary labeling, or no labeling at all.

- Review the variables that David Archer (Reflect) considered as seeds for success or failure (see Appendix 6); many apply to SAS². Referring to these variables—and to Chambers’—may help structure an organized exploration for the future during the November 2008 SAS² International Forum. The exploration should also clarify those decisions and actions that should be held by Carleton from those that need to be country-specific. When decisions and strategies vary from country-to-country, one might say that the Ottawa authors have ceased to function as a center, which is desirable.
Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ........................................................................................................................................... 2
RECOMMENDATIONS ................................................................................................................................................... 4

1. INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................................................... 6
OBJECTIVES ......................................................................................................................................................................... 6
USERS AND USES OF THIS REPORT .............................................................................................................................. 6
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS ............................................................................................................................................. 6
ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT .................................................................................................................................. 7

2. OVERALL FINDINGS ....................................................................................................................................................... 8
SAS² THEORY OF CHANGE .................................................................................................................................................. 8
STAGE OF EVOLUTION ...................................................................................................................................................... 8
ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE ................................................................................................................................................. 8
CHALLENGES ........................................................................................................................................................................ 9

3. SPECIFIC OUTCOMES .................................................................................................................................................. 10
3.1 CONTRIBUTION OF SAS² TO PARTNERS’ RESEARCH AND ADVISORY PRACTICES ................................... 10
    Proof of concept from multiple testing grounds ........................................................................................................ 10
    The Achilles heel: time and confidence ...................................................................................................................... 12
3.2 HOW SAS² HAS BEEN ADAPTED AND COMBINED WITH OTHER METHODS ..................................... 13
3.3 PARTNERS’ FUTURE PLANS WITH SAS² AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ..................................... 14
    Communities of practice, mentoring and accreditation .......................................................................................... 15
    From donor dependency to changing the donor ......................................................................................................... 18
    Academic environments ............................................................................................................................................. 19
    Challenges ...................................................................................................................................................................... 20
3.4 OUTCOMES OF THE SAS² TRAINING AND PLANS FOR DISSEMINATION ..................................... 21
3.5 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF SAS² PUBLICATIONS AND TRAINING EVENTS ............ 22
    SAS² Publications .............................................................................................................................................................. 22
    Training Events ............................................................................................................................................................... 24
3.6 THE CONTRIBUTION OF SAS² TO THE FIELD OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH .................... 25

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SCENARIOS FOR PHASE 3 ....................................................................................... 28
TAPPERS AND LISTENERS .............................................................................................................................................. 28
COMMUNICATING PROCESS ........................................................................................................................................ 28
    Targeting ........................................................................................................................................................................ 29
    Story telling ................................................................................................................................................................... 30
HOW SAS² LEARNS AND EVOLVES ............................................................................................................................ 31
CARLETON UNIVERSITY VS. DECENTRALIZED EVOLUTION .................................................................................... 33

APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES ................................................................................. 35
APPENDIX 2: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED ............................................................................................................................ 36
APPENDIX 3: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED .......................................................................................................................... 37
APPENDIX 4: OTHER TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPATORY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT .................... 40
APPENDIX 5, REFLECT GLOBAL SURVEY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ................................................................. 41
APPENDIX 6: LESSONS FROM THE EVOLUTION OF REFLECT .............................................................................. 43
1. Introduction

SAS² stands for Social Analysis Systems, a collaborative inquiry and social engagement approach. It was developed as a participatory research approach that addresses complex problems where multiple stakeholders and perspectives deserve to be heard. It seeks to improve on other comparable methods of participatory learning in two ways: by introducing more rigour into the tools, and by managing the process of tool selection and adaptation in a systematic yet flexible manner. The SAS² tools are also designed to involve actors as partners who gain skills and become protagonists in decision-making and analysis.

The justification for SAS² can be found in the demand for approaches to learning, planning, and reflection that respond to complex and dynamic contexts. This demand is growing as conventional development fails to deliver on its promises, both in the South and among projects and organizations in the North. Top-down, linear, and instrumental approaches have demonstrated themselves to be rigid and ineffective in complex and dynamic settings. Bureaucratic approaches to development have known limitations and yet their instruments prevail (Easterly, 2002). SAS² joins a family of approaches that calls for a fundamental change in development where learning, searching, and negotiating with stakeholders becomes the norm.

Objectives

The objectives of this SAS² Evaluation are:

- To assess the impacts of the project on the research or consultative practices of collaborators; and
- To assess SAS² dissemination through training, publications, and collaboration.

See Appendix 1 for the specific evaluation questions used and the data sources.

Users and uses of this report

This report is primarily directed to the SAS² authors at Carleton University in Ottawa, namely Jacques Chevalier and Daniel Buckles, and to Michelle Bourassa. IDRC and some of the people who were interviewed also expressed an interest in reading this report.

The report’s main use is that it provides an outsider’s view on both achievements and challenges, and situates these in a wider context of participatory action research. I expect the report will help shape the agenda for the November 2008 SAS² International Forum (Celebrating Dialogue). It is also my hope that it will help an emerging community of practice develop choices and scenarios for a SAS² maturation phase.

Scope and limitations

The study is based on reading project reports and case studies (see Appendix 1 for a summary of the evaluation questions), complemented with interviews with SAS²
practitioners and project partners (see Appendix 2 for a list of partners interviewed). The scope of this evaluation is limited by my lack of direct training in SAS² and by the absence of field visits to project sites where I could have witnessed contexts and outcomes, let alone benefits and challenges, as perceived by different people. My lack of ‘immersion’ (in Robert Chambers’ words, 2007b) was clear from the outset and is the result of limited evaluation resources.

**Organization of this report**

Section 2 provides an overview of SAS² and summarizes my understanding of its rationale—its theory of change. I describe its current state of evolution and the nature of its achievements based on my reading of the documentation and listening to practitioners.

Section 3 of this report explores the nuances of the achievements and identifies emerging challenges. This section’s structure is based on the two evaluation objectives and the specific research questions, with particular attention paid to the opportunities and choices that will nurture the achievements.

Section 4 pools information gleaned from the documentation, from talking to practitioners, and from my own experience to explore scenarios for a next phase of SAS² maturation. It includes recommendations.²

---

² All illustrations are by Ricardo Ramirez.
2. Overall findings

*SAS*\(^2\) Theory of Change

*SAS*\(^2\) is a holistic social assessment system that enables stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and ownership through collaborative inquiry and negotiated action plans. These outcomes mean that collaboration among different actors takes place around a process of inquiry, skills development, and action planning. Action plans that are negotiated and adapted to local contexts are more likely to lead to impacts such as sustainable resource management, policy shifts, and improved livelihoods. It challenges the linear approach that is prevalent in conventional development planning. From a theoretical perspective, *SAS*\(^2\) is an expression of a constructivist paradigm; from a development one, it is coherent with Another Development\(^3\).

Stage of evolution

The first stage of SAS development and funding led to a systematic assembly, creation, adaptation, and packaging of assessment tools. The initial focus on stakeholder analysis grew to include many contextual dimensions of problems, stakeholder interactions, and options and scenarios for action. The current SAS\(^2\) phase will end in the fall of 2008. It has enabled the testing and refinement of these tools and the introduction of more advanced ones; the training of hundreds of practitioners and dozens of trainers in several countries (with most efforts in Honduras, Bolivia, Peru, Nepal, India, and Canada); the application of the approach across multiple organizational and project settings; the development of training materials (several in-country versions in print and on-line); and collaboration efforts (in the form of communities of practice within and among countries).

At the time of writing (May 2008) I value the contribution of SAS\(^2\) at the level of outcomes. It has provided people with new capacities, supported project proposals designed with SAS\(^2\) tools, developed case studies that report on the way the tools are being applied, and supported the evolution of projects. I am aware of a small, yet growing, number of reports that describe tangible impacts, such as changes to people’s access to rights and land resources in India.

Achievements to date

*SAS*\(^2\) has achieved a proof of concept\(^4\) in the eyes of most of the practitioners interviewed for this report. Many are very pleased with the power and potential of the approach. Practitioners with previous, significant experience in facilitation said that in

---

\(^3\) Another Development, as proposed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in 1975, calls for development based on five principles: needs-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound, and based on structural transformation.

\(^4\) The proof of concept is usually considered a milestone on the way to a fully functioning prototype. (WIKIPEDIA).
contrast to other approaches in participatory action research, SAS$^2$ is more structured, more rigorous, and better able to build capacities among partners.

There is a growing number of publications on the approach: the overall SAS$^2$ Guide is about to appear in three languages and guides are being published in other languages, along with case studies around tools and projects. Additional documents contribute to the proof of concept, namely a collection of case studies published as a book by CEBEM (Bolivia), graduate theses, and refereed journal articles. The web resources (www.sas2.net and http://sas.CEBEM.org) include most of the above publications. They also provide access to the IDRC document repository. CEBEM’s website includes additional on-line tools. (See Appendix 3 for a list of documents that I reviewed, as well as additional references.)

**Challenges**

SAS$^2$ is a process-oriented approach that is learned through apprenticeship, self-learning, and practice. In today’s product oriented environment, it is increasingly difficult to communicate process and learning by doing. The challenges SAS$^2$ faces are not unique; the authors of other process-oriented approaches have faced comparable hurdles. The moment you publish a guide, someone will use it as a recipe book, despite instructions not to do so. Having said this, the SAS$^2$ authors use the following cooking metaphor. Cooking is a creative and artistic process. They don’t mind creating recipes as long as the cook is into “slow food.” A creative cook may follow a recipe by the book once, but will always introduce changes later on. As Brock and Pettit (2007) highlight, the challenge is less about transferring innovation, and more about transferring innovativeness. Beyond stating the principle, this is tough to do. Metaphors may help, especially when they convey the notion that an artist—cook or dancer—is not made overnight.

SAS$^2$ is embarking on a third phase that will set a strategy for broader dissemination; there are challenges about how to do this. The authors are the victims of their own success: they are receiving a growing number of requests. I believe a next step is to determine criteria for selecting the most promising contexts to focus energies on. Such criteria should explain the core SAS$^2$ activities that each community of practice will focus on. I also see value in further differentiating the audiences and targeting training and publication efforts accordingly. This follows the notion that whoever produces a guide learns the most. In doing this, I see the need to make explicit what can be achieved, by whom, and through each level of training.

---

5 A movement to counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world. http://www.slowfood.com
3. Specific outcomes

In this section I address outcomes\(^6\) in terms of practitioners’ research and advisory practices. I will also focus on dissemination efforts, including training, publications, and collaboration.

3.1 Contribution of SAS\(^2\) to partners’ research and advisory practices

I explored this topic by identifying examples of modified research, training, or consulting practices among SAS\(^2\) partners in Honduras, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Chile, Bolivia, Spain, and Canada. For purposes of this section, I divided practitioners into three categories: academics, NGOs and consultants (though many [of us] wear more than one hat).

Proof of concept from multiple testing grounds

The following quote from a SAS\(^2\) interim report to IDRC indicates the multiple contexts in which the approach has been introduced:

“...a group of professors at the University of La Serena in Chile is applying SAS\(^2\) to the development of a competency-based approach to capacity building strategies for development. An NGO in Peru is about to begin a series of SAS\(^2\)-based community workshops across the country to generate the baseline information required by law to assess the impact of a major gas pipeline construction project. In Nepal, LIBIRD is integrating SAS\(^2\) into virtually all of its new community-based research projects. ADS has trained in SAS\(^2\) members of a major network supported by Miseror (German Catholic Aid) working on biodiversity issues in India and Nepal. Links between UBINIG in Bangladesh and DSCRC in Kolkatta, India are providing opportunities for similar linguistic communities in the region to exchange experiences with SAS\(^2\) and reinforce capacities.” (SAS\(^2\) 2007 Interim Report, pp. 15-16)

All users praised SAS\(^2\) for how it embodies a constructivist approach, one that shines when participants cogenerate knowledge. Many underlined that the power of the approach is that it enables dialogue. One informant emphasized how “decision making capacity of villagers has increased.”

All of the interviewees involved with academic institutions underscored the significant challenge of introducing SAS\(^2\) into the “Ivory Tower.” Conventional natural and social scientists are mostly unwilling to make room for methodological innovation. This makes the Universidad Nacional de Agricultura (UNA) in Honduras noteworthy. Suazo (2007) highlights how SAS\(^2\) filled a gap at UNA in May 2006 when the university announced it

\(^6\) I use the term ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘impacts’ to underline the intermediary nature of accomplishments to date. Having said that, I recognize that changes in human capacities at the community level constitute fundamental ‘impacts.’ While I was not exposed to that level of analysis, I did hear accounts of such changes taking place (from interviews with practitioners).
would no longer require students to prepare conventional theses or major papers. The SAS$^2$ combination of capacity development, research, and action was seen as an appropriate way to shape an academic program that is community-oriented and committed to action research. So far, 25 theses that lean on SAS$^2$ have been completed. The university is now designing its service learning approach based on the SAS$^2$ platform.

UNA has incorporated SAS$^2$ into its curricula because it gave the university a way to become accountable to society:

“Trabajar más con la gente, los beneficiarios. Cuando salieron trabajos y evaluaciones favorables de afuera, todo cambió. Hoy día los trabajos con SAS son significativos, [hay] mucha apertura.” (Informant)

At UNA, SAS$^2$ went from being a project to becoming part and parcel of the university’s commitment to integrate teaching with research and extension work.

“Dos elementos que apuntan a la sostenibilidad del trabajo que se ha logrado en SAS son: La apropiación institucional y la Comunidad de Práctica. De la primera, el mejor ejemplo es el trabajo realizado en la UNA, en donde SAS dejó de ser un proyecto para convertirse oficialmente en una oferta académica, de investigación y extensión.” (Suazo, 2007: 36)

For the Honduran respondents, SAS$^2$ has also created a more reflective way to work.

“Los integrantes del Equipo Líder del SAS en la UNA miden su experiencia de aprendizaje del SAS en términos de: aprendizaje personal, rapidez en la obtención de datos, Investigación, Extensión, Capacitación–Docencia, Investigación, Acción, Capacitación e Innovación. En todos estos elementos se reportó un aumento considerable a partir de la capacitación SAS recibida.” (Suazo, 2006. Informe de consultoría en SAS: 12)

“Habiendo trabajado de forma mecánica, surge de una reflexión de los paradigmas dentras de nuestro accionar: ver en la práctica a Jacques: la gran dificultad: como transferir/transmitir a los nuevos que lo más importante es lo epistemológico, más allá de las herramientas. Será que toca dejar que metan la pata....técnicas primero y reflexión segundo... (Informant)

The NGO experience of CEBEM in Bolivia is also relevant. Its efforts to change the academic world from the outside have been considerably more difficult.

“Paso difícil: entrar al mundo académico: reuniones con universidades para penetrar donde se discuten temas metodológicos. Remover a los profesores de sus prácticas y cursos ya establecidos. ‘¿Una ONG me va a venir a enseñar a mi?’ ” (Informant)

The forthcoming SAS$^2$ Guide may help overcome this type of barrier. As well, field evidence is bound to help. CEBEM hosted two graduate students: one was an Italian Masters’ student whose thesis did not explicitly integrate SAS$^2$, while a Spanish student’s PhD dissertation did. In that case, a forestry school yielded to the extent that it allowed
Jacques Chevalier to join the student’s thesis committee. Such steps are significant because they create important precedents.

NGOs in South Asia appreciate how SAS² workshop participants take ownership: villagers’ criteria drive the process and they are directly involved in the analysis. These observations correspond to those of several consultants. People with previous expertise in facilitation value the SAS² tools that apply to evaluation work and organizational planning.

SAS² establishes a way of doing development that challenges the status quo. It acknowledges how little is predictable. It provides ways to make flexible, negotiated adjustments as the context changes. In a sense, SAS² and other emerging approaches are Trojan Horses for Another Development, but such changes take time. One informant underscored that logical frameworks remain the norm because administrations are comfortable with them:

“El SAS no llega a cambiar mentalidades. En cooperación, es más fácil la gestión con métodos ficticios pero organizados. Eres cómplice... prevalece (el marco lógico) porque facilita la administración, la toma de decisiones. Los procesos los quieren prever.... (La) diferencia es estar en terreno Vs oficina. Combinar como alternativa... toca repetir.” (Informant)

The Achilles heel: time and confidence

SAS² brings together a collection of about 50 tools. Facilitators choose among them on the basis of local circumstances, evolving contexts, and experience. Beyond the toolbox, SAS² includes a Process Manager (and Process Design Guidelines). Matching tools to context is one challenge; making the right choices under time constraints is even more demanding. Like other constructivist approaches, SAS² is learned through apprenticeship, practice, and self-learning. Making the right choices becomes an art. In a sense, these challenges constitute two sides of the same coin.

A seasoned facilitator will find ways to adjust how deeply a tool is used and learns to choose those that best respond to the context:

As a consultant I am often asked to work on short contracts with strict budgets. Whilst this has obvious constraints and can be frustrating, I would also claim that it has forced me to be extremely creative. I find the fact that I almost never have resources to write manuals or guidelines means that approaches used are always fluid and evolving...I am free to invent and innovate for every new circumstance and this is very liberating. Of course, this also means that clients have to have trust in me. (Dee Jupp as quoted in Chambers, 2007a: 184)

Both NGOs and consultants expressed an interest in continued training and mentoring. Only a few of the seasoned consultants were able to “run with the approach” with confidence, and only after more than one training session. Both NGOs and some consultants were concerned that tools are very time consuming. Other experienced practitioners mentioned that simple versions work well. People said that it is learning the art that takes time, more so than applying the tools. Some found it hard to use the
approach in settings where people had limited time. Still others commented that SAS² techniques can help organizations diagnose a problem faster than conventional techniques, or in a more transparent manner. This explains the growing popularity of SAS² with large institutions interested in internal planning and evaluation of their programs.

In short, while SAS² has achieved proof of concept, and while a growing volume of publications are giving it credibility in wider circles, there is much work to be done to nourish the achievements to date.

3.2 How SAS² has been adapted and combined with other methods

I explored this topic by finding examples of adaptations and combinations of methodologies among partners. Here are the results of my harvest:

- CEBEM in Bolivia mentions the combination of SAS² tools with statistical analyses (CEBEM guide, P. 10) and Process Manager with results-oriented frameworks (p.14).
- In their review of Outcome Mapping training in Honduras, Gottsbacher et al. (2007: 55) include a summary of adaptations proposed by the OM Community of Practice where some SAS² tools (Socratic Wheel, Process Manager) are proposed in OM training.
- The forestry case study from Chiquitania, Bolivia (Tellez Carrasco et al., 2007) that appears in CEBEM’s SAS² publication, explains how SAS² was combined with a logical framework as required by the Spanish donor. The authors also mention using tools from other sources (e.g. stakeholder analysis from SEAGA/FAO).
- SAS² was combined with geographic information systems (GIS) at UNA (SAS 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 12)
- “Hacia una Estrategia de Municipios Productivos (HUEMP) is another key SAS² project in Bolivia supported directly by IDRC (independently of the SAS² project). The methodology currently used by HUEMP incorporates key concepts and tools from SAS², an integration resulting from close collaboration between ACEDI and Carleton.” (SAS² 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 14)
- “A new challenge for UNA will consist in supporting LED strategies in Catacamas by combining SAS² with the economic planning tools currently used in Bolivia, tools developed under the leadership of ACEDI and modified recently in collaboration with Carleton to incorporate the concepts and tools of SAS².” (SAS² 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 12)
- In Honduras there are efforts to link SAS² with Outcome Mapping (Suazo, 2006: Informe de consultoría en SAS: 17)
- “Se utiliza la metodología denominada “SAS Cholo” porque se trata de adecuar el SAS a este contexto cultural mestizo o más propiamente “cholo,” que es
• “Se pueden citar algunas costumbres o expresiones simbólicas que existen en la tradición o en la cultura local, para motivar a que la población participe más activamente; por ejemplo, se puede recurrir a la descripción de un personaje simbólico como es el caso del “Ekeko” (que en los últimos tiempos ya se le conoce en todo el Perú), que representa el cambio deseado, el imaginario individual, familiar y social del “futuro deseado” por la población andina.” (Clavería, R. 2007: 8)

• The second case in the CEBEM 2007 book describes how the CLIP tool was adapted. The informants I interviewed confirmed this trend and emphasized the art of constant adaptation:

    *La bondad [del SAS$^2$] es que es demasiado flexible: exige combinar (a diferencia de otras) y se presta a mucho ajuste. Esta es la principal fortaleza.*

    *It can be stand alone, but it adds a new set of tools, reinforces the process/participatory approach. It allows you to deal with complexity in ways other tools did not allow.*

    *Always combine with more traditional approaches—has to do with what it is you are doing, time constraints, budget...*  

    *Had background in games and simulation, so had strong method background. Large corporations in Europe: they needed participative methods. You build and model, you witness change.*

    *Help groups work out options, using criteria. SAS$^2$ method: 10 options, you take 3 and compare their characteristics, it works like magic. Uses it, modifies it, suggests criteria to judge. Like [seeing]... the group to find the characteristic. Takes a skill. Opens up a conversation: seems more engaging and far reaching. Dilemma: lots of criteria.*

    *SAS$^2$ in aboriginal tourism: integrated with interviews.*

The sense of adventure and confidence that is needed to combine SAS$^2$ with other approaches and tools comes only with practice. This was evident from the interviews, where it was mainly the experienced facilitators who provided examples. Newcomers first need time to take command of the tools, to adjust them (sliding scale), and to then combine them with others as the situation evolves. This challenge is common with other methods like RAAKS and Collaborative Management that emphasize multiple stakeholder engagement. (See Appendix 4 for links to other such approaches.)

### 3.3 Partners’ future plans with SAS$^2$ and their recommendations

I noted a number of emerging themes that relate to future plans and the type of support needed to nurture current SAS$^2$ achievements. The first theme centres on skills,
communities of practice, mentoring, and accreditation. The second includes the continuum from donor dependency to changing donor practices. The last focuses on universities as incubators of change, albeit reluctant ones in most cases.

**Communities of practice, mentoring and accreditation**

During phase two of the SAS\(^2\) project, the authors facilitated a large number of training events. In some cases, some of the more experienced trainers then facilitated workshops in their regions.

“During the project period, IDRC engaged (with resources from the Centre Administered Portion of the current project) the training services of ADS for work on the pottery sector in Mumbai, India. IDRC also supported access to SAS\(^2\) training for its partner Ecosad (Peru), in the context of a project funded by the Urban Poverty and Environment and Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health. CEBEM provided access to its distance learning program for SAS, and face-to-face training in Peru was provided by David Mercado of EMPRENDE.” (SAS\(^2\) 2007 Interim Report, pp. 15-16)

The value of SAS\(^2\), according to several informants, rests less on the tools and more on how they are applied (the skillful means). It is through practice in real life situations that practitioners gain the confidence to adjust and apply the approach.

*The training and tools is (sic) necessary but far from sufficient. (Informant)*

*The challenge: the 5 competencies are harder than they appear. Figuring out, skills go beyond (you need to already be a good facilitator, to ask the questions that will focus on real issues): what is the crux of the matter? Part of the process is to ask the question and figure out the entry point. It is through conversation that the key problems emerge. Once that is surfaced, then you can attach the tool. Competencies come only with practice and experience. (Informant)*

“Applying the SAS\(^2\) process requires at times a high level of effort both on the part of facilitators and the local actors, an investment that can cause frustration when results do not address matters of immediate concern. Further training in SAS\(^2\) will focus on enhancing the identification of diagnostics and selection of techniques that respond to felt needs, and exploring ways to do the analysis in a timely fashion while still engaging participants in the process (a goal also expressed by SAS\(^2\) practitioners in other countries).” (SAS\(^2\) 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 9-10)

As the number of trainees grows, the authors of SAS\(^2\) are looking for ways to maintain some control over quality, via accreditation. In the 2006 SAS\(^2\) Interim report, the rationale for certification was described as follows:

“…the culture of mainstream development institutions depends strongly on the
quality and relevance of the knowledge generated through the SAS\textsuperscript{2} research process. By providing a path for professional certification in SAS\textsuperscript{2} we hope to avoid the fate of PRA and other participatory experiments that lost credibility because they did not combine participation with rigour and relevance.” (p. 36)

While authors of these approaches differ in how they interpret what happened to PRA (Sultana et al., 2007; Thompson, 2005), the SAS\textsuperscript{2} certification route is not unique. In the field of organizational development, the Cognitive Edge (http://www.cognitive-edge.com/) provides accreditation that allows members to use the approach, packaged into several software variations. In contrast, SAS\textsuperscript{2} is more flexible. Trainees need not be accredited to apply it; only those who train others must be accredited.

“CEBEM and Carleton have worked closely at developing guidelines for structuring communities of practices and defining rules of SAS\textsuperscript{2} accreditation.” (SAS\textsuperscript{2} 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 13)

Many SAS\textsuperscript{2} practitioners see some benefit in accreditation, while others emphasize the need for continued mentoring:

\textit{Need for ongoing mentoring or support to develop such competencies. Even being certified, feel very new at it. Have enough to help others at the early stage, so have become mentors. Yet still feel they reach limits and need to get expert advice. (Informant)}

The effort to build Communities of Practice (COPs) is meant to increase peer-to-peer learning and decrease the mentoring pressure on the SAS\textsuperscript{2} authors. All informants believe in COPs but some felt that thus far they remain fragile.

There is mention of a successful exchange between Honduran and Ecuadorian teams from Carchi (Suazo, 2007: 31).

“The Bolivian partner (CEBEM) seeks, in addition to these objectives, to develop information and communication technologies in support of distance learning and SAS\textsuperscript{2} communities of practice.” (SAS 2007 Interim Report, Jan 2007: 5)

\textit{La COP no ha funcionado. Fundamental: estudiantes de todo el país para inocularlos, pero toca también revivirla a nivel de instituciones. Importante lo de las redes y los portales para interactuar entre instituciones nacionales e internacionales. (Informante)}

\textit{COP en Bolivia, comulga con las ideas progresistas del SAS. Como articular con actividades académicas. Falta más. Si una institución de prestigio sacara una maestría en SAS, la gente iría por el título. En una COP van porque se usa el SAS. El éxito de la COP requiere que la gente lo aplique. (Informante)}
En Chile hay un grupo que ha manejado la técnicas, una COP local (no nacional). Luego con CEBEM y los que participaron, pero no se mantuvo red, sólo vínculos individuales. Jacques sigue siendo clave también. (Informante)

COPs across regions also require good connectivity, and in some cases, this is only beginning to happen now. For example, the Hondurans would like more exchange with the Bolivians but until recently they had no reliable access to the Internet.

Con CEBEM no mucho, nos llevan años luz en TICs, hemos estado sin acceso. Mandando señales con humo... Siguiendo el trabajo de ellos que interesa mucho, con ganas de hacer plataforma para compartir. (Informante)

Mentoring remains a most common need, although some informants worry about burdening the SAS² authors with requests:

Expect it will be successful... though [person is] concerned about JC and DB. You always knock on the same door. JC sharing, expanding, keen. They are overwhelmed, you try not to bother them. (Informant)

Build strong net of instructors, consultants, coaches that are paid to provide assistance (design and tool selection): different functions that need to be clear (roles, code of ethics): TORs of who does what, goes beyond certification (competencies). (Informant)

Ginger group collaborative, an organizational development consultant COP (members across the country): hands-on work with organizations (planning, transforming). Several Ginger people have taken training and were interested in putting them to work. (Informant)

There are emerging COPs in Bolivia, Honduras, India, Nepal, and Canada. They have yet to develop strong ties among themselves, even regionally, though some examples were mentioned. Several informants felt that while the COPs were fragile, they were most important as a means of peer-based learning. What is not yet clear is what has to happen to keep them vibrant.

The SAS² authors—after much consideration—have opted to accredit those practitioners who will become SAS² trainers. Certification is valued by some practitioners in the South because it gives them respectability. On the other hand, certified consultants told me that SAS² accreditation was not that important to their professional work but it was still appreciated. The extent to which accreditation meets the goal of protecting quality needs to be monitored.

Certification is associated with the SAS² “label.” Even though the second “S” in the name refers to Systems (in the plural), some people understand the SAS² label as a contained approach. This creates a paradox in that SAS² builds on other methods and seeks cross-pollination.
I communicated with or read reports from authors of three other methodologies. All three had considered the certification route and all three chose not to formalize it. They recognized that the risk of misuse is real, but they also felt that this risk was an acceptable tradeoff. Especially relevant is the case of Reflect, a participatory literacy approach that was promoted actively by ActionAid. See Appendix 5 for a summary of a large evaluation done once the approach had gone to scale. See Appendix 6 for a list of 13 factors that David Archer of Reflect identified as the seeds of success or failure with such approaches.

**From donor dependency to changing the donor**

As Phase two of the SAS\(^2\) project draws to a close, one could ask, what is needed to nurture the achievements? Can the seeds that have sprouted grow on their own or do they need more watering? How much is the evolution of SAS\(^2\) tied to the existing project structure? The answers to these questions will vary from one type of organization to another. Here's how the questions pertain to an NGO in Honduras:

> “Un aspecto que afecta directamente la aplicación del SAS es la ausencia de “proyectos de investigación” en cada institución. La ausencia de estudios o de iniciativas investigaciones al momento de ofrecer las capacitaciones hace que el uso del SAS se vuelva incierto y en la mayoría de los casos, especialmente con las ONGs, la relación empieza y termina con la capacitación.” (Suazo, 2006: Informe de consultoría en SAS: 5)

> “Una lección aprendida de este proceso fue el confirmar que las capacitaciones SAS tienen mucha aceptación, sin embargo el éxito total de un esfuerzo SAS va directamente relacionado con la existencia de un proyecto/iniciativa de investigación en la institución.”  (Suazo, 2006. Informe de consultoría en SAS: 17)

*Difícil implementar sin apoyo de cooperación, el SAS incluido (Informante)*

> “Another encouraging result of SAS\(^2\) training events in Honduras is that several academic institutions and NGOs are now using SAS\(^2\) without receiving financial support from IDRC.”  (SAS\(^2\) 2005 Interim Report, Jan 2006: 11)

Practitioners in both Latin America and South Asia highlighted the importance of moving SAS\(^2\) from the NGO world to government organizations and universities as a way of increasing its coverage—something that is already happening in Canada. Also, many universities or research centers, including CEBEM and LIBIRD, have been active partners. Some informants said that continued funding was needed, due to the fact that other donors tend to insist on their own assessment and evaluation methodologies. Others were proud to show examples of continued SAS work without IDRC funding. In some
countries, a different challenge is to convince national institutions to introduce SAS$^2$ as part of their own research funding. The following are examples of these different voices:

_TODOs gustan del SAS, pero no es a ese nivel donde se produce la apropiación, es a más nivel. Atacar el nivel institucional, que la cooperación canadiense lo incorporara…(Informante)

_Cambio de la base para arriba… revolucionario. Pero al mismo tiempo toca cambiar desde arriba…Banco Mundial, la FAO. (Informante)

With senior people: involved them in practising tools and letting them present outcome. They were skeptical, but they became excite; they did not think it would generate such conclusions. (Informant)

**Academic environments**

Several SAS$^2$ practitioners also work in academia in Canada and Europe. They will actively pursue opportunities to introduce SAS$^2$ into the curricula, even though in some faculties this is still an uphill battle. One mentioned that this effort may mean “…being looked at as an extraterrestrial,” but that it was worth it.

Both the people and the organizations that offer SAS$^2$ training contribute to the credibility of the approach in the eyes of the development community. Certification and having a university platform are both seen as assets. For example, for CEBEM to influence Bolivian universities, accreditation will carry weight.

In Honduras, the university selects and plans to use its graduates as the agents of change, creating a national community of practice among impoverished municipalities.

_"En la UNA y como consecuencia directa del Proyecto SAS II, el SAS forma parte transversal de la propuesta de nuevas carreras que iniciarán a partir del 2007: a) Tecnología de alimentos, b) Ingeniería en Recursos Naturales, Desarrollo y Ambiente. Asimismo, el SAS se ha incorporado en la curricula actual de Ingeniería Agronómica. El hecho de contar con un proyecto institucionalizado del SAS ha influido directamente en el aprendizaje y aplicación del SAS en la UNA.” (Suazo, 2006. Informe de consultoría en SAS: 13)

_Queremos que esto crezca: hablando con muchas instituciones para meterlos en esta metodología: movilización social del conocimiento. En las carreras integrando SAS y seleccionando estudiantes de los municipios más pobres. En 2 años salen los primeros muy preparados para contar con nucleos, incidencia nacional, germinar semilla. (Informante)

Making **“service learning”** a practice in universities that embrace SAS$^2$ will be most relevant as a way to integrate action, research, and capacity development. Service learning is the niche that allows academia to incorporate process-oriented methods (Visit: [http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/resources_sample.cfm](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/resources_sample.cfm)). Carleton University
and UNA have already experimented with this, and I was pleased to hear that the SAS\textsuperscript{2} authors have collaborated with the Canadian Community Service Learning Association (with active support from the McConnell Family Foundation).

**Challenges**

Some informants expressed two concerns with SAS\textsuperscript{2}: time and complexity. Suazo (2007: 32-33) mentions an experience in Los Pinos that highlights some challenges she had when using SAS\textsuperscript{2} in terms of having enough time and engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way. This echoes comparable critiques and challenges associated with other PLA approaches.

One informant suggested the need to package SAS\textsuperscript{2} based on degrees of complexity. He suggested a gradual approach, starting with examples of brief, accessible SAS\textsuperscript{2} events where a small number of simple tools work well. At the very least, SAS\textsuperscript{2} needs to differentiate target audiences, with those in academia in a different group from those in non-governmental organizations and consulting firms. Newcomers can learn from case studies that are grouped from the simple to the more complex and time consuming, too the most demanding tools. Other informants emphasized the need to translate materials into local languages and to simplify terminology.

> According to our understanding, SAS is a bit more complicated than other methods like PRA; it is beyond the level of understanding of villagers. This is a challenge for us. (Informant)

> When we train villagers to make them understand a tool, it takes time. When they apply it there is large range of time needed, also a problem. Takes time: participation gets reduced, villagers get frustrated with time taken. (Informant)

> Was developed by Canadian scientists. Now to make it more user friendly we need a country-based approach, how to promote it based on national research and development organizations. (Informant)

> SAS being a bit of liberating theology: time and cost simply not covered here. (Informant)

The real challenge lies in facilitators knowing how to apply the tools so well that they become easy to use and share at the village level. This requires practice. It also means adapting tools to different contexts. The SAS\textsuperscript{2} authors compare it to learning to speak a foreign language or playing the piano. It takes time and lots of practice—as do the efforts by partners in the field to produce handbooks adapted to different needs and contexts (see 3.4).

A central challenge with SAS\textsuperscript{2} is the difficulty of explaining process to someone who has not lived it. This is not unique to SAS\textsuperscript{2}, and the way to resolve the challenge may be to place more emphasis on stories from users—narratives whose goal is to inform newcomers to the approach about its potential.
3.4 Outcomes of the SAS$^2$ training and plans for dissemination

My reading of SAS$^2$ reports and publications and the results of interviews reflected the following SAS$^2$ training outcomes:

- individuals gained new insight and skills along a continuum that began with a sense of confidence in using the tools, all the way to the ability to train others
- organizations have incorporated SAS$^2$ into their programs or policies
- organizations have produced their own SAS$^2$ guides and case studies, web resources, and on-line tools

For example, CEBEM in Bolivia provides these examples of training outcomes:

- Co-publication (with IDRC and Carleton University) of a SAS$^2$ guide with six case studies entitled “Sistemas de Análisis Social: Enfoques y herramientas para procesos de desarrollo.”
- Training of over 300 participants (as per the Guide, p. 9)
- CEBEM’s web site http://sas.CEBEM.org with sample tools (some on-line) and SAS$^2$ resources

In Honduras, SAS$^2$ has become part of the curriculum at UNA. As well, students have used SAS$^2$ on campus to organize a waste management effort. This type of service learning is very valuable.

Among Canadians (consultants mostly, with just a few academics), many feel that they need more training and mentoring before applying SAS$^2$. A few are already applying it, especially as part of organizational development consulting. The differences may be due to people’s previous experience with comparable methods. Those who had only taken a SAS$^2$ introductory workshop appeared to be the least able to “run with the approach” on their own. I also associate this with consultant-client relations in the North where there is little patience for process or experimentation.

On the other hand, several Canadian practitioners have used SAS$^2$ as part of organizational development and evaluation exercises. In all cases, they were very keen on the results. One of them reported using a SAS$^2$ tool, almost without thinking, during an organizational planning session.

Practitioners in both the North and the South voiced the need for clearer terminology and translation into other languages.

Tough to make the terminology accessible. They changed language and simplified [it]. Simplified the process of training to make it understood. (Informant - South)

SAS very complex to start. Make it more accessible, jargon more simple. (Informant – North)

More than one informant spoke about adapting the language to target audiences:
SAS needs more publications, a way to presenting that is not fanatic. Audience to consultants VS to researchers (identity fixed). SAS or collaborative action research: what term to use... In scientific conferences: some are disturbed by term (sounds like a business)... Depends where you are and how many others are using it. (Informant)

One consultant said he does not mention SAS$^2$ to the client. Instead he uses questions from SAS$^2$, and only explains where they come from when the client asks.

Not the start. Not another recipe. Government people are fed up with the labels. Government people are more demanding. Instead, start from where they are at and with new questions. (Informant)

Targeting may also be relevant when it comes to adjusting the training to fit trainees’ backgrounds:

Trainers or practitioners: those who do well are those who have done more than one thing. Having done different things, the more flexible [they are]. (Informant)

### 3.5 Contributions and limitations of SAS$^2$ publications and training events

While it is arbitrary to separate publications from training, I will attempt to address them separately in this section.

#### SAS$^2$ Publications

The SAS$^2$ Guides and the information and documents available on-line explain the purpose and the tools behind the approach. Most informants, however, underlined that they are most meaningful when used in a workshop. On their own, they are difficult to grasp and the full collection of tools can be overwhelming.

Making the publications more accessible and relevant is a topic that many informants raised. Not all readers are able to grasp the approach. Others may need case studies with sample tools to help them understand the approach, while a third group may need more narrative.

This challenge can be addressed through two avenues: the **design of the publications**, and the definition of **places and moments for learning**.

**Design of the publications** (guides, case studies, websites). One way to address the publications challenge is to segment audiences into two major groups: those who learn through a combination of theoretical/conceptual inputs, combined with tools and case studies (academics and some consultants), versus those who need a practical entry point with more case studies and tools, and less theory (practitioners and some consultants). In both cases, the real challenge is to shift the attention—as soon as possible—towards the innovative, adaptive art of applying SAS$^2$: the skillful means. All audiences will thrive
when they arrive at this destination, even though they need different routes to get there. This brings us to the places and moments for learning.

**Places and moments for learning.** Universities that embrace SAS\(^2\) will integrate it with service learning. The potential of service learning needs further elaboration. Under what conditions can communities and universities jointly design, own, and manage collaborative learning places and moments? Service learning can provide such spaces only when the relationship includes balance and respect for the needs and demands of each partner. Under ideal conditions, the community organization gets to experiment and adjust methods and embrace error—something that their Board of Directors would be less willing to tolerate with consultants. Projects in the South (and in the “Third World” of First Nation communities in the North) are also good places and moments for experimenting with new tools and methods. This openness also applies to organizations that set time aside for internal evaluation or strategic planning. If rated from high to low, service learning would be the ideal situation for SAS\(^3\), followed by projects in the South and consulting in organizational development. Low on the list would be conventional consulting in the North.

Using stories (or narrative) with examples from practice was mentioned by some respondents as a way to explain the approach through concrete examples that others can relate to.

> More people documenting their experience, describing the situation, process and how they arrived at what they did, and why. That would be one way to accelerate learning: the more examples the better. (Informant)

> Técnicas acompañadas con ejemplos locales: importancia de generar más informes locales, experiencias más cercanas. (Informante)

> Hacer diagnósticos antes de publicar: situación de los profesionales, qué papel es el del LFA [marco lógico], un trabajo de decirle al vicio que existe la virtud; un trabajo para estudiar qué pasa en la cooperación, algo serio. Desafío cuidadoso. Nadie lo resalta: esto sirve, pero a un nivel, pero mientes, no es honesto. A la realidad de proyecto difundes SAS y es impactante... se ve y se capta su potencial. No es otra cosa que organizar algo que todos sabían, ha sabido presentarlo (es sentido común). Faltan las actividades a nivel institucional. El SAS aun esta cojo. En eventos de sociología, de cooperación, en congresos, tener presencia. Proponer soluciones. (Informante)

In Bolivia, there is a commitment to developing a variation of the guide for local development and other Latin American informants emphasized the need to localize the approach.

Guía para el desarrollo local: para quienes impulsan proyectos. Ya se tenía guía para el tutor (técnicas convencionales, etc.). Ahora la guía pone sobre la mesa las herramientas y enfoques en la elaboración de proyectos. Para los gestores. Para fomentar apropiación de parte de los usuarios. Será parte la guía SAS de CEBEM. Ya no es curso introductorio sino uno de aplicación, con enfoque online constructivista, es para quienes usan los manuales como check-list. (Informante)

Aproximar a contextos locales y territoriales latinoamericanos, que en otros contextos tal vez no son comprensibles. Mismo desafío con investigadores (diversos temas). (Informante)

In addition to the printed material, the communication of process and the attempt to make SAS\(^2\) available to others beyond a workshop format represent new challenges. Video demos of more complex tools may be important, as well as testimonials from participants. The tutorials on CEBEM’s website ask the user to fill in sample values. I tried them and concluded that they are bound to work best in an applied situation, where participants can discuss and agree on the variables.

**Training Events**

Workshops in community and organizational contexts have a double outcome: people gain skills at the same time they organize the information in a collective, structured manner to agree on collaborative action. When SAS\(^2\) training happens in a workshop format, people are trained by test-driving the tools. Suazo describes four SAS\(^2\) workshops in Garifuna communities in Honduras where 240 community leaders were trained. Not only did they acquire new skills, they also ascertained the nature of the problems they faced. This is the most valuable aspect of SAS\(^2\): learning by doing in a real context.

Gauging the type of event that is needed and designing the workshop accordingly are, according to several informants, the most important and difficult aspects of SAS\(^2\). Since SAS\(^2\) means learning in action, gauging time and selecting tools become an art:

“Es de notar, que el tiempo que se dispone para enseñar las técnicas en las capacitaciones es sumamente corto, lo que contradice el principio del SAS de ‘aprender-haciendo’. ” (Suazo, 2006: Informe de consultoría en SAS: 14)

*We are not after making tools, we are convinced about SAS\(^2\), but we search for ways to make it more communicable. Problem is how to explain: a gap between villagers and the trainers. (Informant)*

Understanding when local actors are to learn the tools versus when the focus needs to be on using them together with other participants is a skill that comes with practice. One informant said it would be useful to have an evaluation instrument to log the choices made, and to reflect and learn from them in the future.
I read and heard about different types of SAS\(^2\) workshops, depending on local circumstances.

*Introductory is simple and good, exposure, whet appetite. Advanced are also good and most effective if it draws people around a concrete situation to anchor in reality, then notice the AHAs. Allows you to really understand what the power of SAS is. (Informant)*

Clearly, SAS\(^2\) at the community level is very different from SAS\(^2\) for NGOs, researchers, and consultants. I found this relevant reflection in the 2006 Interim Report.

Suazo (2007: 27) mentions an early stage of institutional reconnaissance that is carried out before SAS training begins. A tracer study in Honduras concluded that prior to doing more training in Outcome Mapping, an organizational diagnosis would help identify those organizations—and champions within them—that would be most open to the approach (Gottsbacher et al., 2007, p. 53). The same report recommended two types of training: a short overview for managers and more hands-on workshops for technicians (practitioners).

Suazo (2007) mentioned three different types of SAS\(^2\) workshops: introductory, intermediate, and advanced (p. 26) though the Guide does not differentiate levels. The 2006 SAS\(^2\) Interim Report also mentioned three levels, but details about the duration and scope of each event are not (yet) explained.

This brings to mind the case of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) SEAGA approach, where three complementary manuals are available for different levels of users (see links in Appendix 3). On the other hand, *Reflect* went in a different direction when it decided not to promote its original Mother Guide book and to focus instead on developing more local adaptations. This balancing act may be easier to achieve on the basis of a clearly defined strategy. *Reflect* focused its dissemination strategy on widespread use by local organizations and NGOs. In that context, the Mother Guide became less important. For SAS\(^2\), the decision will depend on where the authors seek to place their energies.

### 3.6 The contribution of SAS\(^2\) to the field of Participatory Action Research

The following are examples of additional SAS\(^2\) contributions to the field of PAR.

The CEBEM guide (p. 13) mentions that SAS\(^2\) promotes a shared research process between researcher and participants by transferring skills to the participants (learn by doing).

*SAS: design process, selection of tools, facilitation. You do everything together. No need for lengthy process of diagnostic. Process together. Interpretation phase becomes obvious, it is all there. [I am] amazed by the results, even with 20 years’ experience. (Informant)*

*Noticed the contrast. People are content-oriented. Need to experience and break the paradigm. For them to take control over the process. (Informant)*
Lundy (2007) mentions two contributions:

- more rigour in applying the tools and in generating knowledge in a collaborative manner, and in sequencing, whereby the lessons from one exercise become inputs for another; and

- flexibility in applying the tools, since process management allows for ongoing adaptations based on substantive knowledge that was not foreseen or on levels of complexity.

As with other PAR tools, it is how the tools are applied that matters most. While SAS\(^2\) provides more orientation on this matter, only the most experienced practitioner will be able to minimize the difficulties imposed by tight time lines and mixed agendas. The SAS\(^2\) authors mentioned many examples of practitioners keeping it simple and applying them in short time. The challenge, in their minds, revolves around getting past the mentality of quick-fix learning (fast food).

“\textit{In conclusion, it is important that researchers employing participatory methods—SAS}\(^2\) or other—cultivate both an intimate understanding of the people they plan to work with as well as experience and skill with a wide repertoire of useful techniques. Regardless of whatever theoretical and methodological efforts there are to make participatory techniques more effective, they are only actually as good as the practitioners who employ them.” (Lund 2007: 26)

\textit{If done right, it can be more rigorous, with complex (domain analysis and dynamics analysis) are more sophisticated... Still you need the good animator skills, need to be able to gauge the situation. If it fits, it can work very well. The power of the technique is in the way it allows people to externalize and look at a situation (visual) and comprehensive (all concerns are on the floor). You avoid fights, all elucidate information that is being generated. Interpersonal emotion taken out. You don't know where it is leading, you cannot know, only evident at the end, when you infer and see the whole. An AHA moment arises. Patterns emerge, beyond standard PRA. (Informant)}

SAS\(^2\) authors compare SAS\(^2\) to PRA and suggest that the former has improved in rigour and relevance. Some of us have argued elsewhere that, as PRA shifted away from appraisal towards learning and action (PLA), it set the scene for a new generation of collaborative learning approaches (Lightfoot et al., 1999). SAS\(^2\) is one such example. It deserves to be compared less with PRA and more with RAAKS and Collaborative Learning, among others, where the attention has shifted to multiple perspectives, negotiation, complexity, and collaborative work. (See Appendix 3 [Ramirez, 2001] for a comparative analysis.) Having said this, I underline that the SAS\(^2\) authors have made significant advances on three fronts: the theoretical grounding of the approach, the systematic organization and testing of existing tools, and the incorporation of more and
complex tools from other fields. Perhaps the most notable innovation in SAS$^2$ is the notion of skillful means; what now needs to be emphasized is that getting there is like learning a language.
4. Recommendations and scenarios for Phase 3

In this last section I combine the findings of this evaluation with my own interpretation of achievements and of choices to be made in the near future. In some cases, I list scenarios and in others I provide recommendations that are “grist for the mill.” My hope is that they may help shape some of the agenda items for the fall 2008 SAS\(^2\) International Forum (Celebrating Dialogue).

**Tappers and listeners**

In their best-selling book *Made to Stick*, Heath and Heath (2007) mention the tappers and listeners game. Tappers were given 25 well-known songs. Each person was asked to choose a song and tap out its rhythm for the listener to pick up. Tappers estimated that listeners would guess one out of two songs (50 per cent), when in fact they only got three songs out of 120 (2.5 per cent). Heath and Heath state that when tapping, the tapper is hearing the song in her head, but the listener has no clue. They call this the ‘curse of knowledge’ and it leads to a large information imbalance.

When I tried to read the SAS\(^2\) Guide\(^7\) I felt a bit like the listeners: that I was missing the tune. The tune, in this instance, is the experience of having lived a SAS\(^2\) event. The Guide did not make mention of this likely and significant challenge for newcomers. SAS\(^2\) is learned by immersion, its power hits our affective and cognitive domains, yet the Guide is based on a language of logic and intellect.

- **Recommendation:** Guides and case studies should be developed and tested by the Ottawa team (and/or their partners) with potential users. They need to be developed with a clear sense of the audiences who will use them, the workshop context, and with explicit variations for different types of events. At the very least, they should differentiate the two major audience groups: academia versus non-governmental organizations and consultants. Guides that are made available outside of a workshop require a clear statement advising readers about the inherent limitations of such publications and the challenges of learning without immersion.

**Communicating process**

Several users value SAS\(^2\) as a way to make constructivism practical. They emphasized that it is not so much the tools as the approach that matters. Yet others emphasized the tools and gave less attention to the spirit of SAS\(^2\). More than one practitioner noted that this represents a capacity development challenge: how can trainees achieve this level of reflection and avoid the trap of thinking of SAS\(^2\) as a toolbox?

\(^7\) SAS\(^2\) is a recognized name but mainly among its practitioners. I am less confident that it is recognized by the international development community at large. Practitioners of other methodologies that I contacted were mostly unaware of SAS\(^2\).
Targeting

I have highlighted the different audiences that were reported in the documents or mentioned by the practitioners whom I interviewed: community members, facilitators at the local level, community-based organizations, local governments, NGOs, regional and national planners, national policy makers, project planners, funders in government and in international aid agencies, and university professors and students. SAS\(^2\) training and support materials need to cater to these groups with the appropriate language, workshop style and level, and tool combinations. Since a SAS\(^2\) workshop combines a training event and a collaborative learning experience, it follows that the production of local examples and locally adapted guides is conducive to appropriation\(^8\); it is something to be encouraged among partners.

Targeting also means reflecting on the context in which each audience will apply SAS\(^2\). I certainly heard more anecdotes about the power of SAS\(^2\) when the training happened in real life situations. The power of SAS\(^2\) became real when people witnessed others learning and finding new meaning.

**Reactive criteria:** The authors of SAS\(^2\) are flooded with requests for training. Now is the time to develop criteria to help the authors choose contexts to respond to, such as:

- Individuals or organizations that can replicate the training;
- Individuals, projects or organizations with a concrete topic/theme/issue to address where multiple stakeholders can be convened;
- Individuals, projects or organizations with a long-term commitment to their community; and
- Universities in transition, with leadership that is open to constructivist thinking and with experience in service learning.

(See Nandago, 2007 for an elaboration of choices made in training and facilitation with Reflect.)

**Proactive criteria:** I also see value in being proactive: creating events for brainstorming with practitioners of other collaborative learning methodologies, or in response to invitations from select institutions; seeking donors who are more flexible or in transition to create experimental programs using SAS\(^2\); training professionals in units that are by definition cross-disciplinary.

If SAS\(^2\) is best learned through a gradual apprenticeship in service learning then perhaps service learning and SAS\(^2\) should be more closely integrated (as long as the service learning arrangement responds to the needs of all partners). One way of doing this would be to create a competitive process for SAS\(^2\) training funds similar to the SSHRC Community University Research Alliance (CURA) program. Proposals from community-university partnerships that include service learning would be awarded more points. Such

---

\(^8\) When I work with Ojibwa-Cree communities in Ontario, they often ask me to simplify my terminology so that it can be translated to Oji-Cree.
a point system would respond to the criteria for ideal SAS² leaning places and moments. This implies funding and an administrative support system that may lie beyond the capacity of the SAS² authors in Ottawa; yet is signals an opportunity for IDRC, or other funding partners, for follow-up.

- **Recommendation:** During the November 2008 SAS² International Forum (Celebrating Dialogue), challenge participants to develop categories of users and criteria to select the most promising contexts to work in. Identify the organizations that are best positioned to embrace SAS² and those that can become trainers of others. Reflect on who is in a position to be choosy (i.e. be proactive and selectively reactive) and who is not, and the risks and opportunities involved in becoming more selective. These reactive and proactive criteria will be different across each community of practice. Consider developing a competitive fund, similar to CURA, where community-university partnerships that include service learning would be awarded more points.

**Story telling**

The five skillful means are at the heart of SAS². The tools and the conceptual framework are the foundations to achieving them. Experienced SAS² practitioners who have skillful means will communicate and interact using the tools, as a language. This is not an easy notion to convey in a world driven by instrumental thinking. However, SAS² faces comparable risks to PRA and PLA where the tools became the calling card for the approach. Baser and Morgan (2008) suggest a number of guidelines in the use of tools and frameworks:

- “All frameworks have gaps and limitations. They work much better in some situations than in others. But they can help to craft a shared understanding and guide action provided their blind spots are kept in mind.
- People use tools and frameworks in every situation either explicitly or tacitly. In many cases, the challenge is not so much to find and apply new ones but to bring to the surface those already employed by different groups.
- Tools and frameworks that become ends in themselves, whose use is seen as a guarantee of development effectiveness, tend to begin to generate unhelpful side effects that, in turn, start to erode their impact.
- The desired end point is a customised hybrid tool or framework, crafted in some way by the participants, that emerges in response to a particular set of needs or programme challenges.” (p. 107)

The SAS² Guide is very dry, even though it is rich with case studies for each tool. What is missing, in my opinion, are stories form the users: examples that are introduced and illustrated through narrative. Personal stories convey the power of the approach; I heard them during the interviews. For example, when I recall case of the participant with a speech impediment who did not stutter once during the SAS² workshop, my mind thinks ‘process’, not tools. The ‘SAS Cholo’ incorporates characters like the Ekeko that Andean participants can relate to. As SAS² becomes more culturally engrained, these adaptations will help ground it. Communicating process is hard enough, so having a guide full of tools needs to be balanced with stories.
• **Recommendation:** Seek a balance between the cognitive and the affective sides of learning. Create incentives and mechanisms to collect more narrative accounts of what people felt, did, and learned from SAS² activities. The Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology provides a structured system to categorize and select stories. An MSC exploration could be the basis for a graduate thesis.

• **Recommendation:** Communication efforts should focus on capturing examples of people demonstrating the skillful means. Once the audience understands these, it will use the tools as the mechanisms, and become less toolbox oriented. Communicate the inherent limitations of tools and frameworks.

## How SAS² learns and evolves

So far, SAS² has evolved through practice and by gradually incorporating, adapting, and developing more tools. Perhaps by necessity, it has worked parallel to other approaches that are also in evolution. Working ‘parallel to’ refers to a lack of cross-referencing to SAS² in portals that provide access to comparable tools and approaches (see Appendix 4 for a list of such portals and approaches). I am also referring to the limited—yet growing—exposure in the academic literature. (Several searches using Ingenta led to no hits and two articles that I recently peer reviewed that included comprehensive literature reviews on stakeholder analysis did not mention SAS²). As one informant suggested, it is time for SAS² to be exposed to the global market of approaches.

The transition from Phase 2 to Phase 3 of SAS² offers a strategic moment to reflect on scenarios about how the approach may evolve. I can think of two scenarios:

**Scenario 1: learning within SAS². This is the status quo, where SAS² grows from within its own structure in a manner controlled by its lead authors and accredited trainers.** This situation works well with the accreditation effort in that the approach is clearly packaged for purposes of training others. It remains clear that practitioners are free to use it and combine it with other methods without accreditation. The downside of this scenario is that once practitioners create innovations, there is no method to feed those back into future generations of the package. Will there be a standard SAS² that others can adapt (as in the case of ‘SAS Cholo’), or will ‘SAS Cholo’ shape SAS² itself? The example of PLA Notes comes to mind as one venue used by this community of practice to continue innovating.

**Scenario 2: learning with the outside. This involves actively pursuing opportunities to hybridize SAS² with other approaches that are evolving globally.** Take the example of the participatory market chain approach. This approach may be less demanding of people’s time, given that much preparatory work takes place within each group before a multi-stakeholder workshop is convened (Bernet et al., 2005). I can imagine situations where SAS² tools could work wonders within that framework. In the same vein of market linkages, the First Mile Project focuses on how small farmers, traders, and processors in East African rural areas learn to build market chains, linking producers to consumers.

While the two approaches are clearly very different, the subject matter is not new to SAS². I see scope for cross-pollination.
At the other end of the spectrum, USAID has developed the SCALE approach. SCALE stands for “system-wide collaborative action for livelihoods and the environment.” In this approach, the project begins with all key stakeholders in the room. USAID has experimented with different topics, some of which lend themselves rather well to this approach; it replaces the conventional challenges of scaling up (GreenCom, 2004).

Recent publications by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) on capacity development merit attention in that they address core capabilities by collectives or people. Baser and Morgan (2008) list the following collective or organizational capabilities: capability to balance diversity and coherence; to adapt and self-renew; to relate; to carry out technical, service delivery and logistical tasks; and to commit and engage. It will be interesting to see if and how these notions complement the SAS² skillful means.

The two scenarios that I outline are not exclusive. In fact they could help to shape components of a strategy. My point is that SAS² has already achieved proof of concept, and I see more potential for impact by experimenting with different modalities of use, rather than through more tools.

By modalities I refer to the organizational and project contexts in which an approach evolves. A quick and dirty SAS² with few tools, but with an organization that is able to accompany the process on the ground, may be more promising than the opposite. In my analysis, the relevance of collaborative learning approaches in the future depends less on the tools, and more on the dynamics for convening stakeholders. Both RAAKS and Collaborative Learning dedicate a lot of attention to a first phase where the nature of the collaborative process is defined and redefined in an iterative manner. Paul Engel, the father of RAAKS [the mother is Monique Salomon], once commented that the ‘convening part’ remains the $64 million question. (See the article by Ramírez, 2001 and by Ramírez and Fernández, 2005 in Appendix 3 for a reflection on how power dynamics affect the way such approaches work.)

It could be that the heart of this exploration revolves around the benefits and challenges of the SAS² “label”. Among the benefits, when the label is applied to other tools or techniques, it means that they have been tested and evaluated as compatible with the SAS² philosophy. On the downside, outsiders to SAS² may interpret the labeling as an appropriation effort. I wonder if there is a way to address labeling in a temporary manner to communicate the intentionality behind this balancing act.

**Recommendation:** While SAS² builds on other methods and concepts, the SAS² “label” can lead to confusion about its identity as it hybridizes with others. Even though the second S in the name refers to Systems, the SAS² label is understood by some as a contained approach. Include a Scenarios session in the November 2008 SAS² International Forum to explore the benefits and the risks of hybridizing SAS². The focus would be on labeling, some form of temporary labeling, or no labeling at all.
Carleton University vs. decentralized evolution

If the main contribution of SAS$^2$ is “…to reinforce the role of local actors in defining priority problems and potential actions” (SAS$^2$ 2006 Interim Report, p. 24) then how does this evolve and spread? In other words, where should its authors and practitioners focus energies (the authors’ responses to this question may be different from their partners’ responses). The possibilities include: universities (highest impact according to UNA, see page 25 of the SAS$^2$ 2006 Interim Report), NGOs, CBOs, local governments, national agencies, certification, etc.? If SAS$^2$ is an example of a constructivist approach to learning, capacity development, and action, how does it create mechanisms for collective innovation?

It is clear that the evolution of SAS$^2$ involves juggling several balls at once: publications and web resources, training strategies, mentoring, communities of practice, and selection of partners and projects to support. Suazo illustrates this rather well for Honduras:

“Sin lugar a dudas, los grandes retos para la experiencia del SAS en Honduras consiste en:
1) asegurar aplicación del SAS en las instituciones participantes, sin que el CIID tenga obligatoriamente que dar financiamiento para esta aplicación,
2) la socialización y publicación de experiencias de aplicación del SAS que incluya resultados de los estudios, así como del proceso de aprendizaje, generación e intercambio de conocimientos que se dan en el proceso,
3) la sostenibilidad de la Comunidad de Práctica del SAS en Honduras, incluyendo el proceso de acreditación de facilitadoras(es) e instructoras(es),
4) la inserción de las iniciativas SAS locales en el marco del PRIDE [Programa de Investigación para el Desarrollo] y de otras oportunidades, y la acreditación tanto institucional, como individual, de instituciones, practicantes e instructores SAS.”
(Suazo, 2006. Informe de consultoría en SAS: pp. 5-6)

While it is fair to judge the achievements of Phase 2 of SAS$^2$ in terms of outcomes, a third phase—combined with wider exposure in the international community—will call for more attention to impacts. This then begs the question of how to set targets across the different actions or dimensions that matter.

The Reflect Global Survey [http://www.reflect-action.org/enghome.html](http://www.reflect-action.org/enghome.html) merits attention as a source of inspiration. (See Appendix 5 for its complete Executive Summary.) It remains unclear who decides on targets, as they will be country and context-specific by necessity, yet some sort of aggregation will also be needed.

David Archer’s account of the choices made by ActionAid (with Reflect) are particularly relevant at this juncture:

So we never updated the Reflect Mother Manual, deciding instead to focus on building networks of practitioners: facilitator forums, trainers’ networks, national umbrella groups and regional networks. These spaces for exchange
and learning were used as a direct alternative to publications, to ensure that Reflect would remain as a living and evolving process. (Archer, 2007: 21)

Chambers (2007a) also reflects on some of the enabling and disabling conditions that allow participatory approaches to evolve.

The enabling conditions include:

- a continuity of champions and institutional support
- clear ownership by the organizations charged with disseminating the approach
- when increasing the scale of impact, recognize and address the trade-offs, nuances, and contradiction that are bound to arise
- recognize that multiple versus single sources of funding carry their own limitations

Among the disabling conditions:

- abrupt termination of funding
- inappropriate indicators and evaluations
- fracturing relationships and trust (183-6)

**Recommendation:** Review the variables that David Archer (Reflect) considered as seeds for success or failure (see Appendix 6); many apply to SAS². Referring to these variables—and to Chambers’—may help structure an organized exploration for the future during the November 2008 SAS² International Forum. The exploration should also clarify those decisions and actions that should be held by Carleton from those that need to be country-specific. When decisions and strategies vary from country-to-country, one might say that the Ottawa authors have ceased to function as a center, which is desirable.
## Appendix 1: Evaluation questions and data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desk-review</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Evaluation Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>IMPACTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What has SAS² contributed to your research practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What adaptations of SAS² and combinations of SAS² with other methods have you made?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your plans for future use of SAS²?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What recommendations would you make regarding future development of SAS²?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>DISSEMINATION (training, publication, collaboration)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What have been the outcomes of SAS² training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What forms of collaboration have emerged around the use of SAS²?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your plans for ongoing dissemination of SAS² (Training, Publications, Collaboration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td></td>
<td>What is the contribution of SAS² to the field of Participatory Action Research?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the contributions and limitations of SAS² publications?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the contributions and limitations of SAS² training events and processes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢</td>
<td>➢</td>
<td>What recommendations would you make regarding the dissemination of SAS² (Training, Publication, Collaboration)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: People interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honduras</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmer Reyes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:wreyes@catie.ac.cr">wreyes@catie.ac.cr</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bolivia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar Pabón, y Jose Blanes</td>
<td><a href="mailto:edgar@CEBEM.org">edgar@CEBEM.org</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>India/Bangladesh</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bimal Regmi, LIBIRD</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bregmi@libird.org">bregmi@libird.org</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Amitabha Sarkar &amp; Mr.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:drcsc.ind@gmail.com">drcsc.ind@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapas Mondol, DRCSC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chile, Costa Rica, Spain</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Tapia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ctjopia@yahoo.es">ctjopia@yahoo.es</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Carrière CUSO,</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jacquesc@cuso.or.cr">jacquesc@cuso.or.cr</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Téllez Carrasco</td>
<td><a href="mailto:am2tecaj@uco.es">am2tecaj@uco.es</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Turcot</td>
<td><a href="mailto:paturcot@web.ca">paturcot@web.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Faid</td>
<td><a href="mailto:commserv@shaw.ca">commserv@shaw.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benoît Hurtel</td>
<td><a href="mailto:efficience@videotron.ca">efficience@videotron.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvie Blangy</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sylvie.blangy@rogers.com">sylvie.blangy@rogers.com</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann-Louise Davidson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annlouise_davidson@carleton.ca">annlouise_davidson@carleton.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carleton University</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Buckles</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dbuckles@sympatico.ca">dbuckles@sympatico.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Chevalier</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jacques_chevalier@carleton.ca">jacques_chevalier@carleton.ca</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDRC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merle Faminow, IDRC Montevideo</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mfaminow@idrc.org.uy">mfaminow@idrc.org.uy</a></td>
<td>Skype interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Appendix 3: Documents reviewed

SAS\textsuperscript{2} publications and reports

- Chevalier, J. and Buckles, D. 2005. Carleton supplement to IDRC.
- Chevalier, J. 2004. SAS\textsuperscript{2}-Carleton-Proposal to IDRC.
- Reyes, W. 2008. ¿Qué esta pasando con el SAS en la Universidad Nacional de Agricultura? Honduras: UNA

Reports in the IDRC repository


Sapkota, T.B.; Poudel, B. & Buckles, D. 2007. Identifying stakeholders in a project to prevent and reduce the impacts of floods and landslides in Nepal. 
https://idl-bnc.idrc.ca/dspace/bitstream/123456789/32582/1/126089.pdf

**Relevant literature**


Appendix 4: Other tools and resources for participatory social development

Ports and collections of tools

ECDPM Institutional Development: Learning by doing and sharing.  
http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/msp/Institutional_dev_tools_ECDPM.pdf

Integrated Approaches for Participatory Development (IAPD)  
http://www.iapad.org/

IAPD Participation on the internet (links to web sites)  
http://www.iapad.org/links_participation.htm

Multi-stakeholder processes and social learning portal (Wageningen, the Netherlands)  
http://portals.wi.wur.nl/msp/?Methodologies

Other methods or tool collections that overlap with SAS²

A trainer’s guide for participatory learning and action (Pretty et al., 1995)  

Collaborative management of protected areas: Tailoring the approach to the context  
http://www.iucn.org/themes/spg/Files/tailor.html

Mapping Political Context: A Toolkit for civil society organizations (ODI, UK)  

Power Tools for policy influence in natural resource management (IIED, UK)  
http://www.policy-powertools.org/index.html

Rapid Appraisal of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (RAAKS)  
http://www.kit.nl/smartsite.shtml?ch=FAB&id=4616&Part=Resources

REFLECT, participatory literacy approach (AcionAid)  
http://www.reflect-action.org

Socio-economic and gender analysis programme (SEAGA)  
http://www.fao.org/sd/seaga/1_en.htm

UNDP: Democratic dialogue a handbook for practitioners  
http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/page.pl?s=2;p=tools_handbook_dd

Popularized, locally produced format

PPAZ/GRZ Community-based distribution project Eastern Province, Zambia. Participatory learning and action (n.d.).  
http://participation.110mb.com/Other/Participatory_learning_and_action.pdf
Appendix 5. Reflect Global Survey: Executive Summary

The following text is copied from: http://www.reflect-action.org/enghome.html

We highlight below some of the key insights from this survey but encourage you to look through the full report, as the analysis of these results is crucial:

- The vast majority of organisations using Reflect are local, national or internationals NGOs, but there is a growing level of use by governments.
- Nearly 40% of Reflect practice now involves work in urban areas, but rural work remains the most widespread.
- Inter-institutional training workshops, particularly at national level, have been the most important means of spreading Reflect, though exchange visits and publications have also played a significant role.
- Most organisations using Reflect have developed a local name for the approach to strengthen ownership—with names in 37 different languages used by respondents to this survey.
- Less than a quarter of organisations using Reflect see it just as (or principally as) an approach to literacy. Rather it is often seen as a grassroots foundation for people-centred development or advocacy programmes.
- There are at least 200,000 participants presently in Reflect circles and the approach is spreading at an incremental rate.
- Reflect is a very intensive and extensive process. On average participants meet for over two hours in each session, three days a week for over two years—though there is considerable variation.
- Reflect is used with pre-existing community groups (women’s groups, savings and credit groups, existing literacy groups) in about 60% of cases. In less than 40% of cases the groups are specifically formed as Reflect circles.
- Most circles have between 10 and 30 participants. Two thirds of participants are between 15 and 35 years old.
- In 80% of cases Reflect circles work in the mother tongue of participants.
- Most participants in Reflect processes are women—and sixty organisations using Reflect work only with all-women’s groups.
- A clear majority of participants have had no previous access to education—but in some contexts Reflect is used with people who have completed primary education or even have some secondary education.
- Less than 10% of participants are reported to have dropped out – though the accuracy of this finding is questioned. Economic pressures (work / migration) are the principal cause of drop out followed by illness/death and lack of interest.
- There is a balance of male and female facilitators—but there are proportionately more male facilitators than there are male participants.
- Facilitators tend to be in the same age range as participants and overwhelmingly come from the same community.
- Most facilitators have been educated to secondary-level but some have only
primary education. Over a third have had no previous training experience.

- Nearly half of all facilitators receive a basic honorarium—but a quarter are volunteers and a further quarter receive proper pay for their work.
- The main motivation for facilitators seems to be a commitment to social change but the experience and social status achieved are also important.
- There is a reasonable level of continuity of facilitators, with most working for more than a year and a fifth working for more than two years. However, facilitator dropout is clearly a significant issue for some organisations.
- ActionAid plays a significant role in organising training of trainers but other organisations are running an increasing number of these and now play the dominant role in training facilitators.
- Two-thirds of Reflect facilitators receive follow up/refresher training after their initial training (usually 2 weeks) and over 60% of facilitators have weekly or monthly meetings with other facilitators.
- The range of participants’ abilities and the quality of facilitation are identified as the biggest difficulties in training facilitators. Time constraints are the most significant problem with training of trainers.
- There are many diverse approaches to the use of training resources/manuals, with some practitioners rejecting any manual but most using a local manual—especially one produced by facilitators themselves.
- A huge range of participatory approaches are used in the Reflect process, with visualisations (maps, calendars, diagrams, matrices, rivers, trees) being dominant together with approaches drawing on oral culture (songs, stories, role play, theatre). Nearly 30 organisations have also introduced participatory video work. A large number also draw on real materials (newspapers, documents etc).
Appendix 6: Lessons from the evolution of Reflect

The table below summarizes thirteen critical factors identified by David Archer to review the success and the possible failures of the Reflect approach that was supported by ActionAid for many years.

Source:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive attributes</th>
<th>Drawbacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reflect was innovative</td>
<td>People love something new You cannot remain innovative for long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A strong identity</td>
<td>Having a name became important Some practitioners felt excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A simple manual</td>
<td>Reflect Mother Manual: emphasized that it should not be seen as an absolute guide Tried updating it, tried living document and then shifted to production of local variations; and away from publications to exchanges and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rooted in the work of Paolo Freire</td>
<td>Endorsement by Freire added prestige Lack of gender dimension was critiqued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Part of the participation movement</td>
<td>Shifted emphasis from tools to processes, and facilitator transformation People tend to focus on tools and techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Roots in three continents</td>
<td>A broad base of trained people; celebrated diversity Regional tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A grassroots identity</td>
<td>Clearly rooted with the poor and excluded Grassroots celebration has gone to extremes, shifted emphasis to linking micro and macro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ActionAid supported spread</td>
<td>While ActionAid supported Reflect actively, it first spread through other organizations ActionAid was responsible for some of the worst practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. External validation by ODA/DFID</td>
<td>ODA published the first action research report and this elevated the credibility Large donor endorsement led to request for money to do Reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Support from big players</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
World Bank provided flexible funding that allowed for networking | Further WB funding refused to avoid co-option and possible discredit

### 11. Adult literacy: a powerful entry point

| A clearly established concept with a wide network of practitioners | Shifted focus to *adult learning* to reduce expectations for conventional top-down teaching |

### 12. Reflect was not controlled

| There was no patent nor restricted distribution | Some dubious effects took place and they are ignored; authors remain cautious of passing judgement about who is doing it well nor not |

### 13. A vocal champion

| David Archer responded to his elevated position with an effort to reflect on the power he has and how he uses it; the approach is now coordinated by CIRAC in Uganda, not ActionAid | David Archer became associated with the approach as its embodiment, which he is not pleased with, although he has been its key champion |