Chapter 19

Cultural Beacons in Health Communication: Leveraging Overlooked Indicators and Grassroots Wisdoms[1]

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> *Said the Eye one day,*
> *"I see beyond these valleys a mountain veiled with blue mist. Is it not beautiful?"*
> *The Ear listened, and after listening intently awhile, said,*
> *"But where is any mountain? I do not hear it."*
> *Then the Hand spoke and said,*
> *"I am trying in vain to feel it or touch it, and I can find no mountain."*
> *And the Nose said,*
> *"There is no mountain, I cannot smell it."*
> *Then the Eye turned the other way, and they all began to talk together about the Eye's strange delusion.*
> *And they said, "Something must be the matter with the Eye."*
>
> *—Kahlil Gibran[2]*

What do we see, hear, touch, and feel? What do we not see, not hear, not touch, and not feel? These two queries–both their intellectual substance and their riddle-esque style–capture key challenges around designing, implementing, and evaluating health communication interventions. Consider a team of health practitioners and researchers collaborating to design a nutrition program in a community, and administering a pre-intervention needs assessment survey that asks: *What is the general wellness of the community? Who is malnourished and who is thriving? Which citizens perform Nutrition Strategies X, Y, and Z?* Post-intervention, the team might re-distribute the survey, seeking answers to the same questions in order to gauge the effect of the intervention.

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1   This article draws upon research conducted by the present authors in Uganda, India, Perú, and Sénégal.
2   From *The Madman: His Parables and Poems*, first published in 1918.

This pre-post data can begin to illuminate the intervention's effects. However, the team will only learn about the predetermined survey constructs—i.e., the survey will deliver a limited knowledge product. Further, the respondents' answers will be codified in pre-determined response categories—i.e., the data collected is bounded by the narrow knowledge-generating framework. Like each body part enumerated in Gibran's parable, this survey instrument can detect and process only a certain type of information. By definition, the survey instrument cannot discover or process any other type of information.

We call on health communicators to purposely and mindfully gather information that is traditionally overlooked and omitted, for such can yield surprising and invaluable insights. What if the hypothetical nutrition team had subjected its corpus to the following critical questions: Whose experiences do these data reflect, and whose voices are absent? What data is collected, and what is not? What data characteristics lend credibility to local wisdom, and what characteristics prompt its dismissal? In this scenario and for all health communicators, the answers to these questions begin to guide the discovery of overlooked indicators and grassroots wisdoms.

We call these overlooked indicators and grassroots wisdoms *cultural beacons* (CBs) (Durá, Felt & Singhal, 2012). This chapter will explore the nature of CBs as well as offer tools for putting CBs into practice. Specifically, it will examine CBs' theoretical underpinnings, provide case studies in which CBs emerged, recommend strategies for designing, implementing, and evaluating interventions that integrate CBs, and recommend more sources of practical information for enriching and extending our practice. Our purpose is to take seriously the essence of Gibran's tale and to not miss, or discredit, what's really out there.

Theoretical Frame for Cultural Beacons

Much like a beam from a lighthouse, cultural beacons can guide outsiders, helping them to negotiate unexpected features of a landscape as well as establish moorings upon a solid base. (Durá, Felt, & Singhal, 2013)

In our exploratory work on cultural beacons, we termed overlooked indicators and local wisdoms *cultural scorecards*: culturally embedded, user-defined measures for understanding communicative meaning(s), components, and sites of change (Singhal & Durá, 2009; Singhal, Durá, & Felt, 2011). The term was later changed to *cultural beacons* (Durá, Felt, &

Singhal, 2013). This latter designation acknowledges the capacity of on-the-ground insights to illuminate (as beacons do) unique features of people and places. Here, we call upon health communicators to more mindfully consider cultural beacons (CBs) for three key reasons: (1) traditional data-gathering does not wholly capture program-related transformations (Smith, 1999; Shiva, 2005; Dutta & Pal, 2010); (2) non-traditional, non-textual, and participatory forms of knowledge-generation can yield overlooked data; and (3) local wisdoms, enshrined in grassroots epistemologies, can enrich program design and evaluation.

Traditional Data-Gathering Delimits Understanding

Let us return to the nutrition example where a pre-post survey asks: What is the community's general wellness now? Who are malnourished or thriving, respectively? Who now performs Nutritional Strategies X, Y, and Z? Such a survey instrument is unequipped to capture certain program-related transformations. For instance, it does not measure the quantity of nutritional supplements sold at the local store, nor does it ask for observed changes, such as the extent to which common lands show signs of scavenging. Although this instrument might allow space for "any additional comment," its design does not prioritize unexpected outcomes, such as heavy rainfall, abundant fodder, and improved livestock wellness.

By design, tools like surveys, and protocols for in-depth interviews and focus groups, circumscribe range and depth of self-expression (especially with taboo topics), context (time and place of assessment), and sample size. Investigator agendas are almost always ranked above the participants' and thus participants' lived realities are often absent from data corpuses. Not surprisingly, program evaluation literature that has focused on traditional indicators of participant knowledge, attitude, and behavior change has been found wanting in gauging program effectiveness (e.g., Saegert, Benitez, Eizenberg, Hsieh, & Lamb, 2004; Ebrahim, 2005).

To change our mindsets about datasets is difficult for both participants and researchers. We tend to re-enact established operating procedures, or follow our learned scripts. To justify our scripts, we label them as "tried and true" or as "effective," "efficient," or "generalizable." Although scripts are necessary and often deliver satisfactory results, they become dangerous when fossilized as dogma. Kenneth Burke (1954) described this phenomenon of losing the ability to think beyond one's training as *trained incapacities* (p. 7).

Trained incapacities curtail not only what we can see, hear, or execute but also delimit what we cannot see, cannot hear, or cannot do.

Participatory, Non-Textual Data-Gathering Enhances Understanding

In the Western tradition of conducting research, information not codified in print has been repressed, disqualified, and/or dismissed. This perspective, in which unlettered knowledge is considered illegitimate, has been described as "textocentric" (Conquergood, 2002; Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006). We argue that indigenous, informal, and *non-textocentric* data gathering can deeply enhance understanding of interventional effectiveness. What are these non-textual, participatory forms of knowledge generation? Artistic, musical, oral, and visual performances represent formats for the traditionally silent to raise their proverbial voices (e.g., Boal, 1979; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Singhal, Harter, Chitnis, & Sharma, 2007). Participatory visualization techniques (e.g., participatory photography and sketching) accompanied by oral narratives are low-cost, audience-centered methodologies to assess participants' perceptions and interpretations of a social change intervention (Singhal & Devi, 2003; Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty, 2006). The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique also solicits participants' experiences of program-produced change, enabling the articulation of unexpected outcomes, appreciation of diverse participation, and facilitation of organizational learning (Dart & Davies, 2003; Davies & Dart, 2005). Additional participatory methodologies include (but are not limited to) participatory appraisal and asset mapping.

How do non-textual, participatory data add value to what one obtains from traditional data gathering methods? In terms of knowledge *product*, cultural beacons (CBs) add value by considering grassroots "meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded, or hidden in context" (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146). CBs are *culturally embedded*—that is, so specific to a culture that they often seem "invisible" to outsiders. They are *user-defined*–that is, the participants recognize the value/ascribe significance to these data themselves. Thus, in terms of knowledge *process*, participatory, non-textocentric methods inherently reveal the world of respondents, sharing clues as to "what counts" in their cultural contexts. CBs also can reinforce validity by inductively informing how we measure, what we measure, and with whose indicators we measure.

Local Wisdom and Grassroots Epistemologies Need to Be Understood

Robert Chambers, a leading scholar of participation, power, and social change, maintains that participatory research methodologies (PMs) illuminate on-the-ground realities for outsiders. Chambers (2010) points to the importance of local wisdom in this story from Bangladesh:

"…A team led by a consultant used an array of PRA [participatory rural appraisal] tools, a listening study, and drama to generate value statements from members of the movement. The over 8,000 resulting key statements from groups and committees were 'peppered with perspectives which had never occurred to staff'" (p. 38).

Similarly, public health scholar Meredith Minkler (2000) affirms the value of local wisdom. The community members' feedback "at first seemed to make little sense from an epidemiological perspective. Yet, as residents described the logic behind their sorting, it soon became clear that their analyses were based on a sophisticated knowledge of the communities in which they lived" (p. 194).

Participatory methodologies invoke grassroots wisdoms to surface. Usually PMs are deployed within the context of participatory action research (PAR), a dialogic and collaborative process that invites participants and practitioners to co-construct research design and contribute to ongoing data collection. Minkler (2000) lauds PAR as "an empowering process through which participants can increase control over their lives by nurturing community strengths and problem-solving abilities" (p. 193). In terms of benefits, PAR also can "sensitize both the community and the providers about the feelings and constraints of the other side," ensuring that the dialogue does not become adversarial (Singh & Shah, n.d., p. 6). Educational researchers Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle (2009) also interrogate epistemological frameworks, characterizing knowledge as fluid, dynamic, and constructed; as such, any search for "truth" must include joint construction of local knowledge, questioning of common assumptions, and scrutiny of whose perspectives are left out (p. 2).

To illustrate the processes through which local knowledge can be co-constructed between researchers and the respondents, we turn to two case studies that are rich with cultural beacons: One from Uganda; the other from India.

Cultural Beacons Revealed in the Field[3]

The general purpose of both the Uganda and the India projects was to create a more healthy community in a geographically circumscribed area. The insights reported here come from both formal, structured (participatory) evaluation activities, and also from informal observations and interrogations that were noted in our field journals and photographically.

Mats, Home Goods, G-nuts and Birds in Uganda[4]

As the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) civil conflict showed signs of ebbing in northern Uganda in 2007 and 2008, thousands of abductees were rescued or managed to escape captivity. Five thousand of the estimated 26,000 returnees were female (Okot, Lamunu, & Oketch, 2011). While in captivity they were forced to act as porters and cooks, often as soldiers (compelling them to commit atrocities themselves), and almost universally as sex slaves. As a result, "home" communities tended to reject these "LRA-tainted" women, many of whom returned pregnant or with their captor-sired children in tow. Two of the present authors collected data to evaluate a Save the Children project that aimed to reintegrate these stigmatized returned abductees within their communities. In a participatory sketching activity with returned abductees to gauge post-intervention change, it was noted that several respondents drew a homestead, an adjacent tree, and a mat beneath this tree. In a casual conversation about this observed pattern, a local project coordinator explained to us that for the Acholi people of northern Uganda, a mat beneath a homestead-adjacent tree means, "You are welcome. Please come, sit, and share a cup of tea in the shade." This mat is a culturally embedded, user-defined indicator of individuals' capacity for hospitality and leisure. It implies psychosocial healing, material well-being, and evidence of feeling that one belongs to the community, i.e., triumph over social stigma. The repetitive drawing of the mat under a tree signifies that the respondents felt they had achieved a certain level of reintegration within their communities.

More CBs denoting social reintegration appeared unexpectedly. Several project participants invited us into their homesteads. Without fail, each hostess urged us to sit on plastic patio chairs and proudly pointed to her array of possessions—a radio set, hand-held mirrors, large sacks of g-nuts (peanuts), and plastic water bottles of a liter or more filled with shea smearing oil. We

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3   This section draws upon and builds on our previous work (Durá, Felt, & Singhal, 2012; Singhal, Durá, & Felt, 2011; Singhal & Durá 2010).
4   This section draws upon Singhal and Durá (2008).

asked each woman we visited how she felt about her position in the community. A typical response was, "Before, I couldn't look at my face in the mirror, but now I am proud." Many would say, "I like putting smearing oil on my face. I like to look nice" (Singhal & Durá, 2008, p. 66). Thus, we came to understand that the mirrors and smearing oil were CBs; they represented a sense of self-worth and belonging, as well as a commitment to hygiene and personal grooming. We later learned about the significance of the chairs. Having chairs and a table confers social status. It shows that one has the means and the pride to treat guests with honor, sparing them from sitting or eating on the dirt floor. As for the radio, participants explained that this made them feel connected to the outside world. Such a commitment to information and connection, especially when the world beyond their walls had treated them so brutally, suggests the women's healing—the radio was a CB too.

An off-the-cuff field conversation provided a third occasion to discover two CBs. As we walked for several kilometers in the Acholi bush, we noticed whole g-nut shells scattered along the road. Staff member Jimmy explained that g-nuts on the ground are a sign of abundance. Before, people were so hungry that if ever there were a g-nut on the ground, it would be eaten immediately. Now, he said, you also see birds in the campsites. Before, birds didn't come because there were no spare food scraps for them to eat (Singhal & Durá, 2008). Jimmy's words reveal the g-nuts and campsite birds as CBs that represent abundance. Their presence shows, in no uncertain terms, that residents now have enough to eat

These CBs in Uganda are bright spots of devastated communities that are moving toward health and healing. They indicate growing psychological and material well-being as the previously stigmatized now exhibit signs of self-worth, dignity, and belonging. Even the trodden earth shows hints of community abundance.
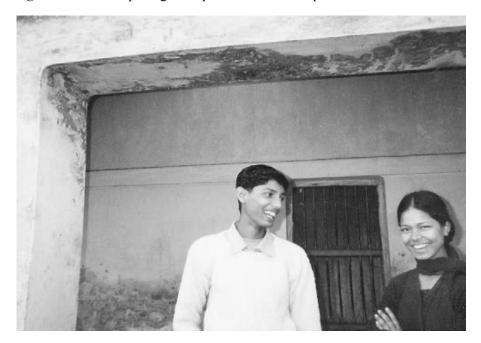
Birthdays, Boyfriends and Bicycles in India[5]

In the Indian state of Bihar, an entertainment-education radio serial called *Taru* commanded the airwaves from 2002 to 2003. *Taru* was a media and community-based intervention to create healthy communities in rural India. *Taru*'s purpose was to promote gender equality, reproductive health, caste and communal harmony, and community development. One of the present authors led the program evaluation of the *Taru* project. Participants in the *Taru* project

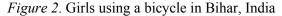---

5   This section draws upon Singhal (2010).

were asked to photograph and narrate visible signs of change in their communities after active program viewing. In an in-depth interview, one respondent described the first ever celebration of a birthday party for a young girl, attributing it as an effect of *Taru*. While many boys in rural Bihar celebrate their birthdays, such is not the case for girls—a sign of girls' unequal status. Thus, this girl's party, inspired by the soap opera's modeling of a young girl's birthday, was a CB. It demonstrated a courageous change of long-standing tradition; the party's significance was further vetted by the discovery that several other young girls celebrated their birthdays in the following months.

Figure 1. Vandana posing for a picture next to her platonic male friend

A 17-year-old girl named Vandana explained two CBs embedded in a photograph of herself. First, Vandana was wearing jeans in the picture. Since conservative villagers deem jeans inappropriate, her fashion challenges historically accepted gender roles and tradition—a goal of the *Taru* project. That Vandana felt strong enough to take such a stand suggests an improved sense of confidence. Second, the jeans-clad Vandana was standing beside a boy—perhaps the first time in Kamtaul Village history that a young woman invited a platonic male friend to stand beside her in a picture. So, this companionship choice is also a CB indicating empowerment.

Another CB emerged from a snapshot (see Figure 2) of two girls walking with a bicycle.

Figure 2. Girls using a bicycle in Bihar, India

To explain the significance of this image, a local male resident stated: "These girls are trying to learn to ride a bike. After listening to *Taru*, girls are changing. By listening to radio these girls learn of new ideas and act on them" (Singhal, 2010, p. 16). This is two CBs in one: not only does it suggest female empowerment, but it also points to radio's ability to impact cultural norms.

Our field experiences in Uganda and India suggest to us that cultural beacons can appear in at least three forms:

1. *Material possessions whose ownership indicates functional or cultural well-being (e.g., a mat, a radio, mirrors, smearing oils, chairs)*;
2. *Natural resources whose presence or state indicates social conditions (e.g., g-nuts on the ground, birds at campsites)*;
3. *Social behaviors whose performance indicates change for individuals or collectives (e.g., celebrating girls' birthdays, wearing jeans, riding bicycles).*

Implications for Designing Health Communication Projects

From the Uganda and India illustrations of cultural beacons, it is clear that CBs are grassroots, locally relevant indicators that tend to be invisible to out-

siders and embedded within local culture. So, how can one design, discover, and evaluate health communication projects to more readily reveal cultural beacons? In so doing, how can health communicators expand their understanding of local wisdoms and grassroots epistemologies?

Designing with Cultural Beacons in Mind

How can health communication projects be designed so that cultural beacons may more readily surface? Designing for CBs requires "untraining" fossilized scripts related to research design and data collection, sharpening observation and listening skills, and nurturing relationships between and among multiple stakeholders. In light of Gibran's parable, those looking for CBs should be prepared to listen with their eyes and see with their ears. What concrete actions might be taken to "watch" and "listen" for CBs?

Incorporate Participatory Practices. To design for CBs, health communication projects may consider incorporating some form of participatory action research (PAR). PAR values co-constructed knowledge building through collaboration, and relies upon an iterative cycle of planning, action, and reflection over time (Aringay, 2008). Embracing PAR can enable the conditions for CBs to emerge. Our work in Uganda demonstrated how participatory methodologies, such as sketching and narration, off-the-cuff conversations with the participants and local project staff (e.g., Why the plastic chairs?), clarification from participants (e.g., g-nuts indicate community abundance), and reflection upon what this all meant shaped our ensuing work.

Embrace "Unusual Suspects." Before designing a health communication project, the universe of stakeholders must be identified. Who stands to gain or lose from this project? Whose input is crucial to the project's success? It also helps to plan for "unusual suspects": those who, traditionally, have not been considered crucial to the project's success but who might yield unexpected insights. For instance, let us return to the photo of two young girls in rural Bihar trying to help each other in riding a bicycle. The picture and narration came from 22-year-old Mukesh, a male resident of Abirpur village, who connected the dots. Here were two young girls who were listening to *Taru,* learning about gender equality, and who began to do things, i.e., ride a bicycle—behaviors attributed to men. Mukesh represents an "unusual suspect" because, in order to ascertain the empowerment of young girls, researchers usually survey young girls, their parents, or their peers exclusively. Rarely would young men in the community be asked for local signifiers of girls' empowerment. To increase the odds of noticing CBs through unusual

suspects, health communicators may ask: *What am I not seeing or hearing? Who else do I need to speak with?*

Nurture Relationships. The cornerstones of healthy relationships between researchers, respondents, and project staff are respect, trust, and productive communication. This emerges from *mutual demystification*—that is, parties knowing one another and being known. Sharing meals, extending courtesies, and dialoguing about non-task issues help in building relationships. In our work in Uganda, we invested about 30 to 40 percent of our time doing so. This sense of familiarity and, importantly, trust allowed us to approach colleagues such as Jimmy and ask about the g-nuts on the ground, or the plastic chairs for visitors. The benefit of familiarity and trust cuts both ways; because project participants trusted us, they invited us to their homesteads after formal data collection had concluded. We noted our observations in field journals and, appreciating these data's richness, requested permission from the participants to report. Again, due to trust, they consented. The success of projects—and the health of communities, for that matter—hinges upon partners' relationships (Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006). Such is true for discovering cultural beacons, as well.

Share Vision(s) and Ownership. Now that you know *of* all the stakeholders in the project, you can be sure that you're inviting everyone you should to participate in the collaborative vision-sharing. And, because now you *know* all of the stakeholders in the project, the odds of them sharing frank, comprehensive, and productive insights are quite good.

Whether you use needs assessment, asset-mapping, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, or another methodology to establish consensus as to the project's goals and scope, arriving at goals together will lay the groundwork for shared ownership of project processes. Jointly develop a program and research plan that enfranchises diverse individuals in multiple activities (e.g., data collection, training) across the project's scope and sequence. Co-construct multiple means of both gathering participants' insights and translating this rich data.

Open Space for the Unexpected. In our experience, many CBs revealed themselves during off-the-cuff conversations and unplanned follow-up questions. The implication: be curious and purposely schedule flexible time to capitalize on emergent opportunities, e.g., accept invitations to visit participant homes so you can ask about what they do with the shea smearing oil, or walk (instead of drive) from one homestead to another so you can notice g-nuts on the ground, and so on.

A simple design check-list is provided below.

Cultural Beacons Design Checklist

√	DESIGN TASK
	With diverse colleagues, identify all stakeholders and unusual suspects. Ask, Who else needs to be here?
	Do not miss an opportunity to build relationships with field staff and respondents. Engage in mutual demystification.
	Be curious. Ask questions. Be open to wonder and surprise.

Discovering CBs: "Invisible" and Embedded Indicators

How can stakeholders in health communication projects more readily discover cultural beacons? Participatory, non-textocentric methodologies invite locals to share culturally embedded, user-defined insights. Participatory sketching / photography, coupled with the artists' narration of these images, led to our recognition of CBs on multiple occasions. In order to "discover" that these were CBs and held special meaning or importance, we looked for the frequency with which these images appeared across various participants. For instance, a sketch of the mat under a tree appeared with repeated frequency to indicate a cultural pattern.

More importantly, when any part of an image was not explained, we asked a follow-up question; since CBs' significance is always "invisible" to outsiders, locals' clarification is the only way to uncover the precious within the seemingly banal.

A simple discovery check-list is provided below.

Cultural Beacons Discovery Checklist

√	DISCOVERY TASK
	Act in ways that will facilitate CBs' discovery: visit locals in their cultural context(s), use participatory, non-textocentric methodologies
	Scrutinize likely CB sites: material possessions, natural resources, social behaviors

Evaluating Cultural Beacons

How can health communication projects evaluate the robustness of cultural beacons?

To evaluate a CB, first ascertain whether an artifact meets the two criteria of a CB. Is it (1) culturally embedded—that is, so specific to a culture that it may seem "invisible" to outsiders; and (2) user-defined—that is, the participants recognize the value/ascribe significance to these data themselves? If these qualifications are met, then the reliability and validity of the CB can be further explored through various strategies: triangulation, quantitative validation, scaling considerations, and measures of organizational learning.

Triangulation. Suppose a participant of a hand-washing campaign sketched a restroom wastebasket, then explained its significance: prior to the intervention, no one had wastebaskets in their restrooms because they didn't need to throw away paper towels (either because they weren't washing their hands at all or because they weren't drying their hands on this sanitary, disposable vector). The participant's account turns restroom wastebaskets into a CB. But to what extent does this CB, if it was mentioned only once, represent community conditions?

Triangulating, or using multiple measures to capture data on a single construct, could reveal whether a phenomenon (in this case, increased paper towel waste due to sanitary hand-washing practice) suggested by a CB (the restroom wastebasket) is occurring widely. External measures, such as vendors' records of wastebaskets, paper towels, and soap sold, or observed changes, such as the extent to which these wastebaskets are filled with paper towels, also could support the CB. If these measures are substantially and significantly correlated with the CB-derived data, then the CB acquires significance.

Quantitative Checks. The above hand-washing example offers ways to examine the program-related impacts of CBs in quantitative terms, e.g., repeated sales of paper towels and soap, frequency of emptying of wastebaskets, and such. Performance of private behaviors can be corroborated by means other than self-report. In so doing, the researchers may expand their depth and breadth of a particular effect and be motivated to pursue more data metrics.

Scaling Considerations. Identifying CBs can expand our notion of what it means to scale. Scaling, or increasing access to "solutions," should not be seen only along a vertical axis. Since participants may take skills/experiences/innovations from one project and apply it to another lateral concern, scaling also can be understood horizontally. For instance, participants

in the hand-washing intervention may apply what they learned about germs to change their habits around preparing food, treating wounds, or disposing waste. They also might leverage their participation in less direct ways, such as by applying their self-efficacy as learners to other learning contexts. This hyper-local approach may be a more productive and sustainable way to scale than widely disseminating a single-issue intervention.

Organizational Learning. Finally, CBs can enrich organizational learning and serve diverse stakeholders. Because CBs have the potential to more fully illuminate program impact, organizations can better ascertain the relative efficiencies of their efforts and the ripple effects engendered. For example, the organization behind the hand-washing campaign could use related CBs to estimate campaign embrace and local economic impact, as well as contextualize the community's decrease in hospital visits since the campaign began. Moreover, processes associated with participation can significantly benefit participants, delivering opportunities for developing skills, relationships, and self-efficacy in important areas. The utility and longevity of such assets contributes to the value and sustainability of an intervention.

A simple evaluation check-list is provided below.

Cultural Beacons Evaluation Checklist

√	EVALUATION TASK
	Test whether a CB meets the two-fold threshold for qualification
	Use multiple measures to triangulate
	Corroborate beyond self-report, e.g., with external measures or observed changes
	Investigate horizontal scaling impacts related to the phenomenon represented by the CB (optional)
	Evaluate how CBs impact organizational and individual learning

Conclusion

In this chapter, we proposed strategies for the design, implementation, and evaluation of overlooked indicators and grassroots wisdoms, which we call cultural beacons. Our research is anchored by the theoretical observations that traditional data-gathering methods are insufficient for capturing all pro-

gram-related changes, and "other" ways of knowing yield legitimate data that can enrich programmatic efforts and formal reports. We illustrate these theoretical observations through two case studies from Uganda and India, comprising almost a dozen examples of CBs.

The exploration of cultural beacons in general and the tools we have presented in this chapter are by no means exhaustive, nor are they meant to be prescriptive. Rather, they are meant to be beacons themselves: guiding practice and, in the spirit of action research, informed by practice as well. In the Appendix we suggest readings and resources for continued exploration and enrichment. Further work with CBs should necessarily follow, including an attention to research ethics. Thoughtful consideration must be given to Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved activities, participants' informed consent, and researcher-participant norms.

To honor IRB-approved plans as well as open space for detecting CBs, research designs should include flexible contexts for data gathering, such as key informant interviews, participant-observation, and ethnographic documentation. When it seems as though a specific mode for CB detection might fall outside previously approved research plans, investigators should petition the IRB to make modifications so this opportunity is not lost.

Data cannot be gathered without participants' informed consent. In the case of g-nuts on the ground, a staff member acted as a key informant— Jimmy provided data. When we realized the richness of his insight, we reminded Jimmy of his rights and requested his participation in the research. Because of the rapport we had established with Jimmy, we believed that he freely chose to engage; however, because of Jimmy's professional role, we needed to ensure that he did not feel coerced. A special informed consent protocol might be useful in cases like these, and merits further exploration. To design for CBs, it is probably useful to define the research population in the original IRB submission as community members and stakeholders.

Norms in terms of researcher-participant interactions also might require re-evaluation. In order to protect researchers' "objectivity," their engagement with project participants is usually confined to formal data collection activities. But such spaces limit opportunities for building trust and meaningfully learning about the local context on participants' terms, in their spaces. Rather than understanding validity as a function of distance, it might be more productive to understand it as a function of comprehension. The better we comprehend a community and its residents, the more valid are our reports of program-related outcomes. Our understanding of how to approach health communication inter-

ventions and research with CBs in mind is young and, from our collaborative efforts with diverse stakeholders, will continue to grow.

Acknowledgements

Recommended Readings

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Additional Resources

The 4 Cs of Participation Inventory (Reilly, Jenkins, Felt, & Vartabedian, 2012, p. 18) was developed for educators to identify their learning contexts' participation opportunities. Its greater objective is to facilitate learning in a culture where "…members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another" (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison, 2006, p. 3). Because this sense of self-efficacy and community describes a participatory action research (PAR) project, the tool may help PAR practitioners to reflect upon and address participants' enfranchisement.

- How do we provide mechanisms to **CREATE**?
- How do we support opportunities for media to **CIRCULATE** across platforms, disciplines and ages?
- How do we help learners to **COLLABORATE** and build upon others' knowledge?
- How do we encourage learners to **CONNECT** with counterparts and establish productive networks?

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