Impact Finder: Board Game as a Tool for Social Impact Assessment Knowledge Transfer

Siyanee Hirunsalee and Chanya Punyakumpol

Abstract This chapter introduced Impact Finder, gaming, and simulation invented in order to support a transfer of complicated knowledge of social impact assessment (SIA). Impact Finder has proved to be a useful tool for beginners who are new to SIA to gain basic understanding of two of the most important tools for measuring impact, namely, Theory of Change and Impact Value Chain.

Keywords Gaming simulation · Social impact assessment · Knowledge transfer

1 Background

Confirmed by previous research, gaming and simulation can play an important role as communication tool to transfer knowledge, leading to better understanding of the knowledge. The research also concluded that players have tendency to change their behavior according to the knowledge learnt throughout the game [1]. In light of this, the Impact Finder is invented in order to support a transfer of complicated knowledge of social impact assessment (SIA). Impact Finder is portrayed to be used along with the prior lecture educating SIA. Impact Finder is suitable for those who are interested in learning about SIA and welcome active learning, which allows the discussion among players. Players are to learn how to classify output, outcome, and impact of both intended and unintended social consequence and then realized how to start, manage, and monitor social impact in action. Impact Finder is repeatable and yet enjoyable; it encourages players to revisit the game when SIA knowledge is fade away or even just to have fun with a group of friends.

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2   Overview of Social Impact Assessment

One social impact assessment (SIA) refers to an action of evaluating social outcomes and impacts of a social project or activities of social-purpose organizations to demonstrate results in addressing social issues. It is becoming more and more popular due to the demands of funders to see the results of their "investments." More importantly, as Ebrahim and Rangan [2] have stated, as the sector is professionalized, it is but a natural development of administrative norms for social-purpose organizations which claim to work for social changes in one way or another.

Unlike financial accountings and auditing, there is no standard practice that is recognized globally for measuring the social performances and auditing social impacts of social-purpose organizations. Yet, certain concepts and tools have emerged at the forefront as common practices, especially among nonprofits and social enterprises. In particular, two concepts are important for discussing Impact Finder, as a tool for social impact assessment knowledge transfer, namely, Theory of Change and Impact Value Chain (IVC). Traditionally, "Theory of Change" is a way to comprehensively describe the desired changes that an organization want to achieve, how such desired can come by, and in which ways the organization is contributing toward such changes. Figure 1 shows an example of a Theory of Change of Elm Harbor, a program designed to improve learning for children and families [3]. The desired outcome is "improved learning for children and families," and the necessary condition for this outcome to occur is that "stakeholders in the Elm Harbor Region come together to create the pack initiative," while boxes in the middles are exactly how the program aims to contribute toward the change.

On the other hand, another major tool used by social-purpose organizations is called Impact Value Chain or logic model, which has a setup similar to Fig. 2. Impact Value Chain has been developed for the purpose of evaluating programs or projects, originally by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) around the 1960s [2]. The key components of Impact Value Chain as shown in Fig. 2 are inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The framework helps evaluators and organizations alike in walking through their activities and make connections to the desired impacts.

A lot of the inspirations for developing Impact Finder come from our direct experiences working in social innovation and social enterprise field in Thailand. Particularly, we have done some social impact assessment projects and organized workshops relating to social impact assessment. Although social impact assessment is yet to be a mainstream practice among social-purpose organizations or social projects in Thailand, it is gaining more and more momentum and interests from various groups of people, especially among potential funders and investors who would like to fund social enterprises and social projects, as evidenced from the active participation of the Stock Exchange of Thailand and other listed companies, as well as the government.

Even though social impact assessment is being recognized in Thailand, a lot of social enterprises and social projects still lack knowledge and resources to conduct
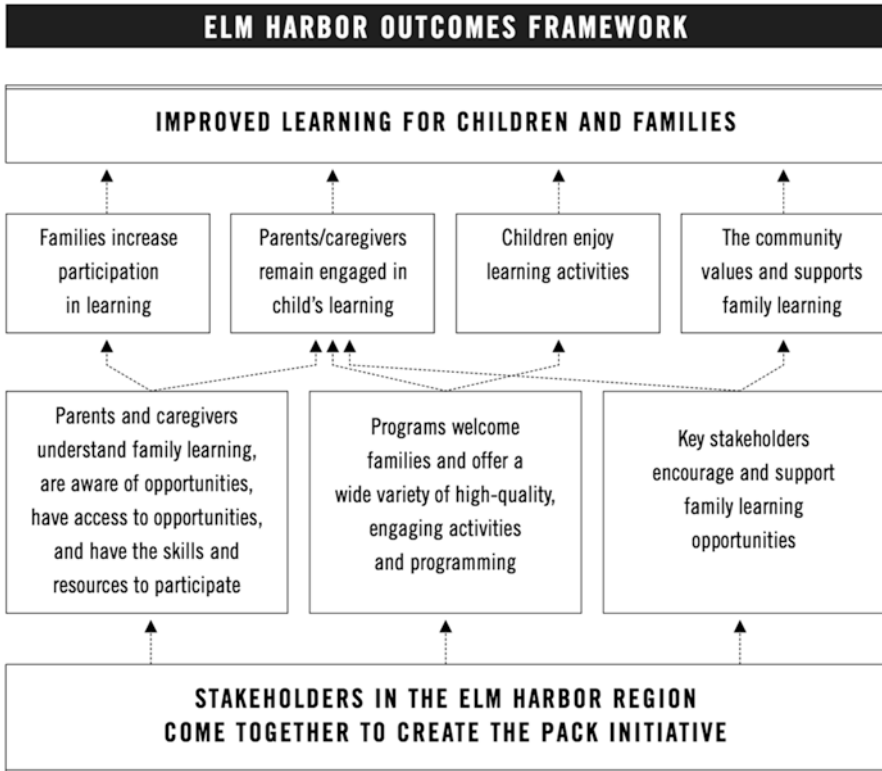
ELM HARBOR OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

IMPROVED LEARNING FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

| Families increase participation in learning | Parents/caregivers remain engaged in child's learning | Children enjoy learning activities | The community values and supports family learning |

| Parents and caregivers understand family learning, are aware of opportunities, have access to opportunities, and have the skills and resources to participate | Programs welcome families and offer a wide variety of high-quality, engaging activities and programming | Key stakeholders encourage and support family learning opportunities |

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ELM HARBOR REGION COME TOGETHER TO CREATE THE PACK INITIATIVE

Fig. 1 An example of a Theory of Change of Elm Harbor. (Source: Anderson [3]: 12)

Impact Value Chain

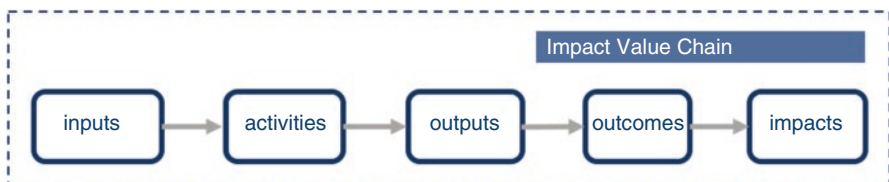inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → impacts

Fig. 2 Impact Value Chain template. (Source: Author adapted from Ebrahim and Rangan [2]: 121)

social impact assessment. One of the main issues among social entrepreneurs is that they do not understand how to make connections between their actions and their goals. This could be done by using Theory of Change and Impact Value Chain described above.

Achavanuntakul and Yamla-or [4] have proposed a modified version of Theory of Change for ease of use. Instead of drawing conceptual map similar to Fig. 1, Achavanuntakul and Yamla-or simplify the format into "if…., then …" statement. In a sense, this emphasizes the main idea of Theory of Change. It forces evaluators

to figure out, in the simplest form, how the social-purpose organization or the social project under evaluation contributes to the desired changes. The detailed break-downs will be done through drawing Impact Value Chain instead.

3   Impact Finder's Mechanism

Impact Finder is resource management board game, which aims at transferring knowledge of social impact assessment (SIA) and demonstrating how the public react after results of the impacts are announced. Impact Finder can be played indi-vidually with groups of 4–8, taking 90–120 min (depend on number of players). Impact Finder is planned to be entertaining to capture player's attention; game accessories are then designed as colorful and playful.

3.1   Scenario

The scenario set in Impact Finder is a rural community with population of 930. There are local farmers who rely on farming activity to feed their families. Most population only graduated from primary school; thus 14% of the population are illiterate. Moreover, most of the population are senior citizen and people with dis-ability. More than 70% migrated from other communities and have stayed in a com-munity not more than 5 years. Interaction among community members is less active. A small group of shamans is well known for their medical knowledge. The main source of income in this community is selling local herbal medicine, and its effec-tiveness attracts more senior population to constantly come to the community. However, formal education is needed to improve knowledge other than medical. The closest school that offers formal education is 100 m away. This discourages children to access to alternative disciplinarians. Since community is remotely situ-ated, community leader has his supreme power to manage and rule the community. "She" has been in her position for 30 years and counting.

3.2   Instruction

There are seven steps to play Impact Finder. (1) Impact Value Chain (IVC) board game is A1 size, and a dice is a main part of this board game for the players to play on. (2) Three Theory of Change cards, one Stakeholder cards, and Money card of 500 IF are to distribute to each player. The player can choose to keep all three Theory of Change cards or to drop any, but at least one card is to be remained. There are 12 Theory of Change and 12 Stakeholder cards in total. (3) All Stakeholder cards left in the stack are up for bidding. Each player can propose money to trade

Fig. 3 IVC board and Stakeholder, Theory of Change, and Money cards. (Source: Authors)

with the stakeholders that are most likely to be linked with Theory of Change cards in hands. (4) Five Resource cards (Fig. 3), input, output, outcome, and impact cards, are distributed to each player. The less of Resource Cards are placed at the stack to be drawn. There are a total of 60 Recourse cards and are divided equally for each type of the cards (15 cards for each type). (5) Roll the dice to decide play order of each player. (6) Start the game. The first player can decide to put one Resource card in hands that is similar to the column indicating on IVC board and then draw one more Resource card from the stack. Other players take turn, respectively. Players

Input	Activity	Output	Outcome
Funding	Arranging Songkran Festival and Elderly day ceremony	Senior citizen want to join the event and sign up for other events	There is a network of Senior citizen with similar interests.

(Source: Authors)

Fig. 4 Resource cards. (Source: Authors)

can also pay 50 IF to swap three pairs of cards. (7) The player who is able to fill in the last box of the chain must reveal the Theory of Change and Stakeholder cards to all players and explain the reason why the chain is complete. If majority of the players agree with the reason, the player who urges the claim can roll the dice twice to get score.

The game is over when all Resource cards are drawn. The player with Theory of Change cards left in hands will be asked to deduct 5 scores for each card. The winner is one with the highest score. Money cards can only help fuel opportunities to boost the process in the IVC but are not the key to winning this game. This is to be mentioned in the debriefing phase (Fig. 4).

3.3 Golden Rule

There is a Golden Rule for the player to learn to master Impact Finder. There are four Discount cards hidden in Resource cards stack. The player who gets the card from the beginning or draws the card from the stack can use these four cards against the player who urges the claim. The player who urges the claim can first roll the dice twice, and the one who holds the Discount cards can then roll the dice twice. Any who has more score can get the different of the score. However, if the player who urges the claim also holds the Discount cards, he/she can use the cards to prevent the attack and can continue to roll the dice with no effect. When using Discount card, players must draw a new card from the stack to remain the original number of the cards in hands.

With this rule, players will understand how social impact is discounted in four different situations:

1. Attribution: there is another who shares the impact.
2. Deadweight: the situation is better organically without your intervention.

3. Displacement: your intervention cannot improve the situation; just that existing of your intervention replaces the other function who used to do the job
4. Drop-off: your impact is declining each day; you cannot always claim the impact. The discount phenomena known as base case scenario in SIA is to be mentioned during debriefing.

4   Feedbacks of the Game

After finishing the game, their Impact Finders were demonstrated six times within a team of designers and played twice with actual players, who are participants in a workshop series called SE 101, held by Stock Exchange of Thailand, aiming at incubating social enterprise in Thailand. SIA class is outlined as one out of ten classes in aforementioned workshop series. The lecture about SIA was delivered from 09:00 to 12:00, and Impact Finder was played from 13:00 to 15:00, following with the debriefing for a half hour. Debriefing phases of Impact Finder are designed to contribute to learning by doing approach. It will first stimulate players to exchange difficulties in winning the game. The facilitator will then ask all players to refer the aforementioned difficulties with the real-world problems in making or assessing social impact. There are a total of 50 players (24 and 26 for the first and second batch, respectively), who experienced Impact Finder.

4.1   SIA Knowledge Learnt Before and After "Impact Finder"

Post-questionnaires were distributed to every workshop participant after class. The results display that participants agreed that Impact Finder can enhance understanding of SIA and the average score if how much it helps is indicated at 3.98 out of 5.0. The satisfaction in learning improvement of SIA class is the highest among other nine classes in the workshop series. Ninety percent of participants (45 participants out of 50) clearly mentioned that Impact Finder can elaborate their learning from theory to practice. Moreover, 80% (40 participants out of 50) mentioned that Impact Finder affects their thought of how to create social impact and has tendency to change their behavior to scale the impact in the future. Seventy-six percent (38 participants out of 50) agreed that Impact Finder is worth spending time and money on. An average of 3 h is the maximum hour that participants are willing to spend with Impact Finder and participant are willing to pay up to 250–500 THB (8.03–16.07 USD) to play Impact Finder for 3 h. One hundred percent expressed introducing Impact Finder to others who have difficulties in understanding SIA.

4.2   Feedbacks and Future Outlooks of "Impact Finder"

Most feedbacks received from 50 participants are as follows: (1) Impact Finder is hard to play and takes much time (at least 15 min) for players to learn how to play the game, and it may cause frustration. This challenge can be avoided by giving clearer instruction and small demonstration round before beginning the game. (2) It is hard to convince other players to agree with the reason given when the player urges to claim the IVC. Since the current version of Impact Finder set to let the discussion flow naturally and they are all competitors, no one tend to agree with anyone. Impact Finder should consider adding the closed-ended answers to explain the IVC. (3) Maximum players set for the current version are from 4 to 8 players. From playing it eight times, four players are the best number for the game. Impact Finder can also be played in team; thus 8, 16, and more players can be added to the original 4 teams. (4) Interplayer negotiations such as swapping their cards, buying and selling cards, etc. were found often during the game and should be allowed. It can bring up the fun element of the game and relieve stress from strategic thinking.

5   Conclusion

In Thailand, measuring social impact will become a crucial factor in securing financial and other in-kind supports in the future. While many social entrepreneurs, as well as other social-purpose organizations, are aware of the need to start measuring their own impacts, there is a clear lack of practitioners who know how to do so. Combined with the highly conceptual nature of Theory of Change and Impact Value Chain, connecting the dots between the desired outcomes and the activities of the organizations is a crucial step and yet the most difficult step for practitioners who are not familiar with social impact assessment to go through. Therefore, we have devised a board game mechanism to turn highly conceptual ideas into a more tangible explanation with examples.

Impact Finder has proved to be a useful tool for beginners who are new to social impact assessment to gain basic understanding of two of the most important tools for measuring impact, namely, Theory of Change and Impact Value Chain. It translates conceptual ideas into tangible examples, enabling practitioners to gain basic understandings easier. However, it also comes with limitations. Most notably, Impact Finder can only provide basic introduction to learners. The situation presented in the game does not necessarily cover the complexity that comes with actual applications of the concepts. The main recommendation gained from feedbacks and observations of Impact Finder implementation is thus how to improve the situations included in the game so that it reflects more actual applications of measuring social impacts. Oftentimes, suggestions on improving and expanding realistic examples in the game come from practitioners who have tried to measure social impacts themselves. Therefore, one way to do so could be interviewing various practitioners from different fields to exact more examples.

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