Goele Scheers Consultancy

Outcome Harvesting & the Emerging Intersections with AI

EvalVoices Webinar Series

Speaker: **Goele Scheers**

03 February 2026 | 14:00 CET

What We'll Explore Today

Understanding Outcome Harvesting

Core concepts and steps

Where AI meets Outcome Harvesting

Explore AI Opportunities for each of the OH Steps

Navigating the Risks

Responsible use of AI for OH

Dialogue

Reflections and questions

Why Outcome Harvesting?

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What is Outcome Harvesting?

A Monitoring and evaluation approach that identifies, formulates, verifies, and makes sense of outcomes that have occurred.

Inspired by Outcome Mapping and Utilisation -focussed evaluation

Based on practice

Developed by **Ricardo Wilson-Grau** and colleagues Barbara Klugman, Claudia Fontes, Fe Briones Garcia, Gabriela Sánchez, Goele Scheers, Heather Britt, Jennifer Vincent, Julie Lafreniere, Juliette Majot, Marcie Mersky, Martha Nuñez, Mary Jane Real, Natalia Ortiz and Wolfgang Richert.

Created by Goele with DALL-E
How many conflicts have you solved today?
I put out three fires.
Ukraine
Haiti
Sudan
Gaza
Yemen
Myanmar
Ethiopia
Other Conflicts
3
4

Goele

We know change is happening but:

- It doesn’t fit our indicators
- It wasn’t in the logframe
- It’s intangible, e.g. political, relational
- It didn’t happen just because of us

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Enter Outcome Harvesting

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Outcome Harvesting asks the question differently

What has *actually* changed and how did we contribute?

From focusing on what is done —> to focusing on what is achieved

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Who have you influenced through your actions?

Parliamentarians

Human Rights Defenders

Young people

Farmer organisations

General Assembly

Political Parties

Ministries

Trade Unions

Religious leaders

Media

Network members

Actor-centred approach

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What are these actors doing differently?

Individual

Group or community

Practice

Relationships

Social Actor

Changing

Institutions

Organisation

Policies

Activities

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Based on a slide by Ricardo Wilson-Grau

Outcomes as behavioural change

Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcomes → Impacts

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I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE SPECIFIC HERE IN STEP TWO
THEN A MIRACLE OCCURS
S. Harris

How did our activities contribute to the change?

Dear Mr. Gandhi, the contribution of spinning cloth to the fall of the British Empire is not clear to us?

Adapted from a cartoon written by M.M. Rogers and illustrated by Ariv R. Futzal, Wirdya S. Ary W.S. Creative team for Search for Common Ground Indonesia

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Contribution over attribution

Outcomes defined as

A. An observable change in a social actor's behaviour
B. that is significant
C. and that has been influenced by your intervention.

A participatory approach

In Outcome Harvesting:

- Outcomes are *identified* with sources (actors)
- Evidence is *interpreted* with substantiators
- Design is *developed* with users
- Learning is *collective*

Participation is not consultation!
It is **co-creation of understanding**.

Why Outcome Harvesting Matters

Captures the Unexpected

Reveals unintended and emergent outcomes

Centers Stakeholder Voice

Elevates diverse perspectives and lived experiences in understanding change

Supports Adaptive Management

Provides real-time insights that inform strategic pivots and course corrections

Makes Complexity Visible

Illuminates interconnections and ripple effects

Why Outcome Harvesting Matters Now More Than Ever

International cooperation is under pressure. If we want its value to be understood, we first have to learn how to make it visible.

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How can we use AI to enhance Outcome Harvesting without losing its soul?

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What We're Talking About: Large Language Models

Large Language Models (LLMs)

Generative AI systems trained on vast amounts of text data to understand and generate human-like text responses.

Examples:

- Claude (Anthropic)
- ChatGPT/GPT (OpenAI)
- Gemini (Google)
- Mistral (Mistral AI, European)

Customisation:

- Projects (Claude)
- Custom GPTs (ChatGPT)
- Gems (Gemini)
- Agents (Le Chat)

Interactive Outputs:

- Artifacts (Claude)
- Canvas (ChatGPT, Gemini, Le Chat)

Risks & Challenges

The risk is not just about AI limitations — it's also about the wrong use of AI by people

AI Limitations

- Hallucinates
- Cannot understand context deeply
- Lacks nuanced cultural understanding
- Cannot make value judgments
- Reflects biases present in training data

Human Misuse Risks

- Accepting AI outputs uncritically and without context or cultural validation
- Replacing human judgment entirely
- Applying AI where human connection and trust-building are essential (e.g., sensitive interviews)
- Using AI to avoid talking to people
- Prioritising efficiency over participation

The 5 steps of Outcome Harvesting

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The Five Steps of Outcome Harvesting

1 **Design the Harvest**

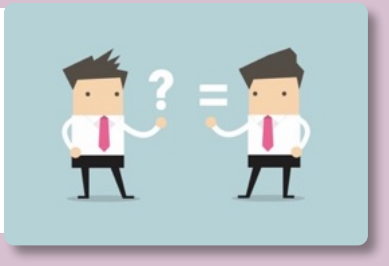
Clarify users and questions

2 **Harvest Outcomes**

Gather existing data

3 **Substantiate**

Verify and strengthen outcomes



4 **Analyze & Interpret**

Make sense of findings

5 **Support use of findings**

Ensure findings are used

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Step 1: Design the Harvest
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The Outcome Harvesting design

- Describes how the Outcome Harvesting steps will be implemented
- Starts by defining the users and uses and monitoring or evaluation questions
- Can be revised throughout the process based on uses

Created by Goele with DALL-E

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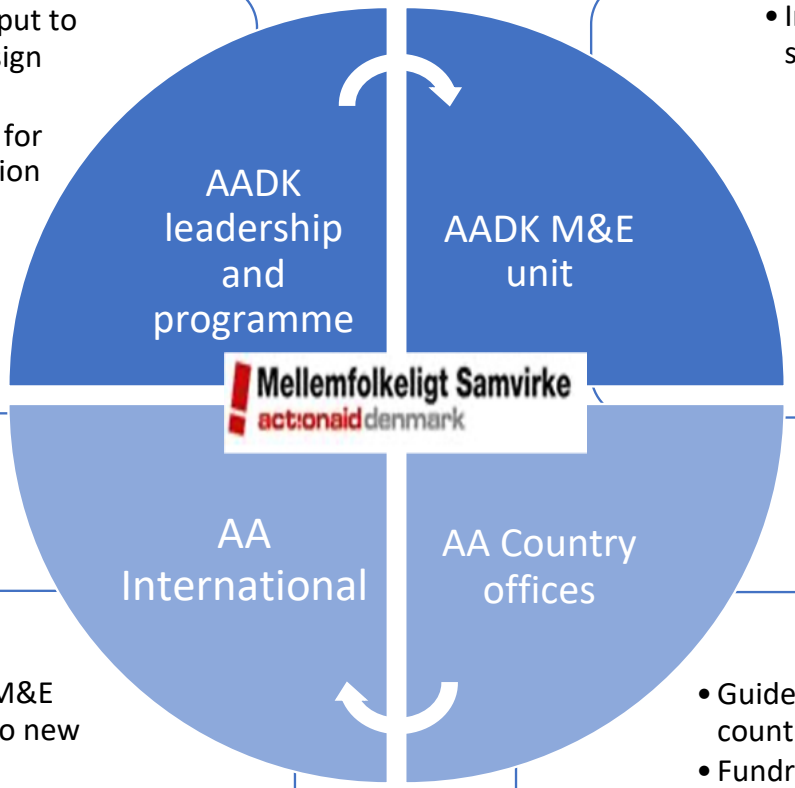
Users and uses AADK evaluation

Primary users

- Learning and input to programme design
- Input and documentation for Danida application
- Fundraising possibilities

- Inform future M&E system



Secondary users

- Input to future M&E system related to new strategy
- Learning reviews

- Guide the thematic or country-level work
- Fundraising possibilities

Step 1: Design the Outcome Harvesting Process

Where AI can help most—without losing the human touch

AI Can Assist With:

- Analyse past OH evaluations to inform design choices
- Analyse patterns in past outcome harvests
- Identify potential data sources to review
- Review previous evaluation questions from similar projects

Humans Must:

- Engage with harvest users to understand needs
- Make context-specific methodological decisions
- Determine appropriate ethical protocols
- Establish participatory processes

Step 2: Harvest outcomes

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USAID Feed The Future Senegal

How to formulate Outcome Statements

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An outcome statement has 3 elements:

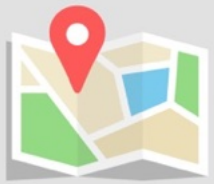
Outcome

Who?

What?

When?

Where?



Significance

Why is it important?

Contribution

Activities/outputs of your intervention

Outcome example

Input in law

Outcome description

In July 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) of Mongolia involved 13 Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) in the drafting of the chapter on Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Employment Promotion Law through a technical sub-working group.

Significance

The implementation of the law will increase the level of integration of PWDs into the labour market. Before, DPOs had not been directly involved in the legislation process of this law. Their involvement is crucial however, so that their views can be included in the law. Previously, there was no dialogue between the ministry and the DPOs

Contribution

In May 2018, the DPOs submitted a lobby paper to the MLSP to make recommendations for the labour law. During 3 meetings in June 2018, TLM (Partner) met with the MSLP and lobbied to organise a meeting of the sub-working group to support the drafting of the concerned chapter. TLM provided technical and logistical support to the MLSP for the sub-working group.

European Partnership for Democracy

Document review

The harvesters review reports, evaluations, press releases, tweets, videos and any other material to identify and draft outcomes and the activities used to achieve them.

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The process of identifying and formulating a set of outcomes that will enable you to answer the monitoring or evaluation questions. The harvester facilitates the identification and formulation of outcomes

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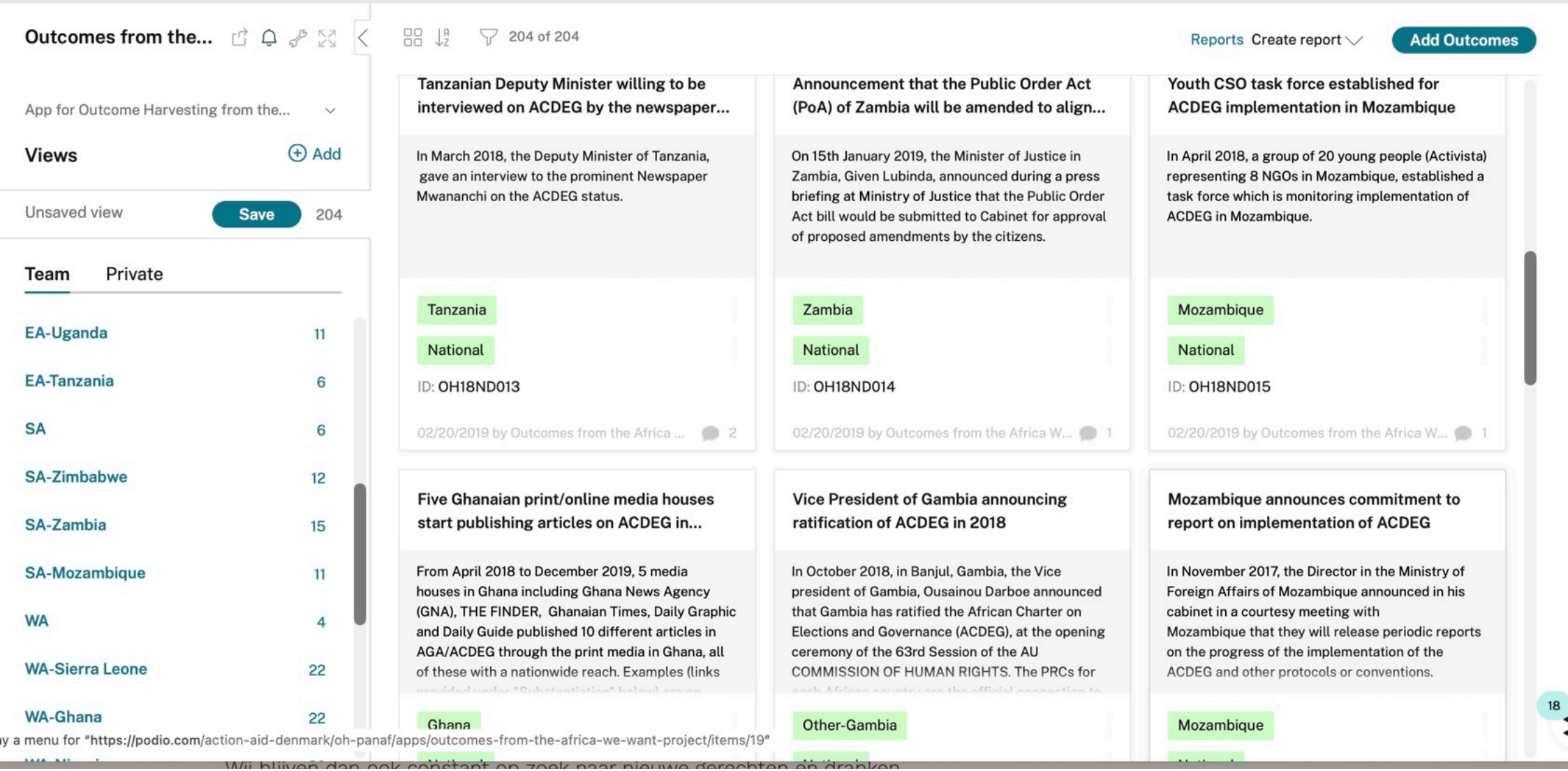
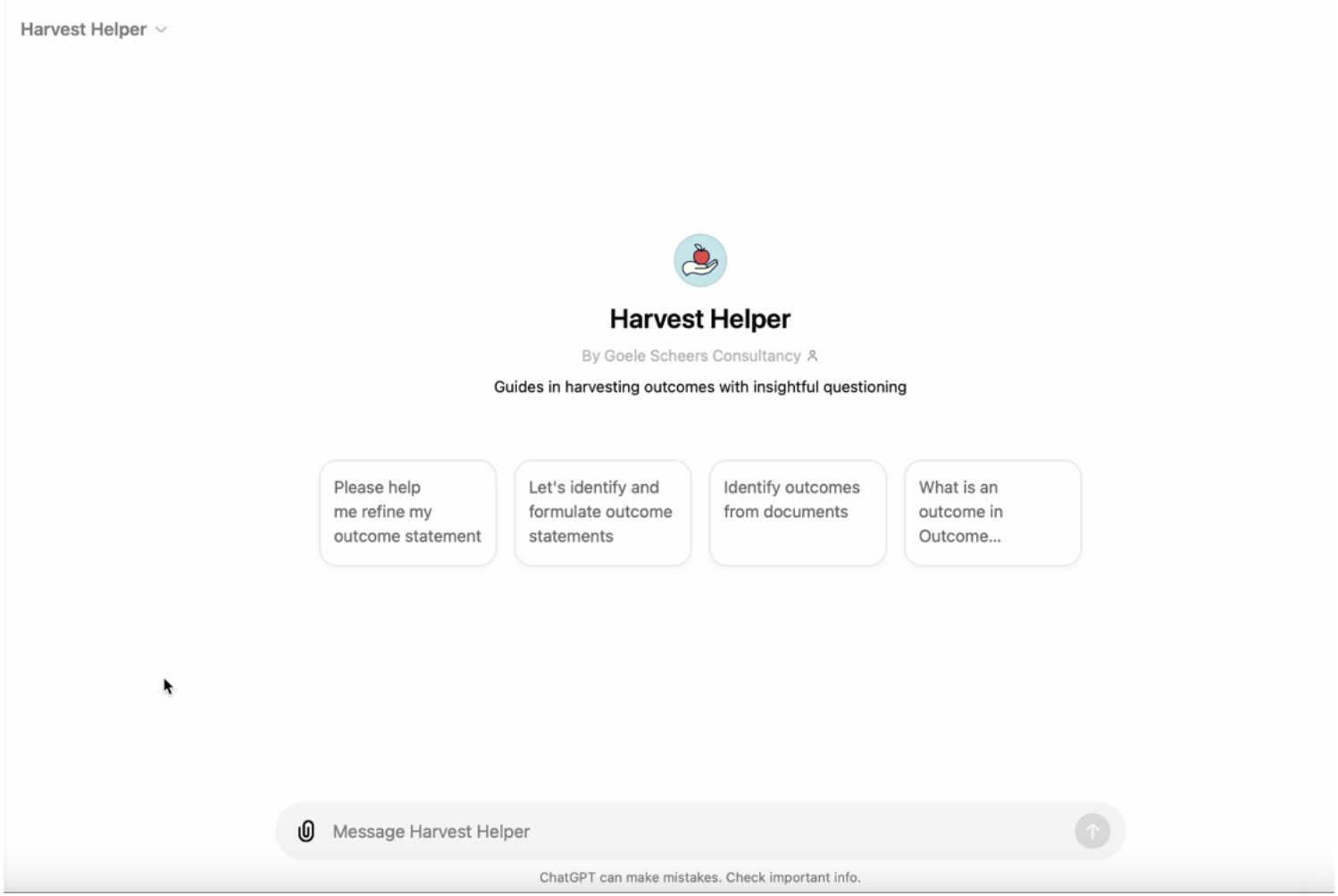
NIMD Mali

Databases, e.g. Podio, Tape app



CustomGPT (OpenAI)



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Claude Artifact

Harvest Helper

Guides in harvesting outcomes with insightful questioning

Developed by Goele Scheers Consultancy

How can I help you today?

Refine Outcome Statement

Help me improve my draft outcome statement

Review Set of Outcomes

Review multiple outcome statements at once

Identify and Formulate Outcomes

Identify and formulate outcome statements together

Identify from Reports

Extract outcomes from your documents

Saved Outcomes (0)

No outcomes saved yet

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Step 2: Harvest Outcomes

Where AI can help most—without losing the human touch

AI Can Assist With:

- Process large volumes of documents rapidly to identify outcomes in different languages
- Suggest improvements to outcome statements for clarity, completeness, and alignment with criteria
- Suggest consistency improvements across statements
- Transcribe OH interviews

Humans Must:

- Engage directly with sources (implementers/social actors)
- Review AI-drafted outcomes
- Interpret context, significance, and meaning
- Ensure participatory integrity throughout
- Make final decisions on what counts as an outcome
- Own the outcomes (sources)

Step 3: Substantiate outcome statements

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Substantiation

The process of selecting a number of outcome statements and consulting with independent people or documents to ensure accuracy, deepen understanding, or both, so that the whole set of outcome statements are credible enough for the intended uses.

Based on Wilson-Grau, R, 2019

Adapted from Pham et al. Outcome harvesting as the monitoring and evaluation tool in the ecohealth field building leadership initiative (FBLI

Goele Scheers | Richard Smith

Substantiation questionnaire

On the **outcome description**: To what extent do you agree that the information is accurate?

- ◊ Fully agree
- ◊ Partially agree
- ◊ Disagree
- ◊ Do not know

Please explain any disagreement you may have with the accuracy of the description of the outcome or present an alternative description or additional information:

Repeat with similar questions on **significance** and **contribution**.

Step 3: Substantiate

Where AI can help most—without losing the human touch

AI Can Assist With:

- Identify potential independent sources
- Cross-reference information across sources
- Flag inconsistencies or gaps in evidence
- Organise verification feedback systematically
- Track which outcomes have been substantiated

Humans Must:

- Engage with independent knowledgeable informants for the link between contribution and change
- Assess credibility of substantiators
- Interpret what evidence means for validity of outcome
- Make judgment calls on strength of evidence
- Decide if outcomes are sufficiently substantiated

Step 4: Analysis and interpretation

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Step 5: Analyse & Interpret

Make sense of what you've harvested

Key Activities:

- Identify patterns and themes across outcomes
- Map relationships and pathways
- Compare against objectives or expectations
- Draw insights and lessons

From Data to Insight

This final step transforms your harvest into actionable knowledge. It's about understanding not just what changed, but why it matters and what it means for future action.

Analysis

How should I organise the outcomes so that I'm able to answer the M&E questions?

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Interpretation

So what do the numbers and text mean?

Providing evidence-based answers to the monitoring or evaluation questions.

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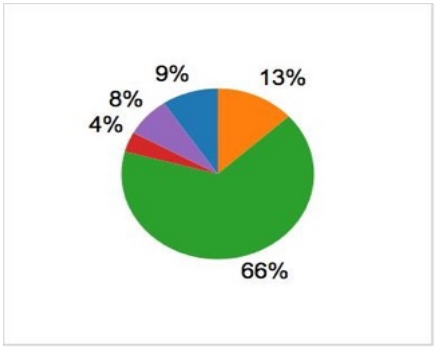
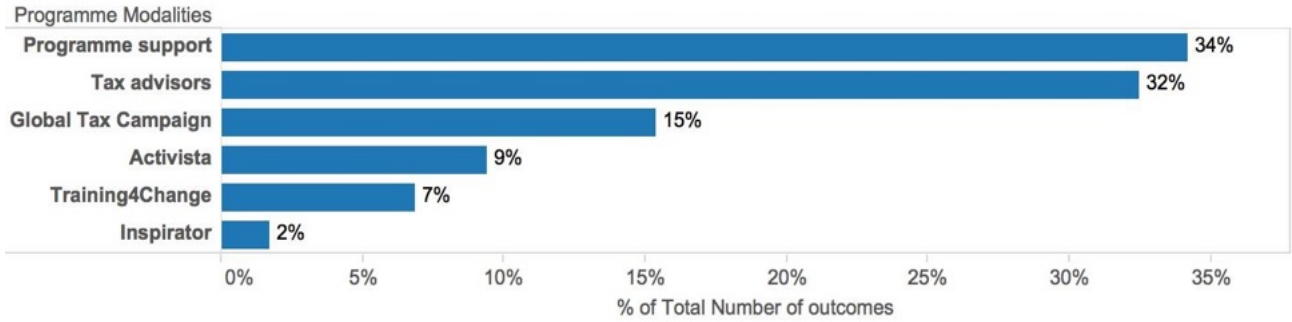
Change level, locally rooted & Contribution



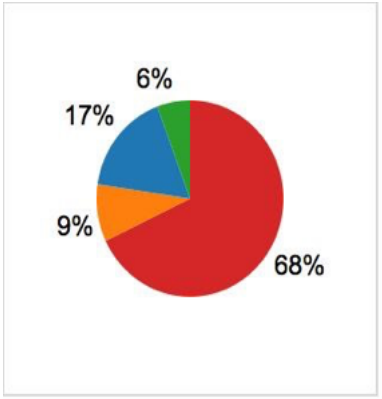
Change level (color) and % of total number of outcomes (size).

Change level

- Local
- National
- National/ Regional
- Regional
- Global



% of total number of outcomes for each Programme Modalities.



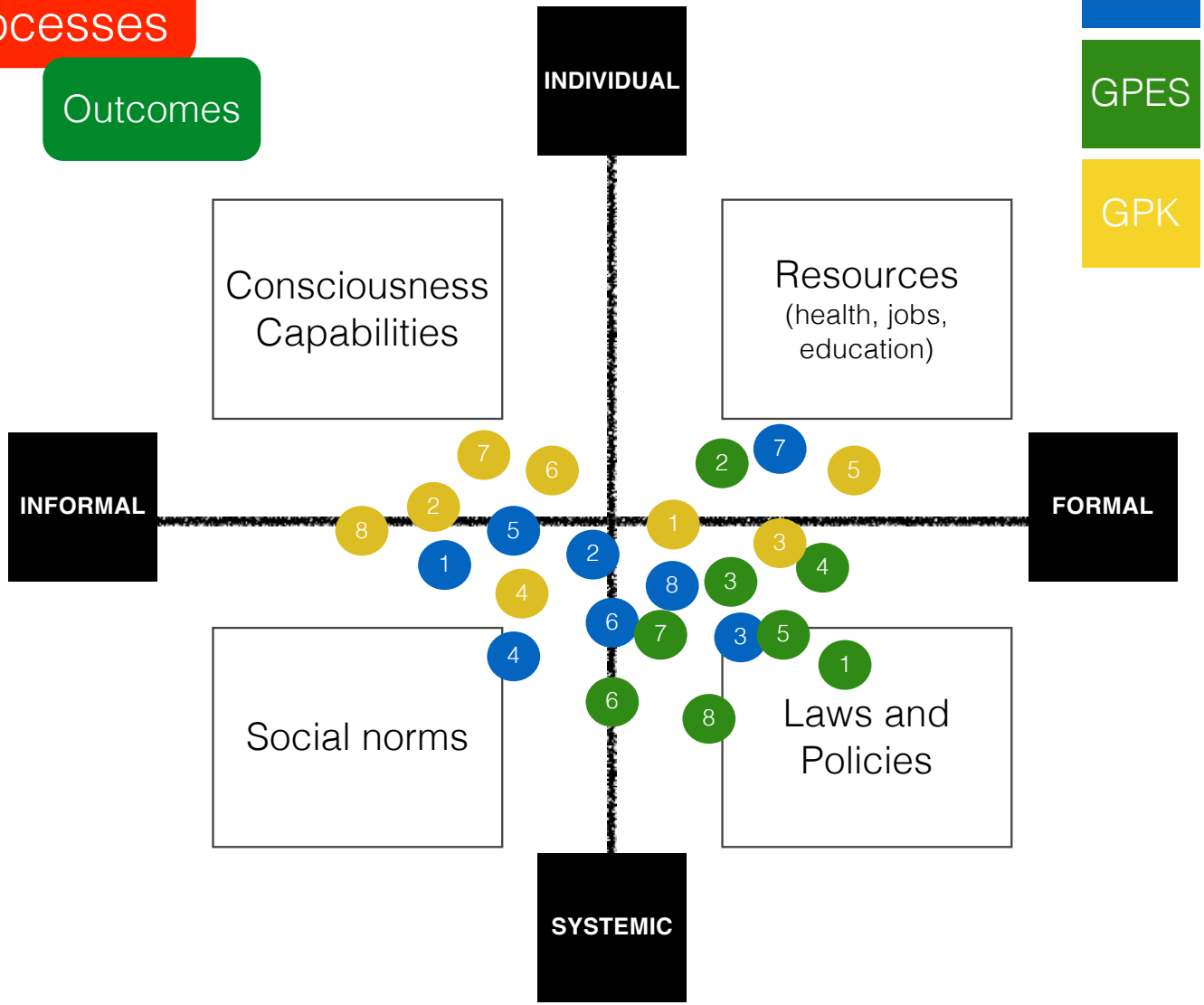
Locally rooted (color) and % of total number of outcomes (size).

Locally rooted

- Not locally rooted
- Engagement of the general public
- Local communities
- Local CSOs engaged

Change Processes

Outcomes



CustomGPT OpenAI

Harvest Analyst

By Goele Scheers Consultancy

Analysis tool for Outcome Harvesting, categorizing statements, answering questions.

Please categorise my outcomes

Please answer my evaluation question

Ask anything

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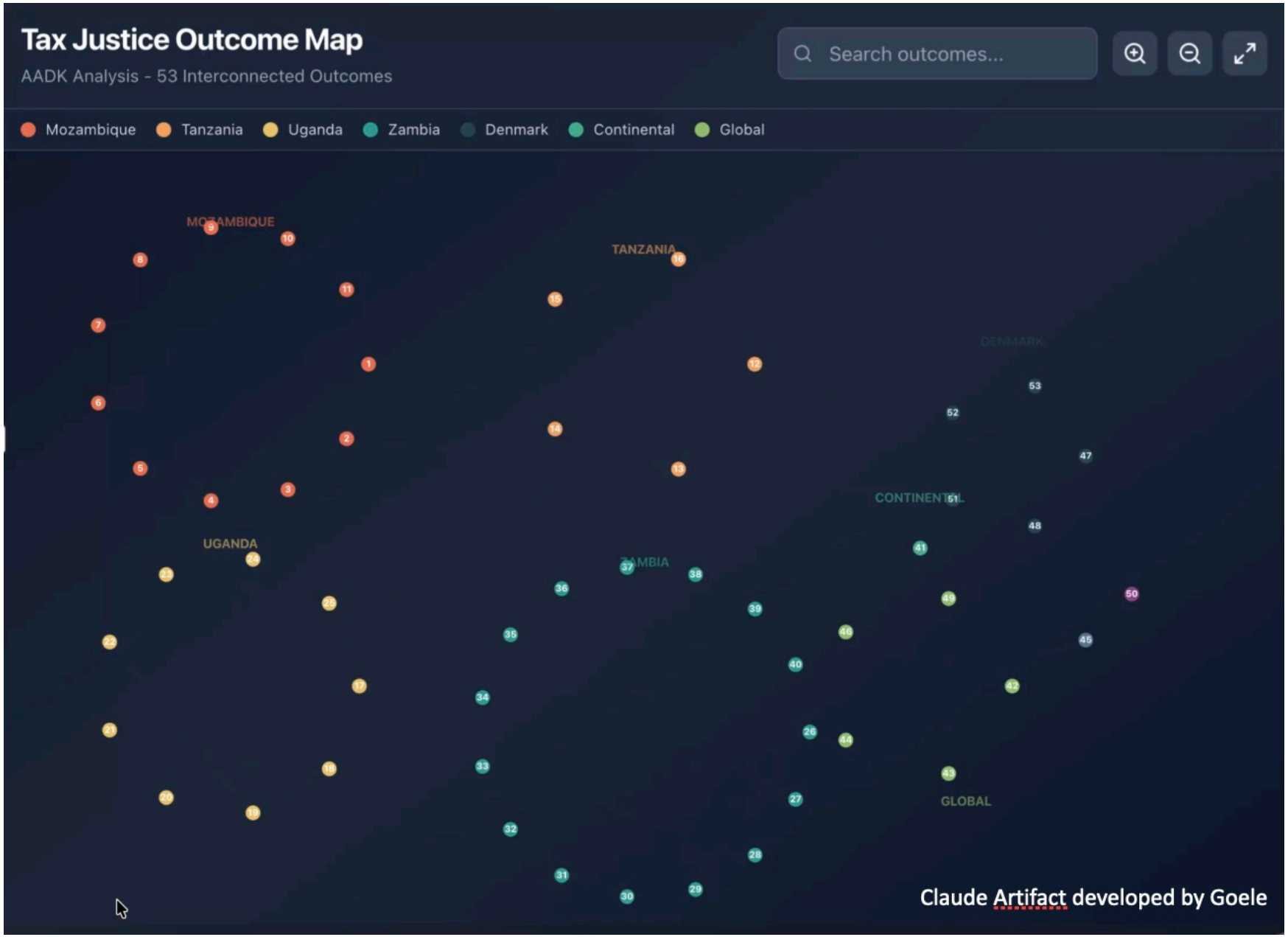

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NIMD Tunis

Engaging sources in analysis and interpretation

- Motivating and inspiring
- Going beyond ‘simply reporting’
- Better understanding (of monitoring/evaluation report)
- Participatory/ownership

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Cafod Sri Lanka

FPU Nairobi

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Step 4: Analyse and Interpret

Where AI can help most—without losing the human touch

AI Can Assist With:

- Identify patterns, themes and outliners across outcomes
- Categorise outcomes according to frameworks
- Generate visualisations of relationships
- Count frequencies and spot trends
- Suggest potential connections to explore

Humans Must:

- Interpret what patterns actually mean
- Draw insights from context and lived experience
- Answer evaluation questions with evidence
- Make sense of unexpected or contradictory findings
- Engage users and sources in participatory learning
- Validate interpretations

Step 5: Support use
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Producing a report is not the purpose of M&E

- Decide in the design what your uses will be
- Use can be supported by harvester / MEL advisor, project manager, external evaluator
- Through participatory workshops, presentations, summaries, etc

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Step 5: Support Use of Findings

Where AI can help most—without losing the human touch

AI Can Assist With:

- Generate different formats of findings (briefs, infographics)
- Tailor content for different audience needs
- Draft discussion questions for workshops
- Keep learning alive between formal moments

Humans Must:

- Facilitate meaningful dialogue with users
- Navigate political and organisational dynamics
- Support collaborative sense-making
- Ensure findings lead to appropriate action

The Participatory Soul of Outcome Harvesting

What we must never automate away:

- Listening to those closest to change
- Building relationships and trust with sources, users, substantiators through dialogue
- Honoring diverse perspectives and lived experience
- Making space for emergence and surprise
- Deep contextual interpretation
- Learning together, not just extracting data

AI as a Thinking Partner

- The main risk is not just AI itself, but how we use it: over-reliance, inadequate oversight, and misunderstanding limitations
- Technology should free up time for deeper engagement with actors involved, not replace it
- Success requires human-AI collaboration: AI handles scale and speed, humans provide context, judgment, and validation
- AI= an assistant that never gets tired but one that must be guided, questioned, and constrained.

AI outputs should *open* discussion, not end it.

The Road Ahead

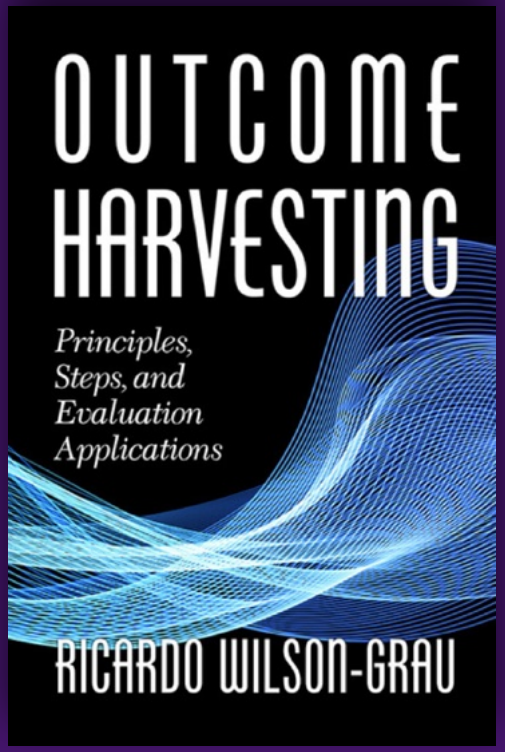
We stand at an inflection point.

AI offers unprecedented opportunities to deepen and democratise evaluation practice. Yet it also carries risks that could undermine the very values Outcome Harvesting champions: participation, context and learning.

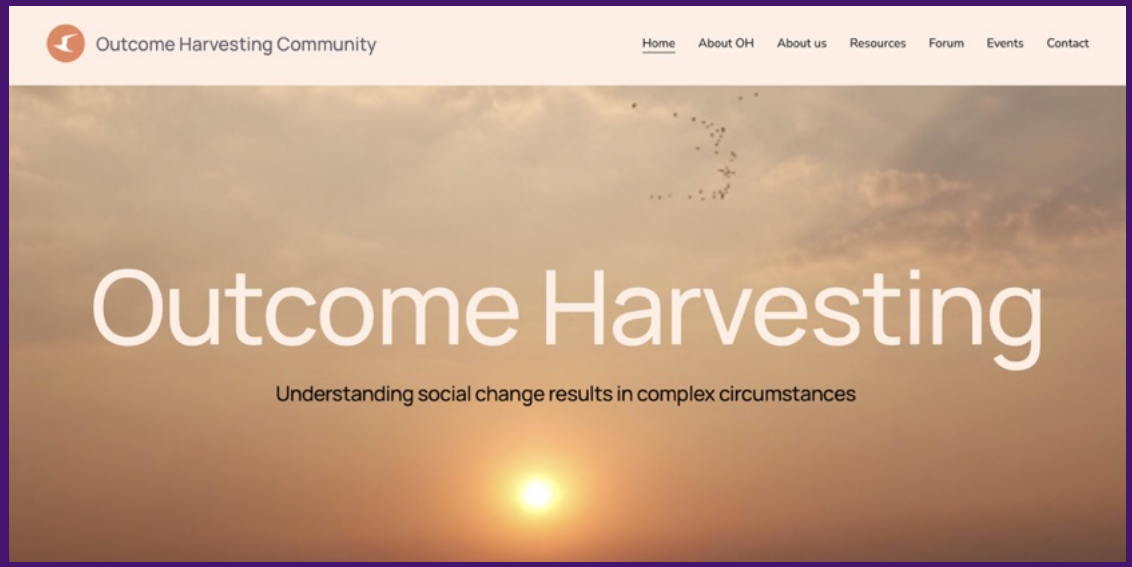
The choice is ours: Will we use AI to amplify human insight or replace it? To make evaluation more inclusive or more extractive?

Let's choose wisely!

Resources



www.outcomeharvesting.net



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Thank you!

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