



**DOSA as a Tool
to Measure *and* Build Organizational Capacity:
Lessons from the Field**

ASSESSMENT

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Dear Colleague:

In 1996, the Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (PVC) launched the Discussion-Oriented Organizational Self-Assessment (DOSA) initiative in partnership with Education Development Center (EDC) and Pact, Inc. PVC's initial intent in sponsoring DOSA was to assess the impact of its activities on the Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) it was assisting. Soon after it was launched, DOSA's potential as a *capacity-building* (as opposed to *capacity-measurement*) strategy was recognized. The purpose of this study is to share lessons learned from the field about DOSA's contribution to PVO capacity-development.

We are pleased to share this report, *DOSA as a Tool to Measure and Build Organizational Capacity: Lessons from the Field*, with you. It offers the first-ever, rigorous review of DOSA as a capacity-building process. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with staff from three PVOs that have been DOSA users for three years. The researchers also analyzed three years' worth of DOSA data for the full "DOSA user population" to develop their findings.

The report documents specific ways that the annual, eight-hour DOSA intervention serves both to *promote and to measure* capacity development. The longitudinal quantitative data demonstrate, for example, that over the three-year period studied, most PVOs experienced substantial score improvement in their areas of greatest weakness. Furthermore, more than half the PVOs assessed registered improvement on all 18 DOSA items tracked in this study.

In-depth interviews complemented the statistical analysis and furnished investigators with a wealth of qualitative insights. Illustratively, the researchers learned that DOSA-inspired change most commonly occurs *within* PVOs. However, the report also documents significant examples of performance gains attributed to DOSA that have directly strengthened PVO partner operations and have extended development outcomes to intended beneficiary groups.

We hope that this study will contribute to an enriched dialogue about the role of organizational capacity assessment and capacity development in responding to the needs of the world's poor.

Sincerely,



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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vi
BACKGROUND	1
PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDIES	3
METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DOSA	4
CASE STUDY METHODS AND PROCEDURES	6
Schematic One: Conceptual Framework for Case Study Interviews.....	7
GENERAL FINDINGS	9
Table One: Performance Change Across Selected DOSA Items--Year-One to Year-Three	9
Table Two: Types of Changes Engendered by DOSA for Three PVO Users.....	12
Table Three: Incidence of DOSA-driven Change by Change Type and Impact Level.....	14
CASE STUDY: THE CAUSAL PATHWAY OF CHANGE IN PVO H	16
Table Four: PVO H--Score Changes on Selected DOSA Items Over a Three-Year Period....	16
CASE STUDY: THE CAUSAL PATHWAY OF CHANGE IN PVO F	20
Table Five: PVO F--Score Changes on Selected DOSA Items Over a Three-Year Period	20
CONCLUSIONS	24
ANNEXES	
A: GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS	26
Overview of Group Interview Sessions	26
The Matrix Exercise	26
Headline Exercise.....	27
Overview of Individual Interview Sessions.....	28
B: SCOPE OF WORK	29

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beryl Levinger of Education Development Center (EDC) and Evan Bloom of Pact, Inc. developed DOSA (Discussion-Oriented Organizational Self-Assessment) in 1996 under a five-year contract with the USAID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (USAID/PVC). The purpose of the contract was to enable USAID/PVC to assess longitudinally its impact on the organizational capacities of Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) that it supports through such funding mechanisms as Child Survival and Matching Grants. The DOSA team's task was to develop and execute a methodology for capturing changes in organizational capacity. The scope of the DOSA project, therefore, focused exclusively on the development of a rigorous methodology for organizational capacity assessment and data-generation rather than on organizational capacity-building. In the four years since DOSA was launched, the DOSA team has worked with 20 PVOs in the administration of DOSA.

The DOSA process typically involves 10 to 20 people from a PVO who represent diverse perspectives, functions, and levels of responsibility. This team works with a trained DOSA facilitator to answer discussion question-sets in a setting that closely resembles that of a focus group. Each discussion-question set is followed by a series of individually scored items. Qualitative and quantitative insights are, therefore, blended to identify and develop new opportunities for excellence. The practice of alternating between focus-group type discussion questions and individually scored surveys within a single session gives DOSA the precision of a survey instrument combined with the richness of a focus group. The DOSA team scores the assessment and returns a month or more later to conduct a debriefing session where findings are shared and next steps are planned. In facilitating these two sessions, the DOSA team typically interacts with each PVO-client for a total of eight hours over the course of a year.

This study addresses three principal questions: a) What specific changes in organizational capacity can be attributed to a PVO's participation in DOSA? b) In which areas and to what degree are PVOs likely to experience changes (both positive and negative) in their DOSA scores? c) What are DOSA's strengths and limitations in promoting organizational capacity development among PVO users?

The case study methodology consisted of a longitudinal analysis of DOSA data as well as focus group and key informant interviews with numerous informants at three PVOs that have participated in DOSA for three years. All interviews took place at the PVO headquarters level and included both participants and non-participants of past DOSA self-assessment teams. Senior executives of each of the organizations were interviewed separately.

The conceptual framework that was used to conduct and analyze the case study interviews (the qualitative data) entailed searching for instances of three types of change (process; learning; and procedural) which could occur at one or more of four change levels (individual, organizational, partner and beneficiary). For the three PVOs studied, there were 42 DOSA-attributed instances of change. Change was most pronounced at the organizational and individual levels (14 and 13 citations respectively). However, interviewees were also able to cite examples of performance improvements at the partner and beneficiary levels. The case studies also revealed that all three PVOs noted important benefits that they attributed to their application of DOSA.

The case studies reveal two powerful yet unique causal pathways to change that resulted from PVO participation in DOSA. One PVO discovered that it could not agree on who its stakeholders were. This realization gave rise to a broad and very diverse set of changes. For another PVO, change came as a result of organizational dissatisfaction with recurrently low scores on measures pertaining to staff morale and teamwork.

Quantitative data were derived through an analysis of 18 key DOSA items that were deemed “most likely to fluctuate from year-to-year.” Fluctuation could be either up or down. In selecting these items, the study team sought to create a sensitive barometer for change. The analysis indicated that at least half of the PVOs showed improvement on all but 3 of the 18 items between the Year One and Year Three DOSA administrations. On average, 58 percent of the PVOs showed improvement for each of the 18 items. Positive change in the average cohort score occurred in 16 of the 18 items selected. In general, PVOs showed the greatest improvement over time (expressed as percentage change) on those items that returned the lowest mean scores in Year One. Furthermore, PVOs showed great improvement with scores that fell below 3.0. In three-quarters of these cases, an improvement of at least one-half interval was returned. In approximately two-thirds of the cases where item scores fell below 2.5, the magnitude of change over three years was at least one full interval.

Other findings derived from the longitudinal quantitative analysis of 8 PVOs with three years’ worth of experience using DOSA include the following:

- Five of the organizations have improved their ability to recruit competent staff.
- Stakeholders are viewed as increasingly involved in program assessment (five PVOs) and traditionally underrepresented stakeholders are seen as playing a more active role in program monitoring (six PVOs)
- Monitoring and evaluation is bolstered by the growing use of results-based approaches (five PVOs)
- Half the cohort reported improvements related to their efforts to strengthen the capacity of local partners over the three-year period.
- The cohort is increasingly adept at sharing, collecting and using information with the general public and its constituency. The majority of PVOs showed improvement in all three items related to these capacities.
- The cohort has increased its capacity to raise funds from the public. Five of the eight organizations have obtained larger contributions from foundations, and half have secured increasing support from corporations.
- Over half of the cohort reported improvements related to teamwork over the 3-year period. This item returned the second highest average change at nineteen percent
- The role and contributions of the Board of Directors in supporting advocacy returned the highest average change at forty four percent.

Among the study’s major conclusions are the following:

- **Focused discussion leads to capacity development as well as to capacity assessment.** At least half of the PVOs showed improvement on all but 3 of the 18 items from the year-one to year-three DOSA administrations. On average, 58 percent of the PVOs showed improvement for each of the 18 items. Between Years One and Three, positive change in the average cohort score occurred in 16 of the 18 items selected. Thus, DOSA seems to serve as an impetus for both capacity measurement and organizational improvement.

- **Learning through dissonance.** Participants engaged in the DOSA process occasionally find that their personal reflections and experiences run counter to viewpoints expressed by other group members. While such “dissonance” can be frustrating, it also engenders profound growth and change.
- **Creating the change imperative.** Findings drawn from both the DOSA case studies and longitudinal data suggest that, once alerted to serious deficiencies in their performance through DOSA debriefings, participating PVOs made authentic efforts to improve in those areas that are particularly weak.
- **Focusing on weaknesses.** In general, PVOs showed the greatest improvement over time (expressed as percentage change) on those items that returned the lowest mean scores in Year One. Once PVOs are alerted to serious deficiencies in their performance through DOSA debriefings, they appear to make substantial efforts to improve in areas of greatest weakness.
- **Clusters of change.** The change process ripples and ramifies in multiple directions. Improvements engendered by DOSA are best understood in the context of a “clusters of change” which are sets of *interrelated, thematically linked, causally connected* dimensions of organizational performance that vary together over time. The two PVOs studied in depth exhibited “clusters of change” that represented significantly different pathways to improvement. One of the strengths of DOSA appears to be its capacity to help users establish causal connections among different dimensions of organizational performance. Because DOSA’s methodology supports the *thematic* interpretation of findings across multiple areas of performance, PVOs are able to derive multi-faceted change strategies from DOSA results.
- **The value of time series data.** One of the cases highlights the importance of longitudinal data provided by DOSA. Annual DOSA results reinforced initial findings regarding weak human resource practices. The data trend over three years played a critical role in convincing senior leadership to tackle a persistent challenge. It appears that a single “report card” creates awareness, while multiple “report cards” create commitment to change as well as the ability to track the results of change efforts.
- **Strengthening DOSA’s impact.** Each PVO participating in the study suggested that additional on-site assistance from the DOSA team would be highly desirable. In particular, PVOs would like support in connecting DOSA findings to strategic planning initiatives and their own capacity-development efforts with partners.

BACKGROUND

Beryl Levinger of Education Development Center (EDC) and Evan Bloom of Pact, Inc. developed DOSA (Discussion-Oriented Organizational Self-Assessment) in 1996 under a five-year contract with the USAID's Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation (USAID/PVC). The purpose of the contract was to enable USAID/PVC to assess longitudinally its impact on the organizational capacities of Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) that it supports through such funding mechanisms as Child Survival and Matching Grants.

The task of the DOSA team was to develop and execute a methodology for capturing changes in organizational capacity. Efforts at assessing organizational capacity are not new, but information available to development organizations about capacity-building initiatives is very rarely diagnostic. Outcome data are largely unavailable and, when such information is at hand, it often does not permit confident inferences about the appropriateness of capacity-building practices. USAID/PVC's intent was to use DOSA to generate insights about its PVO partners and to generate information that could be included in its annual report to Congress on impact ("the R4"). The scope of the DOSA project, therefore, focused exclusively on the development of a rigorous methodology for organizational capacity assessment and data-generation rather than on organizational capacity-building.

In the four years since DOSA was launched, the DOSA team has worked with 20 PVOs in the administration of DOSA¹. The participatory assessment methodology leads organizations through a process of systematic self-investigation focusing on six core competencies: Human Resource Management, Financial Resource Management, Service Delivery, External Relations, Organizational Learning and Strategic Management. In a recent survey conducted by PVC, approximately 40 percent of the Office's Child Survival grantees reported using DOSA as did one-third of Matching Grant recipients.

In the intervening years since DOSA was first developed, over a dozen DOSA-derived applications for organizational assessment, learning and planning have been created by EDC and Pact. In these applications, the methodological framework that made DOSA a novel diagnostic tool for USAID/PVC has been developed into a comprehensive organizational change and development strategy. Since 1996, Pact and EDC have provided organizational capacity assessment and strengthening services to more than 25 different International NGOs, several corporations (e.g., Time Inc.) and more than 400 Southern NGOs and local governments in 22 countries around the world. Together with DOSA participants, users of these DOSA-derived capacity assessment and organization strengthening applications:

- Identify and build on organizational strengths
- Identify divergent viewpoints on capacity through the open exchange of ideas
- Create consensus around a strategic vision

¹ PVOs participating in DOSA include ACDI/VOCA, Aid to Artisans, Andean Rural Health Care, CARE-USA, Catholic Relief Services, Citizens' Network for Foreign Affairs, CRWRC, Helen Keller International, International Eye Foundation, Katalysis, Lutheran World Relief, Margaret Sanger Center, Mercy Corps, Minnesota International Health Volunteers, OIC International, PATH, PSI, Save the Children, Winrock International and World Vision.

- Generate the information needed to select, implement and track organizational change and development strategies
- Assess their performance in relation to a broader grouping of user organizations through the creation of “cohort user groups”
- Communicate with and receive information about the capacity-building efforts of colleague organizations through an Internet Network

PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDIES

This study addresses three principal questions: a) What specific changes in organizational capacity can be attributed to a PVO's participation in DOSA? b) In which areas and to what degree are PVOs likely to experience changes (both positive and negative) in their DOSA scores? c) What are DOSA's strengths and limitations in promoting organizational capacity development among PVO users? These case studies are also designed to probe the extent to which DOSA contributes to sustained positive change by helping "staff champions" advocate more effectively for internal improvement programs. To the degree that DOSA enhances the effectiveness of internal change advocates, its impact grows larger over time and its cost-effectiveness increases significantly.

This report contains findings drawn from on-site interviews with three PVOs that have participated in DOSA for at least three years.² Additionally, the three-person study team from EDC and Pact also analyzed longitudinal DOSA data in order to learn more about the nature of the organizational capacity-building process among DOSA users.

What is the core DOSA intervention that is assessed in this report? The DOSA team typically interacts with each PVO-client for approximately eight hours over the course of a year. This time is split between facilitation of the initial organizational capacity assessment and facilitation of a debriefing session in which findings from the assessment are shared and some immediate next steps are identified. The standard facilitated assessment meeting runs between four and six hours, while the debriefing sessions generally last no more than two hours.

² It should be noted, however, that one of the organizations studied participated in DOSA for two years, and used a DOSA-derived tool (NGO Networks for Health Organizational Assessment Tool) in Year Three. The latter tool was developed by the DOSA team for use by health-oriented PVOs. The methodologies behind each tool are virtually identical although DOSA focuses on generic capacities while the NGO Health Assessment combines health-oriented items with general management concerns. The investigators felt that this combination of experiences would shed additional insights into the utility of DOSA as a vehicle for organizational change and development.

METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DOSA

DOSA was initially designed to capture changes in PVO organizational capacity over time. However, the DOSA team soon realized that the process it had developed was exceptionally well suited to the promotion of continuous learning and improvement among PVO users because key organizational actors measured and discussed the meaning of two dimensions of organizational performance:

Capacity--Perceptions held by user-organization staff members concerning the organization's capabilities, skills, and competence in relation to core capacity areas (i.e., strategic management, financial management, human resource management, external relations, service delivery and organizational learning).

Consensus--the degree to which members of the assessment team agree on their perceptions about specific areas of core capacity.

The use of consensus and capacity measures underscores a key DOSA principle: meaningful organizational development occurs at the intersection of two processes--identifying perceived organizational strengths and weaknesses and exploring differences of opinion regarding these perceptions.

The DOSA process typically involves 10 to 20 people from each PVO who represent diverse perspectives, functions, and levels of responsibility. This team works with trained DOSA facilitators to answer discussion question-sets in a setting that closely resembles that of a focus group. Each discussion-question set is followed by a series of individually scored items. Qualitative and quantitative insights are, therefore, blended to identify and develop new opportunities for excellence. The practice of alternating between focus-group type discussion questions and individually scored surveys within a single session gives DOSA the precision of a survey instrument combined with the richness of a focus group.

The literature on information-processing raises questions about the validity of retrospection and self-analysis and points to biases that underlie individual judgments about performance. In order to correct for the inherent bias of self-assessment teams, DOSA applies a critical incidents framework that involves the use of "discussion anchors," open-ended questions about time-specified data and closely defined events.

A trained facilitator helps the PVO's cross-hierarchical, cross-functional assessment team consider thematically linked sets of discussion questions that offer an objective framing for individually scored items about core capacities. Facilitator-led discussions flow from objective fact-seeking to analytical reflection. Participants in a DOSA assessment session alternate between thoughtful discussion of open-ended questions and individual reflection about items that are scored privately and anonymously using a 1-5 scale. By focusing group discussion on objective level data, the DOSA facilitator helps to minimize the biases traditionally associated with self-assessment.

In addition to the methods that minimize respondent bias during *data collection*, DOSA uses two additional safeguards to minimize respondent bias during the *report-generation* and *debriefing* stages. The first safeguard entails the introduction of organizational consensus scores that highlight divergence of opinion on performance. The second safeguard involves the generation and use of "cohort data," information generated through a comparative analysis of the entire DOSA user population. DOSA cohort data, which is made available online through a DOSA website and through face-to-face interactions with a DOSA debriefing facilitator, provide organizations with a mechanism for internal reality-testing by comparing their organization's performance against other peer-colleague organizations.

The methodology that underlies DOSA offers several important contributions to the field of organizational capacity assessment.

- 1) **Precision with depth.** DOSA assessments yield both quantitative and qualitative data. Scored individual response sheets yield quantitative data on both capacity and consensus in relation to core capacities. Discussions yield focus-group type insights about the factors that shape people's opinions.
- 2) **Benchmarking and internal "reality testing."** DOSA users are organized into "cohorts," groups of organizations with similar objectives and characteristics that, through the use of pseudonyms, share their assessment results anonymously with other cohort members. Such sharing facilitates organizational benchmarking and also helps users to determine whether they are indeed performing at peak capacity in relation to other organizations tackling similar challenges. The opportunity to scrutinize internal realities through the lens of external experience often represents a significant opportunity for organizational learning.
- 3) **Action and reflection.** Although initially created to meet an assessment and data collection objective, DOSA has evolved into an integrated capacity-building process that entails envisioning standards of excellence and assessing performance against these standards. Once assessment results are compiled, users engage in rigorous analysis of results, reflection, and the identification of action steps. The iterative nature of DOSA promotes continuous organizational improvement and models a process of organizational learning.

CASE STUDY METHODS AND PROCEDURES

General design of case studies

The case study methodology consisted of a longitudinal analysis of DOSA data as well as focus group and key informant interviews with numerous informants at three PVOs. All interviews took place at the PVO headquarters level and included both participants and non-participants of past DOSA self-assessment teams. Senior executives of each of the organizations were interviewed separately. The names of the three organizations have been withheld and are referred to in this report as PVO H, PVO G and PVO F. These three cases represent one small, one mid-sized and one large PVO respectively.

Preparation for the case studies began with a review of the entire pool of 100 DOSA scored items in order to identify those items that would be most likely to fluctuate (either positively or negatively) from year to year. This selection process resulted in the identification of a pool of 18 DOSA scored items that would be particularly sensitive to changes that occur as a result of either internal or external capacity-building efforts. These 18 DOSA items became the basis of an in-depth longitudinal analysis of performance.

The selection of items was qualitative in orientation. Each of the six capacity areas of DOSA (i.e., Human Resource Management, Financial Resource Management, Service Delivery, External Relations, Organizational Learning and Strategic Management) are represented. This set of items covers a broad range of organizational performance: recruitment, supervision, budgeting, stakeholder involvement, evaluation, sustainability, fundraising, strategic planning, teamwork and board governance.

PVOs that had participated in DOSA for at least three years were identified and their scoring pattern on each of the 18 items was tracked in order to detect the magnitude and direction of change. Eight PVOs from a total of 20 PVO's fit this criterion of a three-year history using DOSA and data drawn from their performance on the 18 items is displayed in Table One.

Data Collection

The investigation team developed two protocols for data collection, one for confidential, oral interviews with individual respondents in a private setting and one for oral interviews with groups in an open setting. Both protocols were administered at each of the three PVOs under study. Responses to the protocols were recorded on coded forms by the study team to ensure that data collection was accurate and of high quality.

The general format of all interviews involved:

- Climate-setting to encourage openness and, where appropriate, expression of divergent feelings, attitudes and values;
- Probing designed to disengage participants from preset viewpoints or prepared responses.

The facilitator offered interpretive comments in order to elicit deeper introspection. This involved summarizing before topic shifts, encouraging clarification of statements, and challenging or testing the strength of opinions or feelings.

Within each of the protocols, the EDC/Pact team organized the inquiry around two dimensions: the *type* of change and the *level* of impact. The team posited that the *types* of change that have occurred as a result of DOSA participation include process impact, learning, and alterations of systems and procedures. These changes, the team theorized, could occur at one or more of four *levels*: individual, organizational, partner, and beneficiary.

The schematic chart below summarizes the conceptual framework that was used to conduct and analyze the case study interviews.

Schematic One: Conceptual Framework for Case Study Interviews

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER	4. BENEFICIARY
A. Process impact				
B. Learning				
C. Systems and procedures				

Categories of Observation

Process impact

This category of change captures new ways of communicating or working together that came about as a result of exposure to DOSA. Process impacts might illustratively include initiating employee climate surveys, an analysis of agency priorities, or better communications with people in marketing.

Learning

This category of change captures lessons learned through participation in DOSA and the extent to which these lessons are applied. Illustrative examples of learning include new insights into the roles and responsibilities of colleagues; new frameworks for understanding capacity-building; greater understanding of the informational requirements of other departments; and, the importance of partnership-building as a requisite skill for mission achievement.

System and procedures impact

System and procedure impacts illustratively include new employee assistance programs, reworked job descriptions or reconsidered lines of responsibility, and new initiatives aimed at building reserves.

Levels of Impact

The case study team posited that each of these three *types of change* could occur at four different *levels*:

Individual Level

A staff member alters some behavior or work pattern. This change is directly attributable to the experience of having participated in DOSA.

Organizational Level

The PVO alters some practice, behavior or pattern. This change is directly attributable to the experience of having participated in DOSA.

Partner Level

A partner organization (southern NGO or collaborating PVO) alters some practice, behavior or pattern. This change is directly attributable to the experience that a partner PVO has had with DOSA. For change to occur at this level, the DOSA organization must transmit its experience with DOSA to another entity.

Beneficiary Level

The PVO and/or a colleague organization change some practice, behavior or pattern that has *direct* impact on beneficiaries.

GENERAL FINDINGS

Table One shows the extent to which eight DOSA users (the entire universe of PVOs with three years' worth of DOSA results) exhibited change on 18 selected DOSA items. At least half of the PVOs showed improvement on all but 3 of the 18 items from the Year One to Year Three DOSA administrations. On average, 58 percent of the PVOs showed improvement for each of the 18 items. The average change over three years for the 18 items was 10 percent. Positive change in the average cohort score occurred in 16 of the 18 items selected.

In general, PVOs showed the greatest improvement over time (expressed as percentage change) on those items that returned the lowest mean scores in Year One. This finding leads the research team to hypothesize that once PVOs are alerted to serious deficiencies in their performance through DOSA debriefings, they make palpable efforts to improve in those areas that are particularly weak. In approximately two-thirds of the cases where item scores fell below 2.5, the magnitude of change over three years was at least one full interval.

Table One: Performance Change Across Selected DOSA Items--Year-One to Year-Three

DOSA Item	Item Mean	Average % Change 1997–1999	Median Change %	% of PVOs improving	% Change range—low value	% Change range—high value
38. Our Projects: <i>Routinely</i> use result-based indicators to track progress in achieving objectives.	4.1	-1%	3%	63%	-18%	+9%
48. We <i>routinely</i> share information on our progress in achieving our mission through our communications with: Constituency.	4.1	9%	7%	75%	-14%	+52%
99. We actively engage in strategic partnerships with other organizations.	4.1	18%	4%	50%	-6%	+108%
98. We adapt our programs to the changing needs of our constituency	4.0	5%	7%	63%	-7%	+24%
21. The budgeting process leads us to allocate funds in a way that closely reflects our organizational priorities.	3.8	12%	-6%	38%	-20%	+99%
41. Our Projects: Enhance local organizational capacity as captured through evaluation.	3.8	9%	1%	50%	-14%	+37%
44. Throughout the project cycle (design, implementation, monitoring, and impact assessment), we give adequate attention to: political sustainability (how project-supported innovations will be accommodated within the framework of existing laws, policies, and political institutions).	3.7	14%	1%	50%	-17%	+79%
32. Stakeholders in our programs are engaged in: Assessing (project) impact.	3.6	7%	6%	63%	-15%	+52%
19. Supervisory practices enhance our staff's capacity to meet the organization's objectives.	3.5	1%	-8%	38%	-30%	+76%

DOSA Item	Item Mean	Average % Change 1997–1999	Median Change %	% of PVOs improving	% Change range—low value	% Change range—high value
61. The <i>level of financial support</i> from donors in each of the following categories is increasing: Corporations	3.5	-2%	2%	50%	-33%	+31%
67. The <i>average size of contributions</i> from donors in each of the following categories is increasing: Foundations	3.5	15%	2%	63%	-8%	+84%
72. We <i>routinely</i> use feedback from the general public and our constituency to improve performance.	3.5	7%	9%	63%	-33%	+45%
80. We use teamwork effectively to achieve our organizational objectives	3.5	19%	6%	63%	-25%	+101%
5. The following systems or practices contribute to good performance by our employees: Recruitment.	3.3	2%	5%	75%	-40%	+31%
84. We modify our strategic objectives based on findings generated through strategic planning exercises.	3.2	4%	-3%	38%	-31%	+50%
91. Our board has contributed competently in carrying out such functions as: Policy definition	3.1	12%	3%	63%	-18%	+78%
36. Traditionally under-represented stakeholders are engaged in: Monitoring projects.	3.0	6%	5%	75%	-24%	+44%
89. Our board has contributed competently in carrying out such functions as: Advocacy	2.5	44%	6%	63%	-15%	+186%

Type, Level and Pace of Change Driven by DOSA

The analysis of the longitudinal data from three years of DOSA generated a rich set of findings concerning the status of PVO capacity and the volatility of specific competency areas. Competencies with high volatility are those capacities most likely to change by one or more intervals over the course of one year. In order to further explore the *type*, *level* and *pace* of change that occurred among DOSA users between 1997 and 1999, the EDC/Pact team constructed a focus group exercise in which cohort data was shared with participants in the form of "leading headlines." Participants were asked to write their own organization's stories in light of a series of headlines that captured major cohort findings³.

The following findings concerning specific capacities measured by DOSA were used to generate the "leading headlines." Each finding was derived from an analysis of scores on the 18 "volatile" items for the eight PVOs that had participated in DOSA for three consecutive years:

- Five of the organizations have improved their ability to recruit competent staff.
- Budgeting practices still do not fully support organizational priorities for five organizations but the overall cohort improvement was twelve percent.

³ See annexed protocols.

- Stakeholders are increasingly involved in program assessment and traditionally underrepresented stakeholders are playing a more active role in program monitoring as measured in improving scores for five and six PVOs respectively.
- Monitoring and evaluation is bolstered by the growing use of results-based approaches for five of the eight organizations.
- Half the cohort reported improvements related to their efforts to strengthen the capacity of local partners over the three-year period.
- Half of the organizations showed improvement in the area of political sustainability (how project-supported innovations will be accommodated within the framework of existing laws, policies, and political institutions) with the magnitude of change remarkably high for two organizations.
- The cohort is increasingly adept at sharing, collecting and using information with the general public and its constituency. The majority of PVOs showed improvement in all three items related to these capacities.
- The cohort has increased its capacity to raise funds from the public. Five of the eight organizations have obtained larger contributions from foundations, and half have secured increasing support from corporations.
- Over half of the cohort reported improvements related to teamwork over the 3-year period. This item returned the second highest average change at nineteen percent.
- The practice of modifying strategic objectives and forming strategic partnerships are areas where the majority of PVOs did not demonstrate improvement, but the aggregate cohort scores increased by four and eighteen percent respectively.
- Governance is an area of increased strength for the cohort as five organizations have seen improved board performance in policy definition.
- The role and contributions of the Board of Directors in supporting advocacy returned the highest average change at forty four percent.

In some instances, participants' perceptions of performance for their own organization was in concert with the cohort trends noted above. In other instances, performance was described as markedly better or markedly worse. Reactions during the focus group by participants to various headlines generated a discussion around hypothetical performance- improving practices (their own and the cohort's). Participants formulated future scenarios for change based on the cohort findings and on their own organizational realities.

During the headlines exercise and in ensuing discussion, participants examined a variety of capacity-building practices (e.g., staff training), assessed the degree to which each contributed to specific capacity-building outcomes, and assessed alternative capacity-building practices to achieve similar or superior outcomes. The investigation team used this participant dialogue to identify potential causal pathways that connect the application of DOSA to concrete changes at the individual, organizational, partner and beneficiary levels. These potential causal pathways were then explored through individual interviews and through a review of longitudinal DOSA data.

The following table presents *Process Impact, Learning, and Systems and Procedures* changes that PVOs H, F and G reported as having been engendered by DOSA.

Table Two: Types of Changes Engendered by DOSA for Three PVO Users

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER ORGANIZATION	4. BENEFICIARY
A. Process impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I changed my approach to staff development and interpersonal communication • I now feel more comfortable saying hello to people in other departments because we shared info with them • I felt more involved and empowered to enact change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are now undertaking an employee climate survey, in part because of what we learned from DOSA • DOSA led to closer coordination between HR and the Program department • DOSA has spurred a total analysis of agency priorities and resources • There is better communication with people in the marketing department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working more with our partner organizations to think about sustainability • DOSA led to slightly increased collaboration with our partners in pooling resources for training • We are working more collaboratively at the national level with national and local partners. • There is better communication with our International Service Organization marketing partners • We're using the tool in some of our work with local NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are now doing market surveys i.e., client- driven needs assessments • Clients will receive better services because they are increasingly included in project planning and design. • We are now much more conscious of involving at least representative input in project and program design. This is a coalescence of our mission and the elements that undergird DOSA.

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER ORGANIZATION	4. BENEFICIARY
B. Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOSA helped me to understand the viewpoints that drive our organization • DOSA has refined my concept of the organization as a whole – there are 6 dimensions that I now hold in mind to get a sense of the whole • I gained insights into how I could better communicate with others • I now understand the development department and regional field office perspectives • I felt reassured that others have similar perceptions to mine • I learned about problem areas in our organization • I became more aware of the low morale that permeates our organization • I felt valued and privileged to be part of this assessment • From DOSA, I learned the importance of having a strong team • I really learned something from DOSA because of the variety of people who participated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOSA crystallized a lot of issues and provided a framework for understanding the capacity areas • Human Resource Management, and internal communications, changed as a result of DOSA. DOSA gave us insights into why we have such high turnover • DOSA served as a warning signal that we need to change • We use DOSA to design our learning agenda • Within our organization, it is normal to have cross-functional, cross-hierarchical teams. But DOSA confirmed the value of that pattern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One outcome of DOSA is the articulation of partnership-building as a skill • We highlighted partnership in the annual report in a new way and are marketing partnership skills to our external publics. DOSA helped us to distill what we do well in partnership • DOSA gave us huge external validation that we need to do more work in M&E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are beginning to look at the impact we are having at the client level • We now have a better understanding of who our stakeholders are

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER ORGANIZATION	4. BENEFICIARY
C. Systems and procedures		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We introduced an Employee Assistance Program in response to some of our DOSA findings We made a concerted effort to refine position descriptions, especially to bring greater clarity We have strengthened our commitment to build reserves We are doing more strategic planning as a result of DOSA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are working with our NGO Networks for Health Project partners to address HR issues and are using a tool that builds on DOSA's methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much more efficient flow of resources to partners as a result of DOSA discussions

The qualitative data presented in Table Two can be summarized quantitatively in Table Three.

Table Three: Incidence of DOSA-driven Change by Change Type and Impact Level

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER	4. BENEFICIARY	TOTAL CITATIONS
A. Process impact	3	5	5	3	16
B. Learning	10	5	3	2	20
C. Systems and procedures	0	4	1	1	6
TOTAL CITATIONS	13	14	9	6	42

Table Three shows that, for the three PVOs studied, there were 42 DOSA-attributed instances of change. Change was most pronounced at the organizational and individual levels (14 and 13 citations respectively). However, interviewees were also able to cite examples of performance improvements at the partner and beneficiary levels.

The DOSA process (i.e., cross-functional, cross-hierarchical teams of participants reviewing performance) models organizational learning. Not surprisingly, the most commonly cited change type

was associated with new learning (20 citations). The participatory forum which PVOs create through the DOSA process seems to serve three important functions:

1. The forum gives participants an opportunity to explain why things sometimes had gone wrong. Participants know that, at a minimum, anything said in a DOSA session becomes common knowledge among all assessment team members.
2. The forum gives rise to more holistic knowledge by enabling the partial knowledge of different individuals to be pooled and integrated so that a “bigger picture” can emerge.
3. The DOSA results that emerge from the forum provide empirical evidence about performance, which organizations use to make decisions about future actions.

A review of Tables Two and Three suggests several conclusions:

- All three PVOs noted important benefits that they attributed to their application of DOSA
- DOSA appears to be a particularly valuable tool for promoting organizational learning at all four levels examined by this analysis (individual, organizational, partner, and beneficiary)
- DOSA served as a catalyst to promote change at each of the four levels examined by this analysis
- Learning is the area in which DOSA engendered the greatest number of changes, followed closely by Process impact. Fewer instances of change were reported around systems and procedures

Clusters of Change

Working with the longitudinal quantitative data and the interview-generated qualitative data, the research team identified examples of causal pathways that link the application of DOSA to concrete change. A generic causal pathway can be represented as follows:

DOSA application --->identification of weakness (Level One) --->actions taken/changes made (Level Two)--->and concrete results of these changes (Level Three)

The two in-depth case studies that follow are presented to exemplify how causal pathways work and how each causal pathway is shaped by a “cluster of change” (defined and illustrated below).

CASE STUDY: THE CAUSAL PATHWAY OF CHANGE IN PVO H

The main finding drawn from PVO H’s DOSA experience is that DOSA led PVO H to redefine who its stakeholders were and to examine the degree to which it was appropriately responsive to these stakeholders. As a result of its analysis of the stakeholder issue, PVO H made two important decisions: (a) to consider its donors as stakeholders; and (b) to recognize the clients of its partner organizations as stakeholders.

These two decisions engendered a broad and diverse stream of supporting actions and results. PVO H’s examination of its relationships with stakeholders created a “cluster of change,” (i.e., a set of *interrelated, thematically linked, causally connected* DOSA items that vary together over time). The variables that make up PVO H’s “cluster of change” are shown in Table Four.

Table Four: PVO H--Score Changes on Selected DOSA Items Over a Three-Year Period

“Cluster of Change” Linked to the Theme of “Meeting Stakeholders Needs”

Percentage Change	Relevant DOSA Item
1. 19%	32. Stakeholders in our programs are engaged in: Assessing (project) impact.
2. 44%	36. Traditionally under-represented stakeholders are engaged in: Monitoring projects.
3. 32%	41. Our Projects: Enhance local organizational capacity as captured through evaluation.
4. 79%	44. Throughout the project cycle (design, implementation, monitoring, and impact assessment), we give adequate attention to: political sustainability (how project-supported innovations will be accommodated within the framework of existing laws, policies, and political institutions).
5. 16%	48. We <i>routinely</i> share information on our progress in achieving our mission through our communications with: Constituency.
6. 45%	72. We <i>routinely</i> use feedback from the general public and our constituency to improve performance.
7. 6%	98. We adapt our programs to the changing needs of our constituency.

Excerpts from Interviews at PVO H

Recognizing the Problem

As a result of discussion about stakeholder involvement in M&E, a weakness was identified. First of all, we weren’t sure exactly who our stakeholders were. In the first year of the DOSA administration, we just stumbled over this item. But between years two and three, we realized that we needed to take some action. The first thing that happened is that we broadened our understanding of “stakeholder” to include both our donors and the clients of our partner organizations.

We realized that we were having difficulty identifying who our clients and stakeholders were. We kept on trying to figure out how we should really involve them in a variety of processes. In the course of the year, we see that the field office has taken new approaches to this issue. We keep talking about impact. Our field office is now experimenting with ways to include client as well as organizational input. Our consciousness of stakeholders has been substantially enlarged. This is a direct result of our having to make distinctions in responding to specific DOSA questions.

- **Seeing donors as stakeholders**

Eventually, we decided to do a donor survey, because we now saw donors as stakeholders. This was a change for us. The purpose of the survey was to help us better understand how we had been communicating with our private, individual donors (our pool of faithful supporters). Specifically, the analysis and survey were designed to help us to learn how we could meet their needs as stakeholders. On the basis of survey findings, we have restyled our publications and our look. We have heightened the personalization of our communications with donors. We have made distinctions between casual/occasional supporters and higher contributors and have devised different communication strategies for each of these groups. Our survey has helped us to get a higher return on our investment in communication with donors. We have learned how to engage them more effectively in our work-- both monetarily and personally.

- **Seeing partner organizations' clients as stakeholders**

In the field, we're begun to undertake surveys at the client level with our partner organizations. We're also working with partner organizations to help them get client input. Surveys involve a random sampling of clients in selected communities. These interviews are now a matter of course.

- **Recognizing results that are linked to this "stakeholder cluster of change"**

We are now examining what more we might do in the areas of rural enterprise and rural microcredit lending. We are now looking more at the marketing question and what kinds of training and help we can give in this area since clients have indicated that this is a need. We're looking to see how we can improve that delivery of business training for clients on the basis of feedback they have given us. And, we are concentrating on how we can be more concrete and inclusive in the impact analysis of our work. DOSA created a deeper awareness of these four points and has contributed to our increased efforts in these areas.

We are changing the way we provide technical assistance to clients (i.e., those served by partner organizations). DOSA gave us an opportunity to better analyze questions we had about this area.

We are including the beneficiaries/clients in the planning before we write proposals. We don't just design a project with what we think they need.

We're moving to more need-based, client-based programming.

Summary of the DOSA Causal Pathway for PVO H

- *Level One Impact* (identification of weakness as a result of DOSA)

In Year One of the DOSA administration, weaknesses were identified in the following areas: stakeholder participation throughout the project cycle; information-sharing with stakeholders; and the collection of feedback from stakeholders (including constituents and the general public).

In Year Two of DOSA, the organization was forced to grapple with a recurring performance deficit. As a result of the Year Two administration, PVO H delved more deeply into a consideration of its relationship with stakeholders. It determined that it needed to focus, in particular, on two groups of stakeholders: donors and the clients of its partner organizations. (Level One)

- *Level Two Impact* (actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA) --Donors as Stakeholders

PVO H conducted a donor survey, because it now saw its donors as stakeholders. This was a significant change for the organization. The purpose of the survey was to help PVO H better understand the nature of its communication with private, individual donors and to assess the degree to which that communication was responsive to stakeholder needs and expectations.

Level Three Impact (concrete results of actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA)-- Donors as Stakeholders

On the basis of survey findings, PVO H restyled its publications, and heightened the personalization of its communications with donors. It made distinctions between casual/occasional supporters and higher contributors and then devised different communication strategies for each. Its survey helped PVO H to get a higher return on its investment in communication with donors. It now reports greater success in engaging supporters more effectively in its work-- both monetarily and personally.

Level Two Impact (actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA)--Partner Organizations' *Clients* as Stakeholders

PVO H initiated field-based surveys *at the client level* with its partner organizations. PVO H also began working with partner organizations to help them get client input. Surveys involve a random sampling of clients in selected communities. These interviews are now part of PVO H's standard operating procedures.

Because of findings from these surveys, PVO H is now examining and adjusting what it does in the areas of rural enterprise and rural microcredit lending. Specifically, it is now focusing

greater attention on the marketing side of its microcredit program and is assessing the adequacy of its marketing training. The impetus for this assessment is the feedback it received from clients that indicated an unmet need in this area. Relatedly, PVO H is also seeking to bolster the delivery of business training for clients on the basis of feedback it has received from them. Another change underway in PVO H is an attempt to be more inclusive of stakeholders in the impact analysis of its work.

- *Level Three Impact* (concrete results of actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA)--Partner Organizations' *Clients* as Stakeholders

PVO H and its partner organizations are now including beneficiaries/clients in the planning of projects prior to submission of funding proposals. Projects are no longer being designed on the basis of what PVO H and its partners think their clients need. Rather, there is a new commitment to needs-based, client-based programming.

A Final Observation About the DOSA Casual Pathway at PVO H

The foregoing analysis highlights that a single insight—in this case, the realization by PVO H that it could not agree on who its stakeholders were—can engender a broad and very diverse set of changes. In short, insights often ripple and ramify in profound ways as this case demonstrates.

CASE STUDY: THE CAUSAL PATHWAY OF CHANGE IN PVO F

In the case of PVO F, a “cluster of change,” was identified around *human resource practices*. PVO F’s participation in DOSA, led the organization to examine underlying causes of low employee morale and high staff turnover. In probing these issues, PVO F drew causal linkages between the two dependent (i.e., outcome) variables (low morale and high staff turnover) and a series of highly interrelated independent variables measured by DOSA including organizational learning, teamwork, staff supervision, and staff recruitment. As a result of its analysis of the morale and turnover issues, PVO F made three important decisions: (a) to undertake a comprehensive, highly participatory, team-oriented strategic planning exercise; (b) to conduct an in-depth survey of all employees (both in headquarters and in the field) to learn more about the underlying causes of employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and (c) to institute new procedures for gathering and implementing promising ideas from staff that would help PVO F better achieve its mission while fostering productive teamwork.

These three decisions engendered numerous supporting actions and results (see discussion below). PVO F’s examination of factors related to organizational learning, human resource management and teamwork created a “cluster of change.” Some of the specific DOSA items included in the “cluster of change” for PVO F are shown in the table below along with the direction and magnitude of the change PVO F achieved over its three years of DOSA participation.

Table Five: PVO F--Score Changes on Selected DOSA Items Over a Three-Year Period

“Cluster of Change” Linked to the Theme of “Improving Human Resource Practices”

Percentage Change	Relevant DOSA Item
1. 31%	5. The following systems or practices contribute to good performance by our employees: Recruitment
2. -17%	19. Supervisory practices enhance our staff’s capacity to meet the organization’s objectives.
3. 6%	80. We use teamwork effectively to achieve our organizational objectives.
4. 16%	84. We modify our strategic objectives based on findings generated through strategic planning exercises.

The case of PVO F reveals an interesting phenomenon. The level of dissatisfaction with supervisory practices increased as the bar was raised concerning standards of supervisory performance. In other words, DOSA helped to create a consensus that organizational learning and staff retention were being thwarted by poor supervisory practices. PVO F gradually redefined the skills and traits it most valued in supervisors. The impact of this redefinition was captured in findings from an in-depth survey of all employees that was administered almost a full year after the third DOSA administration. That survey revealed that employees from six of the nine departments queried were highly satisfied with supervisory practices. Thus, changes engendered by DOSA led to new performance standards, a temporary perception of shortfall by PVO F in relation to those standards, and, finally, achievement of performance consistent with the newer, higher standards.

Excerpts from Interviews at PVO F

- **Recognizing the Problem**

DOSA led to better understanding and significant consensus that we have HR issues.

DOSA spurred a total analysis of the Agency's practices and an engagement in strategic planning. We decided to use a strategic planning approach to address the factors that contribute to low morale.

DOSA helped explain why there is such a high staff turnover and made people more aware of low morale.

DOSA demonstrated the low consensus and lack of communication that led to our high staff turnover.

- **Gathering Facts to Address the Problem**

DOSA helped to highlight the current state of affairs. We then examined our data and discovered that we have a turnover rate of 140 percent for the last five years.

We reviewed systematically information gathered from exit interviews. DOSA showed we were a low consensus organization. This same view emerged when we analyzed what we heard in exit interviews; people reported that they don't really see the Agency's focus. DOSA demonstrated low consensus and lack of communication. This made us delve deeply into our use of teams and the approach we take to strategic planning. We wanted to develop processes that would make a deliberate connection to the low consensus uncovered by DOSA.

We surveyed, with the help of the DOSA team, more than half of our staff members in Headquarters and the field to understand their views on supervision, teamwork, confidence in management, and channels for providing input to supervisors and senior management. We learned a great deal about how everyone on our staff felt about each of these issues. We saw that many people did not feel that they had as great a voice as they would like in our day-to-day operations and in our direction-setting. Many people did not feel that their input was valued or that the benefit of their experience was being received.

- **Taking Action**

We created a task force to address specific issues related to our management of human resources.

We created a new strategic planning process that has multiple opportunities for staff at all levels of our organization to contribute their insights and knowledge.

We created a new program, “Bright Ideas,” for identifying and implementing promising new initiatives from staff that could help us to operate more effectively and to serve our clients better.

We have set new standards for what we expect from our supervisors and have instituted supervisory training to make sure that our expectations are met.

- **Recognizing Results Linked to the “Improving Human Resource Practices to Achieve Greater Organizational Learning” Cluster of Change**

We are monitoring staff turnover more closely than ever. However, it is still too early to tell whether the innovations we’ve introduced will make a difference.

I sat in on all three DOSA administrations. The major impact occurred after the second session and was reinforced by the third. There’s value in making this more than a one-shot affair. The major impact started to occur when we saw the same kinds of results over two years. It was an organizational wake-up call. We saw the trend, we saw the (lack of) consensus. In particular, we flagged HR as a concern. When we saw the kinds of results we were getting three times in a row after thinking that there were some kinds of improvements, we realized that the improvements might not have been very effective. This caused us to look at HR staffing (do we have the right people and level of professionalism), and we decided to do some serious upgrading. Now we have a very professional group. We also made changes in compensation and benefits.

Summary of the DOSA Causal Pathway for PVO F

- *Level One Impact* (identification of weakness as a result of DOSA)

In Year One of the DOSA administration, weaknesses were identified in the following areas: organizational learning; recruitment, supervision, and teamwork

In Year Two of DOSA, the organization was forced to grapple with a recurring performance deficit. As a result of the Year Two administration, PVO F delved more deeply into a consideration of its supervisory practices, organizational learning patterns, staff morale, and staff turnover. (Level One)

- *Level Two Impact* (actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA)

PVO F conducted an employee survey; reviewed data gathered from exit interviews, changed its expectations for supervisors; offered better training to supervisors; created more opportunities for effective teamwork (particularly through a revision of its approach to strategic planning); and, created a new program to elicit valuable input and suggestions from employees.

Level Three Impact (concrete results of actions taken and changes introduced as a result of DOSA)

PVO F upgraded and professionalized its staff, particularly at the supervisory level.

Changes in compensation and benefits were introduced.

An in-depth survey was administered (with technical support from the DOSA team) one full year after the DOSA Year Three administration. Survey findings indicated substantial improvement in employee satisfaction with supervisory practices. There was also very high consensus in PVO F on this view.

PVO F continues to closely monitor staff turnover. As more is understood about the trendline in this area, the full extent of Level Three impact will become clearer.

A Final Observation About the DOSA Causal Pathway at PVO F

The story of PVO F is very much a work in progress. The Human Resources Task Force is currently developing a comprehensive plan to address issues that emerged from the employee satisfaction survey. Furthermore, PVO F is currently in the midst of its strategic planning process; thus, additional changes associated with PVO F's DOSA participation are likely to emerge over the next 12 months.

The case of PVO F illustrates that an organization's participation in DOSA sometimes leads to the development of higher internal standards, which, in turn, leads—in the short-term--to declining DOSA scores. In the case of PVO F, new insights about supervision led to higher expectations and, in the short-term, greater dissatisfaction with the organization's performance in this area. However, one-year later, higher levels of satisfaction replaced this pervasive dissatisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

DOSA is a powerful force for change. This finding is based on the quantitative, longitudinal data and the anecdotal information analyzed in the course of this study. Evidence from this analysis suggests that DOSA has engendered positive change despite the limited number of contact hours (typically, eight) between the DOSA team and each participating PVO.

This report highlights two powerful yet unique causal pathways to change that resulted from PVO participation in DOSA. In the case of PVO H, the discovery that it could not agree on who its stakeholders were gave rise to a broad and very diverse set of changes. For PVO F, change came as a result of organizational dissatisfaction with recurrently low scores on measures pertaining to staff morale and teamwork.

Among the important lessons to emerge from this study about DOSA and its role in both measuring *and* building organizational capacity are the following:

- **Focused discussion leads to capacity development as well as to capacity assessment.** Table One showed the extent to which eight DOSA users (the entire universe of PVOs with three years' worth of DOSA results) exhibited change on 18 selected DOSA items. At least half of the PVOs showed improvement on all but 3 of the 18 items from the Year One to Year Three DOSA administrations. On average, 58 percent of the PVOs showed improvement for each of the 18 items. Between Years One and Three, positive change in the average cohort score occurred in 16 of the 18 items selected. Thus, DOSA seems to serve as an impetus for both capacity measurement and organizational improvement.
- **Learning through dissonance.** Participants engaged in the DOSA process occasionally find that their personal reflections and experiences run counter to viewpoints expressed by other group members. While such "dissonance" can be frustrating, it can also engender profound growth and change. In the case of PVO H, dissent about the definition of "stakeholders" initially led to discomfort among discussants. However, this discomfort eventually gave way to significant learning as well as important decisions about how stakeholder relations could be improved. In short, this case demonstrates that insights that emerge from unlearning (in this instance, unlearning a traditional view of stakeholder relations) and new learning can ripple and ramify in profound ways. Internal champions at PVO H helped to create a new, improved standard of "stakeholder relations," and eventually created the consensus needed to effect meaningful change.
- **Creating the change imperative.** All too frequently, organizations respond to information concerning organizational weaknesses with ineffective half measures such as "redoubling" efforts to involve stakeholders or creating a task force, only to find that they have simply built on existing strengths without addressing core problems. Findings drawn from both the DOSA case studies and longitudinal data suggest a very different and promising effect. Once alerted to serious deficiencies in their performance through DOSA debriefings, participating PVOs made authentic efforts to improve in those areas that are particularly weak. In sum, there appears to be a DOSA-driven *imperative for change*.

- **Focusing on weaknesses.** In general, PVOs showed the greatest improvement over time (expressed as percentage change) on those items that returned the lowest mean scores in Year One. Once PVOs are alerted to serious deficiencies in their performance through DOSA debriefings, they appear to make substantial efforts to improve in areas of greatest weakness. Thus, in approximately two-thirds of the cases where item scores fell below 2.5, the magnitude of change over three years was at least one full interval—a considerable improvement!
- **Clusters of change.** The change process is one that ripples and ramifies in multiple directions. Improvements engendered by DOSA are best understood in the context of a “clusters of change.” A “cluster of change” can be defined as a set of *interrelated, thematically linked, causally connected* dimensions of organizational performance that vary together over time. PVOs F and H each exhibited “clusters of change” that represented significantly different pathways to improvement. One of the strengths of DOSA appears to be its capacity to help users establish causal connections among the different dimensions of organizational performance that it measures. Because the DOSA methodology supports the *thematic* interpretation of findings across multiple areas of performance, PVOs are able to derive multi-faceted change strategies from DOSA results.
- **The value of time series data.** PVO F's experience highlights the importance of the longitudinal data provided by DOSA. Annual DOSA results reinforced initial findings regarding weak human resource practices. The data trend over three years played a critical role in convincing senior leadership to “get serious” about the HR challenge. It appears that a single “report card” creates awareness, while multiple “report cards” create commitment to change and an ability to track the results of change efforts.
- **Strengthening DOSA’s impact.** Each PVO participating in the study suggested that additional on-site assistance from the DOSA team would be highly desirable. In particular, PVOs would like support in connecting DOSA findings to strategic planning initiatives and their own capacity-development efforts with partners. If the DOSA team could spend a modest amount of additional on-site time with PVO staff, it is likely that both the *pace* and *magnitude* of positive change generated by DOSA would be enlarged. On-site time by the DOSA team could also be used to design capacity-building initiatives targeted at the partner and beneficiary levels--two impact levels that lagged somewhat behind the individual and organization-bound performance changes documented in this study.

Other ideas that emerged from the interviews for strengthening DOSA’s impact include:

- Closer articulation between senior management and the DOSA assessment team to ensure that all important findings are systematically and rigorously addressed
- Ongoing reporting to the DOSA team on how DOSA results are being used to improve organizational capacity so that the DOSA team can derive lessons learned that lead, in turn, to an ever improving set of services

ANNEX A: GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Overview of Group Interview Sessions

- Brief introductions of all participants and guarantee by research team of complete anonymity—5-8 minutes
- Context-setting—purpose of study and description of the product that will emerge from it—2-3 minutes
- Opening questions (“How many can recall participating in DOSA?” “What do you most remember about your experience with DOSA?”) —5-10 minutes
- Review of the most recent set of DOSA findings and open discussion (specific to each PVO)—5 minutes
- The matrix exercise (described below)—30 minutes
- Headline exercise (described below)—15-20 minutes
- Closing—3-5 minutes

The Matrix Exercise

The Matrix Exercise is a series of open-ended questions that reflect the conceptual framework used in this study. That framework is summarized below.

DOSA can contribute to three different levels of impact and four different types of change as depicted in the following matrix:

CHANGE LEVEL→ CHANGE TYPE↓	1. INDIVIDUAL	2. ORGANIZATIONAL	3. PARTNER ORGANIZATION	4. BENEFICIARY
A. Process impact				
B. Learning				
C. Systems and procedures				
D. Other				

- Process impact—What new ways of communicating or working together came about as a result of exposure to DOSA?
- Learning—What did you learn as a result of your participation in DOSA? In what contexts were you able to apply this learning? What was the value (to you, to your organization, to your partner organization and to your beneficiaries) of this learning?
- System and procedures impact

Each participant is given a sheet with this matrix (but without definition of terminology). The facilitator then gives the following instructions:

We have four columns and four rows, and I’m going to have you do 4 different things. In the first row, I want you to think about anything about DOSA that led you to some change as an individual. Here are some examples: you look to different resources in new ways; you might

understand Finance better; you may have changed the way you communicate with a colleague; you may have formed a new personal alliance or partnership. Use each box for one idea. [60 seconds elapse] Pass your sheet to the right.

Now go to line two. Think about three changes that occurred at the organizational level that you can link to your organization's involvement with DOSA. A change could be a new process, a new initiative, or an experiment that was launched. [60 seconds elapse] Pass your sheet to the right.

To what extent have you seen any changes related to DOSA that are at the level of partner organizations? Possibly you've used new indicators or shared information differently with partners as a result of DOSA. [60 seconds elapse] Pass your sheet to the right.

To what extent have you seen any changes related to DOSA that are at the level of your beneficiaries, the poor, the people your organization seeks to serve? Any examples you wish to note are fine. [60 seconds elapse] Now, you're going to hang on to your sheets.

What was the most difficult level to comment on?

What was the most natural and easiest to brainstorm on in terms of the four areas?

Facilitator then invites people to comment, line by line, on the matrices they have in front of them which represent their work as well as the work of other group members. Probes are used to understand what respondents intended to communicate through their written statements and the factors that participants believe were instrumental in achieving the changes noted. Additionally, the facilitator probes to determine the degree of agreement among participants concerning the changes identified on each matrix.

At the exercise's conclusion, the facilitator asks each participant to circle those cells in the matrix that appear to have been most affected by the organization's participation in the DOSA process. The sheets are then collected.

Headline Exercise

We recently completed a three-year analysis of how PVOs have performed on DOSA. Here are some headlines that could have been written to summarize what we learned. For each headline, share with us what might be the lead paragraph of the accompanying article as it pertains to your organization. In your lead paragraph, you might wish to comment on the degree to which the headline is true for your organization. Your lead paragraph might also identify the factors that led to (or thwarted) the pattern described by the headline for your organization.

[The facilitator encourages participants to build on individual contributions by other group members and to probe as deeply as possible for specific actions, attitudes, and behaviors related to the headline]

- Headline #1:** Strong record in using results-based indicators maintained (38)⁴
- Headline #2:** Trend toward aggressive engagement in strategic partnering continues (99)
- Headline #3:** Growing involvement by stakeholders in impact assessment (32)
- Headline #4:** Supervisors fail to make progress enhancing staff capacity (19)
- Headline #5:** Corporate giving remains stable, while foundation support grows (61/67)
- Headline #6:** Organizations embrace teamwork with new vigor (80)
- Headline #7:** Recruitment going nowhere: another year in the cellar (5)
- Headline #8:** Board role in advocacy: real progress but still a long road to travel (89)

Overview of Individual Interview Sessions

Detailed Individual interview protocols were designed “on the fly” based on responses shared in the group discussion. Concretely, interviewers focused their questions on the specific changes and change categories (i.e., the matrix cells) that generated the most comment in the group session. Each interview lasted 30 minutes. The purpose of the interviews was to gather additional details about the nature, scope, extent and factors associated with each change noted. Interviewers also invited participants to explore, in open-ended fashion, factors that limited DOSA’s impact to promote change.

Responses were recorded and coded using the matrix as the organizing framework. Each matrix cell was numbered, and all responses pertaining to a particular cell’s number were grouped together to facilitate analysis and, in particular, patterns of response.

⁴ Number in parenthesis refers to the DOSA item number from which the finding is derived.