Most Significant Change

MSC was developed by Rick Davies, in the mid-1990s to meet the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating a complex participatory rural development program in Bangladesh, with diverse implementation pathways and outcomes (Serrat, 2009). Since then, MSC has acquired wide acclaim in capturing impact for development interventions which struggle with conventional monitoring and evaluation approaches.

Also known as Monitoring without Indicators, ‘The Story Approach’, ‘Impact Monitoring’, The Most Significant Change Technique (MSC) is a rich participatory program monitoring and evaluation technique that focuses on capturing impact by asking simple questions to program beneficiaries and field staff, such as: “During the last month, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for participants in the program?”

Qualitative in nature, it involves collecting significant change stories from the field level, of which the most impactful ones are then systematically filtered and chosen through a panel of designated stakeholders who discuss them to assess the program impact. (Davies & Dart, n.d.).

Among the many advantages of MSC are, its adaptability in cross-cultural contexts, requiring no specialized professional skills, and that it is highly successful in identifying the important values in an organization, and unexpected outcomes delivered by a program.

List of recommended resources:

For a broad overview:

Brief: The Most Significant Change Technique

Developed by the Asian Development Bank, this four page brief on gives a systematic overview of the rationale, definition, benefits, enablers and implementation steps in MSC.
Toolkit: Most Significant Change Technique
From the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, this toolkit provides a succinct overview of MSC in Q&A format.

For an in-depth perspective:

The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use
With visually appealing illustrations, this guide by Rick Davies and Jess Dart is a one-stop solution to comprehensively understand the theory, practice and capacity building to conduct MSC.

Case Studies: (Video Resources)

Health: “Significant Change-Beyond numbers” by UNICEF illustrates how the use of significant change stories about hand sanitization, breastfeeding, and HIV AIDS interventions helped improve the program impact significantly.

Governance: A rich overview of the experiences in Decentralization through MSC are explained in the webinar - “Most Significant Change (MSc) in Evaluation” hosted by the African Development Bank

Education: This interview from NCERT, gives an overview of Capturing the Most Significant Change in Schools.
**Toolkits:**

**Information Sheet on Stories of Most Significant Change:**

Developed by Save the Children, Norway, this toolkit talks about the use of MSC to understand the values expressed by children and young adults on the benefits of child rights initiatives.