

MANAGING TO ADAPT

Analysing Adaptive Management for Planning,
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

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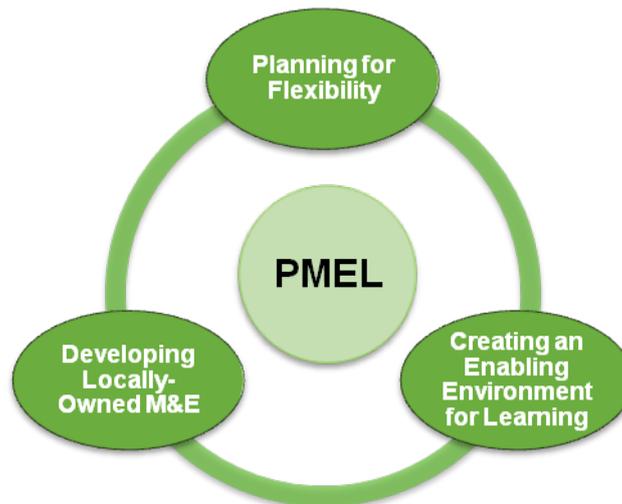
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ABBREVIATIONS

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GEM	Gendered Enterprise and Markets
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LDP	Law & Development Partnership
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MCP	Multi-country Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PbR	Payment by Results
PDIA	Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation
PMEL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
RCDA	Rural Communities Development Agency
RTE	Real-time Evaluation
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNA	Social Network Analysis
ToC	Theory of Change
USAID	United State Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adaptive management is at the heart of ‘doing development differently’ (Wild et al., 2016). Whether it is ‘here to stay’ depends on how much it is mainstreamed into existing development programming, especially planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (PMEL) cycles. In this report, we find that mainstreaming adaptive management in PMEL involves three strategies: **(1) planning for flexibility**; **(2) developing locally-owned M&E**; and **(3) creating an enabling environment for learning**. Adopting these strategies contributes to virtuous cycles of PMEL.



Oxfam GB¹ has a broad impact and has long been committed to flexible programming (Shaw, 2016). We thus identify and assess examples of adaptive management within Oxfam’s PMEL frameworks, illustrating enablers and barriers in seven Oxfam programmes. We also showcase examples in Mercy Corps, the World Bank, DFID, and Care International. In doing so, we hope to inform adaptive approaches for PMEL and help practitioners be better equipped to address modern, complex challenges.

Recommendations

Plan for Flexibility

- **Experiment with evolutionary approaches.** When outcomes are unclear, implementing parallel pilots may help fine-tune programme design. Though this can be time- and resource-intensive, deliberations that align stakeholder understandings and promote buy-in can offset downsides (e.g. resource-drain) of trial-and-error approaches.
- **Negotiate flexible funding.** Sharing of budget targets, setting up centralised ‘rainy day’ funds for need-based adjustments, and innovating PbR contracts by including early grant funding are three strategies to create conditions for adaptation. If donors are reluctant, inviting them to on-site visits and learning events can familiarise them with programmes, build trust-based relationships,

¹ We hereafter refer to Oxfam GB as Oxfam – though our client is Oxfam GB, we hope that our recommendations are generalisable to Oxfam affiliates.

and improve chances for flexible funding arrangements. Training staff to understand flexible budgets is key to such approaches.

- **Design adaptive logframes and contracts.** Logframes are important tools for accountability but often create path dependency. Though donors are interested in adaptive arrangements, they may lack the capacity or knowledge to create them. Negotiating broad-but-defined indicators and incorporating room for adjustments can help build this capacity and prevent lock-in amid changing circumstances. If donors resist adaptive frameworks, it may help to communicate how building-in flexibility during planning can offset the transaction costs of adjusting during implementation.

Develop Locally-owned M&E

- **Invest in training.** Broadening data literacy among country staff allows burden-sharing for M&E and improves capacity to collect timely data. Building capacity is costly initially but can prevent overburdening M&E staff down the road.
- **Improve partner selection strategies.** Selecting partners that are aligned in mandates and resources can (a) help compensate for resource shortages; (b) encourage sensitivity to context; (c) strategically broaden an organisation's field networks; and (d) align incentives for sustained engagement and communication. It can also create an 'institutional legacy' of a programme that enables its long-term resilience.
- **Foster bottom-up decision-making and data-collection.** Encouraging bottom-up tools and approaches (e.g. the Concept Note System and steering committees) can help foster feedback and delegate decisions to local staff and communities. Not only does this reduce transaction costs of top-down management, but it also promotes locally-responsive solutions.

Create an Enabling Environment for Learning

- **Facilitate communication between country offices.** Relying too much on HQ to broker communication can create information siloes. Country staff can take ownership of this process by initiating dialogue with other country offices, especially through events or on-site visits. This has the added benefit of creating alternative sources of institutional memory within the organisation.
- **Face-to-face dialogue is key.** Though webinars and reports are helpful conversation-starters, nothing beats face-to-face communication via learning events, workshops, and in-person visits. Setting aside funding – whether through centralised funds or integrating it into overhead costs – is a first step to mobilise momentum for such events. By creating room for discussions, they allow staff to reflect upon and internalise lessons.
- **Shift mindsets, not just practices.** Being adaptive is intimidating. Investing in coaching and mentoring, and prioritising learning and reflection among younger staff, helps overcome mental barriers to adopting adaptive approaches. Despite high up-front costs, such strategies build organisational culture and resilience for adaptive management.

Case Overview

Within Oxfam	
Chukua Hatua (DFID)	A governance programme to strengthen civil society in Tanzania.
GRAISEA (Sida)	A multi-country programme (MCP) to promote gender-inclusive agri-business in South East Asia.
MRMV (Sida)	A MCP in eight countries to support rights-based approaches to health and education for citizens.
REE-CALL (DFID)	A programme in Bangladesh to support economic empowerment, adaptation to climate change, leadership, and learning.
South Caucasus (European Commission)	A programme in Georgia and Armenia to foster farmers' rights and promote food security.
SWIFT (DFID)	A programme in the DRC and Kenya to provide sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene to citizens.
WWS (DFID)	A MCP in Afghanistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories/Israel, South Sudan, and the DRC to promote accountable governance by building civil society capacity.
Outside Oxfam	
LASER KPMG & LDP (DFID)	A MCP to strengthen legal and judicial capacity and improve the investment climate in eight countries.
IGP-PSCM World Bank (World Bank)	A programme in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda to improve governance in the pharmaceutical sector and broaden access to medicine.
SOMGEP CARE (DFID)	A programme in Somalia to improve access to and shift norms regarding girls' education.
PRIME Mercy Corps (USAID)	A programme in Ethiopia to broaden pastoralist market integration and improve climate change resilience

Case Analysis – Elements of Adaptive Management

Adaptive Elements	Descriptions	Illustrative Cases
<i>Planning</i>		
Adopting Evolutionary Approaches	“Crawling the design space” (Pritchett et al., 2013) by piloting different mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chukua Hatua • REE-CALL
Employing Adaptive Logframes	Using broadly-defined indicators and leaving room for adjustments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LASER</i> • WWS
Creating Flexible Financial Frameworks	Pooling funds and designing adaptive contracts (e.g. PbR).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRMV • SWIFT
<i>M&E</i>		
Using Outcome Mapping Approaches	Enhancing a common and shared understanding of change processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chukua Hatua • <i>IGP-PSCM</i>
Collecting and Using Real-Time Data	Deploying techniques (e.g. real-time evaluations) for rapid data collection and course correction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWS • <i>SOMGEP</i>
Selecting Complementary Partners	Using situational studies, social networking analysis, and stakeholder mapping to identify partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Caucasus • WWS
Promoting Bottom-up Decision-making and Data-collection	Soliciting community feedback and devolving decision-making to local staff and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PRIME</i> • GRAISEA • WWS
<i>Learning</i>		
Leading Learning Events and Informal Learning	Facilitating learning events, in-person visits, and face-to-face communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRMV • WWS
Facilitating Working Groups	Creating spaces for reflection through thematic working groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRAISEA

1 INTRODUCTION

Adaptive management is the latest breakthrough in a series of innovations to ‘do development differently’ (Wild et al., 2016). It emerges from stakeholders’ calls for more context-specific and flexible programmes (Bain et al., 2016), in response to business-as-usual practices, often characterised by linear thinking, short-termism, and an obsession with cost-effectiveness (Valters et al., 2016). Two recent, notable publications – the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law* and DFID’s *2016 Bilateral Development Review* – reaffirm this trend: they call to move away from ‘best practice’ towards ‘good fit’ (Booth, 2017) solutions and promote “a culture of learning and adaptive programming” (UK DFID, 2016, pg. 46).

This seal of approval from major donors is a defining moment for initiatives that are trying to mainstream adaptive approaches (Wild and Booth, 2016). Adaptive management seems to be ‘here to stay’ (Green, 2016). However, breaking away from convention is difficult, especially when funding and resources are limited. In such environments, donors continue to wield planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL) as a tool for strict accountability rather than embracing its potential to promote evidence-based decision-making and change. Innovating PMEL is thus important to overcome institutional inertia against adaptive management.

This report illustrates practical steps to infuse adaptive management within PMEL processes. In doing so, it builds upon a body of research that is investigating adaptive management within organisations as diverse as the World Bank (Bain et al., 2016), DFID (Wild et al., 2017), CARE (Giordano, 2017), and Mercy Corps/IRC (Proud et al., 2016). Oxfam commissioned our team to analyse case studies within the organisation (and comparable institutions) that illustrate examples of adaptive PMEL. Analysing Oxfam is salient because of its diverse reach and global impact: it is in the frontlines of addressing today’s complex development challenges. Its core principles also demonstrate a long-standing commitment to flexibility (Shaw, 2016). Thus, our intended audience is all levels of Oxfam staff, as well as other practitioners interested in learning about strategies for adaptive PMEL.

The following questions guide our report:

- What are the main elements and practices of **PMEL** for adaptive management?
- Are there **good examples** in Oxfam or elsewhere? What are the key **enablers and barriers**?
- How can Oxfam learn from its adaptive approaches – or lack thereof – to **inform and improve its PMEL practices**, particularly in multi-country programmes (MCPs)?

To answer these questions, we structure the report as follows: in Section 2, we review the ‘state of play’ in research and practice on adaptive management, building a theoretical framework to structure our analysis and recommendations. Section 3 presents a brief description of our research methods and cases. We analyse our cases for adaptive elements along the PMEL cycle in Section 4. We conclude in Section 5 with recommendations for fostering adaptive PMEL practices.

2 THE ‘STATE OF PLAY’ ON ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Defining adaptive management is a key first step to evaluate its ‘state of play’. We use the existing literature and feedback from interviewees to develop the following definition:

Adaptive management is an approach that consists of “adaptation[s] [that are] systematic and strategic according to a learning agenda” (Shaw, 2016, pg. 2). It contains the following characteristics:

1. **Context-specific, locally-led** solutions;
2. **Experimentation**, especially when objectives are known and processes are flexible;
3. A strategy to “**learn, iterate, and adapt**” (Andrews et al., 2015, pg. 128).

Sources: Shaw, 2016; Valters et al., 2016; Andrews et al., 2015

Adaptive management is not new: it found early roots in computer science, the private sector, and the military before emerging in international development in the 1980s (Valters et al., 2016). For example, Korten (1980) contrasts ‘blueprint’ and ‘learning process’ approaches in programming, arguing that the former forecloses interventions focused on beneficiary needs. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) extend this analysis to ‘participatory research’ by local communities, while Rondinelli (1993) argues for ‘adaptive administration’ as a counterweight to input-output programming.

This early thinking laid the foundation for recent scholarship from pioneers such as Robert Chambers, Ben Ramalingam, Matt Andrews, and Tim Harford, among others, on complex systems, participatory methods, and problem-driven, iterative adaptation (PDIA) (Andrews et al., 2015). Though these approaches did not make headway into major donor organisations early on, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) readily embraced approaches to foster adaptation, and learning (Faustino and Booth, 2014; O’Donnell, 2016).

In recent years, actors such as the World Bank (López-Calva and Zhou, 2017), DFID (Wild et al., 2017), and USAID (Salib, 2016) are adopting adaptive approaches. Accompanying them are various stakeholder-driven initiatives to promote adaptive learning, such as ‘Doing Development Differently’ and ‘Thinking and Working Politically’ (Algozo and Hudson, 2016). Systems thinking (Bowman et al., 2015) and contract theory (Bryan and Carter, 2016) have also emerged to structure thinking around adaptive management and bridge “gaps between theory and practice” (Bryan and Carter, 2016, pg. 24). Finally, organisations such as Mercy Corps, the IRC, and the Asia Foundation have undertaken stock-takes of adaptive management within their respective organisations (Proud et al., 2016; Faustino and Booth, 2014).

However, crucial gaps remain in the literature. Existing case studies do not showcase adaptive management within MCPs, despite its importance for navigating such environments (Chilvers et al., 2016). They also do not illustrate how adaptive management can be part of broader PMEL systems to improve an organisation’s capacity, reach, and impact. Although Oxfam has readily emphasised the importance of adaptation in its formal guidelines and informal processes, we have not yet come across a systematic study of the scope of adaptive PMEL approaches across the organisation. Our report seeks to fill in such gaps.

Building upon this literature and the definition above, we argue that PMEL for adaptive management consists of the following pillars: **(1) fostering flexibility for planning; (2) developing locally-owned tools, practices, and partnerships for M&E; and (3) creating an enabling environment for learning.** These mechanisms shape the enablers and barriers to adaptive management within PMEL systems. We analyse the basis for each pillar in turn:

Planning for Flexibility: Less rigid logframes and budgets are pre-requisites to adaptive practices (Valters et al., 2016). Contracts that incorporate these approaches provide implementers with incentives to experiment (Bryan and Carter, 2016). However, as donors and implementers design adaptive contracts, transaction costs emerge in the form of the extensive resources, (Valters et al., 2016), potential for confusion (Bryan and Carter, 2016), and cultural barriers associated with implementation (Bain et al., 2016). Introducing flexibility at the planning stage means being practical, collaborative with partners, and grounded in programme realities.

Developing Locally-Owned M&E: “Locally led problem solving” (Wild et al., 2017, pg. 8) involves communities identifying and delivering solutions to local problems (Booth and Unsworth, 2014). Doing so creates room for iteration and adaptation to meet communities’ actual needs. Communities’ involvement in M&E is crucial for such solutions: it leverages their local knowledge (Booth and Unsworth, 2014), renders them active participants in framing problems (Valters et al., 2016), and builds their capacity to make context-driven decisions. Thus, a significant part of adaptive management at the M&E stage involves adopting strategies to strengthen local decision-making and ownership. Another equally-important aspect entails using M&E tools that enable bottom-up data generation. By this, we mean data and data-gathering practices that reflect local realities (Barr, 2015), are sensitive to a programme’s (long-term) goals (Giordano, 2017), and allow implementers to manoeuvre context iteratively (Rogers, 2017). A major obstacle to community participation and bottom-up data generation lies in finding suitable partners to achieve M&E objectives (Valters et al., 2016).

Creating an Enabling Environment for Learning: Programmes cannot iterate and evolve absent mechanisms for using and sharing lessons; indeed, “(l)earning and adaptation are two sides of the same coin” (Valters et al., 2016, pg. 5). Learning is dynamic and continuous: actors can learn by doing, seeking and receiving feedback, or questioning their assumptions (Valters et al., 2016). Actors reflect upon and leverage learnings to identify alternate strategies, adjust their approaches, and share tried-and-tested practices to other actors or programmes. However, ‘learning’ often has the connotation of failure (Pritchett et al., 2013). Moreover, top-down approaches to learning - a form of ‘checking the boxes’ instead of active reflection and engagement - can be self-defeating. Thus, creating an enabling environment for learning is crucial to place ‘learning at the centre’ (Valters et al., 2016) of adaptive management.

In Section 4, we analyse case studies along these categories to illustrate elements of adaptive management within PMEL.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CASE SELECTION

Our research approach was two-fold. In phase one, we reviewed the literature to develop our theory of adaptive management for PMEL, identify salient cases within and outside of Oxfam, and root our research in current debates. This process led us to pick cases that aligned with our terms of reference’s criteria or that were of interest to our reference team, such as prominent Oxfam programmes or MCPs. In phase two, we interviewed 16 Oxfam staff at headquarters and regional/country offices that had experience with our selected cases. We obtained seven additional contacts through snowball sampling and Oxfam’s guidance, including stakeholders at Save the Children, Sida, DFID, CARE International, and Mercy Corps/IRC. These references, in turn, helped us better understand donors’ involvement in facilitating adaptive programmes and allowed us to triangulate cases that were being implemented by similar organisations (i.e. Mercy Corps/IRC) or were considered the ‘industry gold standard’ for adaptive management (i.e. LASER). Essentially, we analysed external cases that reflected prominent pieces of the wider ‘adaptive management’ puzzle. We conducted 23 interviews in total.

Such a case selection process faces several potential challenges. First, it may omit relevant programmes or contacts. It may also lead us to cherry-pick prototypical cases in which adaptive management is heavily featured. Lastly, it may undercut our ability to compare cases using objective, standardised criteria. These limitations may bias our analysis and curtail the wider applicability of our recommendations. We mitigated this risk by casting a broad net, talking to multiple references when selecting our core case studies, and communicating frequently with our Oxfam reference team to ensure that we had included ‘the essentials’ within and outside of Oxfam.

We narrowed our list to seven cases within and four cases outside of Oxfam. We provide an overview of our selected cases’ key characteristics below.

CASE OVERVIEW

Case Studies within Oxfam

Chukua Hatua

- Time frame: 2010-2015
- Donor: DFID

Chukua Hatua was a governance programme implemented in Tanzania by Oxfam GB and partners. KPMG primarily managed the programme, with support from the ‘Accountability in Tanzania’ programme. Its purpose was to increase the government’s responsiveness to citizens by strengthening Tanzanian civil society (Smith and Kishekya, 2013).

Adaptive elements:

- Evolutionary approach
- Outcome mapping

Gender Transformative and Responsible Agribusiness Investments in South-East Asia (GRAISEA)

- Time frame: 2015-2018
- Donor: Sida

GRAISEA aims to promote gender-inclusive agri-business in South-East Asia, particularly for smallholder farmers. As a MCP, it is designed to influence the region's operating environment, leverage Oxfam's partnerships and comparative advantage in gender-inclusive programming, and influence the policy and behaviour of market actors (Coghlan and Meloni, 2016).

Adaptive elements:

- Bottom-up decision-making and data collection
- Working groups

My Rights My Voice (MRMV)

- Time frame: 2011-2016
- Donor: Sida

MRMV supported young people to raise their voice and claim their rights to health, education, and sexual and reproductive health. Oxfam implemented MRMV in eight countries: Afghanistan, Georgia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Tanzania and Vietnam. It was also Oxfam's first joint affiliate programme, implemented by Oxfam GB, Oxfam Novib, and Oxfam Quebec (Van Esbroeck et al., 2016).

Adaptive elements:

- Flexible financial framework
- Learning events and informal learning

Resilience through Economic Empowerment, Climate Change Adaptation, Leadership and Learning (REE-CALL)

- Time frame: 2010-2017
- Donors: Oxfam Australia, DFAT (Australian Aid), Thankyouwater, Oxfam Hong Kong, H&S Davidson Trust, DFID

REE-CALL in Bangladesh is one of Oxfam's priority programmes and has three specific objectives: (1) develop a replicable model for community resilience in three agro-ecological zones and create linkages with urban settings; (2) enhance the livelihoods of targeted communities; and (3) develop community leadership, especially of women, and improve access to resources, services and opportunities (Mukta, 2012).

Adaptive elements:

- Evolutionary approach

Supporting Community Resilience in the South Caucasus (South Caucasus)

- Time frame: 2013-2017
- Donor: European Commission

The South Caucasus programme in Georgia and Armenia aims to bolster food security by supporting governance and rights for smallholder farmers. It also links national food security policy with beneficiary needs by supporting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in evidence-based advocacy. As the programme is winding down, Oxfam is attempting to share learning and hand-over operations to 'spin-off' organisations (GeoWel Research, 2016; OXF008, 16/02/17).

Adaptive elements:

- Selection of complementary partners

Sustainable WASH in Fragile Territories (SWIFT)

- Time frame: 2014-2018
- Donor: DFID

The SWIFT Consortium has provided sustainable access to drinking water and sanitation and continues to encourage the adoption of basic hygiene practices in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Kenya. The programme has provided hard deliverables and aims to build capacity for the remainder of its duration to ensure its sustainability (Feeny, 2016).

Adaptive elements:

- Flexible financial framework

Within and Without the State (WWS)

- Time frame: 2011-2016
- Donor: DFID

WWS was a global initiative funded by DFID's Conflict, Humanitarian and Security programme. It piloted approaches to promote accountable governance through civil society in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Oxfam implemented it in Afghanistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories/Israel, South Sudan, DRC, and Yemen. One of WWS's priorities is to gather evidence and share lessons about what makes programming in these settings effective (OXF014, 22/02/17).

Adaptive elements:

- Adaptive logframe
- Real-time evaluations
- Selection of complementary partners
- Bottom-up decision-making and data collection
- Learning events and informal learning

Case Studies outside of Oxfam

Legal Assistance for Economic Reform (LASER) | KPMG & LDP

- Time frame: 2014-2017
- Donor: DFID

This is a multi-country investment climate reform programme facilitated by KPMG and the Law & Development Partnership (LDP). Providing technical guidance to governments, judiciaries, and other agencies, it is considered a textbook case for designing flexible logframes (Derbyshire and Donovan, 2016).

Adaptive elements:

- Adaptive logframe

Improving Governance in Pharmaceutical Procurement and Supply Chain Management Initiative (IGP-PSCM) | World Bank

- Time frame: 2010-2013
- Donor: World Bank

The World Bank implemented this programme in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It aimed to improve access to essential medicines. To assess its impact, the World Bank conducted an outcome harvesting exercise with customised reporting. A detailed description can be found at Gold and Fisher (2014, pg. 31ff.).

Adaptive elements:

- Outcome mapping

The Somali Girls Education Promotion Programme (SOMGEP) | CARE

- Time frame: 2013-2017
- Donor: DFID

Funded by DFID's Girls' Education Challenge, SOMGEP aims to increase girls' education in rural areas by promoting changes in stakeholder attitudes and addressing causes of girls' marginalisation (Gure, 2016). The programme set up an integrated monitoring system that enabled collection and use of real-time data.

Adaptive elements:

- Real-time evaluations

Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement Through Market Expansion (PRIME) | Mercy Corps

- Time frame: 2012-2017
- Donor: USAID

Mercy Corps leads PRIME in partnership with ten NGOs in Ethiopia. Its objective is to increase the income and climate resilience of pastoralists. To respond to changing realities and involve partners and field staff in decision-making, Mercy Corps uses an innovative Concept Note System (Picon and Wild, 2015).

Adaptive elements:

- Bottom-up decision-making and data collection

4 ANALYSING CASES OF ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

In this section, we analyse adaptive tools, methods, and practices throughout the PMEL cycle. We use our earlier framework to structure our analysis along the categories of **Planning**, **M&E**, and **Learning**. Doing so allows us to identify enablers and constraints to adaptive management at each stage of the cycle and recommend improvements to existing PMEL frameworks.

4.1 PLANNING

Adaptive planning facilitates experimentation with diverse Theories of Change (ToC) and approaches. It can enhance programmatic flexibility and strategically incorporate learning earlier in the programme cycle. We identify three elements of adaptive management at the Planning stage: (a) implementing evolutionary approaches to programme design, (b) employing adaptive logframes and (c) creating flexible financial frameworks.

Implementing Evolutionary Approaches to Programme Design

Providing spaces for evolution through experimentation is crucial to design programmes in complex contexts (Harford, 2011). Programme plans can “crawl the design space” (Pritchett et al., 2013, pg. 2) by testing different mechanisms for achieving outcomes. During this process, successful approaches are amplified while unsuccessful ones are dropped. Such an ‘evolutionary approach’ (Rowlands, 2012) to programme design is promising but faces ethical and logistical concerns: it experiments with people’s livelihoods and can be time- and resource-intensive (Green, 2012).

Case Studies

Chukua Hatua

For the first nine months of Chukua Hatua, implementers piloted five simultaneous approaches to build active citizenship in Tanzania. At the end of testing, representatives from implementing partners, Oxfam, and donors used four agreed-upon criteria to decide which strategies to scale or drop (Lonsdale, 2012). However, dropping activities revealed a downside to evolutionary approaches: teams had expended considerable resources on the pilots, leading to potential waste and dampening enthusiasm among staff. Staff tackled this limitation through three strategies: (a) hosting learning events and involving staff in M&E, which fostered inclusiveness and helped develop shared understandings of which strategies were chosen and why; (b) leveraging outcome mapping to allow partners to identify progress markers; and (c) fostering cooperation with DFID by inviting its staff to participate in learning events. These practices justified Oxfam’s use of significant resources in deploying this approach (OXF009, 17/02/17).

REE-CALL

Initially, REE-CALL was based on a pre-set design to foster learning and ‘doing better in uncertainties and odds’ (Ahmed and Neelormi, 2015). In contrast to

Chukua Hatua, it did not focus on trial-and-error, but rather a model of starting from a minimal design and ‘naturally’ developing over a two-year pilot phase. Today, REE-CALL is considered a ‘framework’ programme that consists of five distinct thematic components, including some not included in the initial design. For example, the design did not plan for the programme’s current gender dimension. However, three factors constrain this programme’s evolutionary approach: (a) some goals were unclear, which resulted in inefficient work streams. At the same time, funding for new project components – such as the Gendered Enterprise and Markets programme (GEM) – could be generated independently from core funding, which offset inefficiency by allowing for slight shifts in goals; (b) cross-learning was problematic due to a broad programme framework. Climate change data was especially difficult to obtain from partners, as capacities to collect it were insufficient. Potential solutions to this problem include stronger capacity-building efforts and the establishment of a ‘knowledge hub’; and (c) the ‘thinking beyond programme approach’ (Ahmed and Neelormi, 2015) made it difficult to ensure local ownership. To address this, Oxfam could work more closely with partners through cross-learning and information-sharing systems (OXF005, 14/02/17).

Employing Adaptive Logframes

Traditional logframes embody the linear thinking that adaptive approaches seek to overcome. To encourage experimentation, adaptive logframes must integrate learning and adaptation as natural parts of the programme lifecycle. However, logframes are also strong accountability tools for donors, who need evidence that programmes are being managed appropriately. To ease the burden of heavy reporting requirements and rigidity, Valters et al. (2016) suggest replacing fixed output indicators with broader, but still-defined, categories.²

Case studies

Legal Assistance for Economic Reform (LASER) | KPMG & LDP

The DFID-funded LASER programme is a leading example of a MCP with flexible logframes. It features a global logframe with nested logframes for each of its countries. Outcomes are tied to the country but connected to the global logframe objectives, anchoring results to context-specific needs. Such nested logframes allow implementers to devise commitment-based targets instead of prescribing a result. Doing so has enabled on-the-fly adaptation and learning-by-doing to achieve results tied to needs rather than agendas. The global logframe only requires two broad outputs: (a) stories of change, and (b) categories of ‘major’ vs. ‘moderate’ results, based on a ‘menu of desired results’ at the global level. Donor buy-in has allowed LASER to change both the global and nested logframes multiple times, based on evaluation, feedback, and reflection (Derbyshire and Donovan, 2016).

² An example of an adaptive logframe is provided in Valters et al. (2016, pg. 32).

WWS

WWS maintains a global logframe with light reporting and broad targets. Country context shapes implementation, allowing Oxfam to test different governance approaches. The logframe's flexibility empowers the Global Programme Coordinator to be an additional resource that advises country offices, facilitates the sharing of lessons, and encourages adaptive thinking. However, three drawbacks exist to such flexibility: (a) context-driven implementation can create siloes that curtail reflective learning within and across programme countries. For example, implementing partners in South Sudan did not devise a formal process for sharing lessons; (b) flexible, broadly-defined approaches can confuse inexperienced staff (OXF014, 22/02/17), especially in the unpredictable context of WWS countries. If staff are trained to follow 'business as usual', input-output thinking, being adaptive can be daunting: this calls for a change in mentality; (c) donor buy-in for changes is rare. Even rarer is active engagement through in-site visits, which can make donors more sympathetic and amenable to adjustments. DFID is a notable exception – DFID managers engage with WWS staff regularly, creating a culture conducive to adaptation (OXF012, 20/02/17).

Creating Flexible Financial Frameworks

Adaptive programmes require flexibility within budgets, programme components, and types of expenditure. At the same time, donors need to ensure budgetary accountability and value for money (Derbyshire and Donovan, 2016). Reconciling these diverging interests is a fundamental challenge for adaptive management. To this end, we discuss several approaches for developing flexible financial frameworks: (a) creating reserve funding for learning and adaptation (Proud et al., 2016); (b) promoting flexible and trust-based partnership arrangements; and (c) designing adaptive contracts to allocate funding in broad categories, such as Payment by Results (PbR).

Case Studies**MRMV**

Setting up a programme fund can help ensure budgetary flexibility during implementation. MRMV established a \$1 million 'Learning and Innovation Fund' to pilot and develop new approaches, components, and technologies over the programme's life cycle (Blommestein, 2014). The fund financed a variety of innovative activities. For instance, the programme introduced participatory videos as a tool for youth-led advocacy, learning and information-sharing. In Nepal, youth activists worked with community stakeholders to produce films that supported health rights to influence local duty-bearers. Because the original budget did not account for this activity, the fund was critical for financing it. Sida's active engagement in the programme's design was key to set up the fund (OXF002, 31/01/17). However, the fund's evaluation report highlights constraints: (a) its designation as a 'Learning and Innovation Fund' limited its ability to finance initiatives that could not directly be described as learning- or innovation-fostering. Keeping funding requirements as flexible as possible can help circumvent this type of constraint. In MRMV, the fund became a 'Programme Development Fund' in the programme's final year; (b) there was confusion in the communication between decision-makers and applicants. To resolve this issue, the fund's Guidelines and Procedures documents should clearly outline steps to streamline this communication (Blommestein, 2014).

SWIFT

DFID funded SWIFT under a PbR contract. In theory, PbR contracts enable flexible processes to reach desired outcomes (Bryan and Carter, 2016). Programmes can try different approaches, provided that they have the means to test and experiment (UK DFID, 2014). In the inception phase, stakeholders innovated and refocused activities after trial-and-error: teams had autonomy to decide on the scope of their activities and could shift budget items between the programme's components. For example, due to changes in the political and social environment, implementers had to change the initial method for evaluating WASH, resulting in rapid adaptation to the new context. Programme staff identified the following constraints to adaptive practices: (a) the third-party monitor was disruptive because they repeatedly requested highly-detailed information about outputs and outcomes; (b) there was a short time frame for delivering results, which led to trade-offs; and (c) the staff was inexperienced with this type of contract, which led to hesitation and confusion during the programme design and implementation phases. In fact, staff spent up to 18 months to understand PbR's nuances - by that time, the deadline for many deliverables had almost passed (OXF006, 15/02/17; OXF010, 20/02/17). SWIFT's experience with PbR highlights the need to innovate its design and encourage longer-term outputs.

4.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Adaptive management aims to minimise the gap between M&E and locally-led decision-making (Valters et al., 2016). To do so, appropriate M&E tools, as well as delegating decision-making and data collection to local staff and partners, are crucial. The first section thus analyses M&E mechanisms by presenting two adaptive elements linked to data collection: outcome mapping and real-time data collection. In the second section, we analyse two practices for fostering bottom-up decision-making by local staff and partners: promoting inclusive partner selection processes and creating mechanisms for bottom-up decision making and data-collection.

Using Outcome Mapping Approaches

Outcome mapping is an M&E approach that recognises the importance of local partner involvement, the centrality of behaviour change, and the likelihood of unplanned results in programming. To this end, it provides a template for creating intervention strategies with local partners, each with its own commitments for and definitions of success. Inspired by outcome mapping, outcome harvesting is a similar technique to identify, formulate, and verify intervention outcomes that were not necessarily foreseen in the programme's design (Wilson-Grau, 2003).

Case Studies

Chukua Hatua

Outcome mapping has been an effective evaluation tool in Chukua Hatua. Staff adopted a bi-annual outcome mapping analysis to investigate changes and trends in the programme (Green, 2012). The team found this approach useful, both in terms of systematically recording the programme's impacts on partners and in building a common vision between programme staff and partners (OXF009, 17/02/17). Progress markers, defined by the partners, replaced the rigid indicators employed in conventional logframes; they were adjusted during implementation to capture unexpected results and plan for unforeseen outcomes (Smutylo, 2005). Data collection by partners, in turn, allowed for an analysis of factors influencing programme outcomes and created spaces for reflective learning. However, several barriers affected the use of outcome mapping: (a) the need for an active effort from management to prepare staff and partners for this new approach (i.e. programme had to translate materials, build staff capacity, and establish feedback and monitoring mechanisms for fieldwork); (b) though outcome mapping promoted shared responsibility for M&E, it created an additional burden for staff who were assigned to M&E on a rotational basis; and (c) the process of outcome mapping produced substantial, almost un-manageable, amounts of data. This constrained the opportunity to process, use, and share it effectively, pointing to capacity constraints for outcome mapping approaches (OXF009, 17/02/17).

Improving Governance in Pharmaceutical Procurement and Supply Chain Management | World Bank

In a handbook of ten cases of outcome harvesting, the World Bank details a case in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda that aimed to improve 'Governance in Pharmaceutical Procurement and Supply Chain Management' (Gold et al., 2014). The team harvested outcome information from stakeholders through customised reporting. They then investigated explanations of the programme's significance and the extent of the World Bank's contributions. In doing so, they identified three outcome areas, which they substantiated by undergoing an additional review process with 15 reviewers. According to the report, this approach successfully demonstrated the project's unintended outcomes and, by engaging various stakeholders, enhanced local programme ownership. However, barriers to outcome harvesting are three-fold: (a) time and resource constraints to engage with various stakeholders and formulate high-quality outcome descriptions; (b) the inability to articulate and identify certain outcomes, leading to them being untracked; and (c) the lack of broad-based stakeholder engagement, which can curtail the reporting and collection of verifiable outcomes (Wilson-Grau, 2003).

Collecting and Using Real-Time Data

To allow for short feedback loops, adaptive management demands high-quality and quantity 'real-time' data (Greeley et al., 2013). Such data can allow for rapid course corrections, especially in fragile contexts that require frequent adjustments. According to a USAID specialist, adaptive projects need to be designed to collect, respond to, and use data not only for M&E, but also to build better feedback loops (Valters et al, 2016) that can allow reflective learning.

Case Study

WWS

In WWS Afghanistan and South Sudan, Oxfam has conducted real-time evaluations (RTEs). These are rapid ‘sense checks’ to identify course corrections or remedial actions in the initial months of a programme. Offices tried RTEs after initial approaches led to data shortages and failed to foster adaptive practices among staff. A renewed focus on learning contributed to realistic appraisals of challenges in South Sudan and led to the adoption of community scorecards, as well as other tools to broaden community engagement and accountability to Oxfam’s partners (Green, 2013). However, RTEs fell short of goals in Afghanistan (OXF014, 22/02/17). Consultants hired to conduct them did not understand their purpose, and staff – including M&E specialists – were relatively inexperienced in these types of evaluations. This resulted in trained staff having to devote more resources to coordinating with the firm and building capacity, rather than learning from RTEs to respond to programme needs. Conflict in the Kunduz region compounded these challenges – staff were only able to implement one of the three planned RTEs due to unstable conditions (OXF014, 22/02/17). Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to leverage RTEs with ‘action research’ for bottom-up appraisals led by communities and partners.

The Somali Girls Education Promotion Programme (SOMGEP) | CARE International

In its SOMGEP programme in Somalia, CARE established an integrated monitoring system that included trackers for activity, participation, and adherence. It also used participatory tools to understand how participants perceived and responded to challenges. The monitoring system uses online toolboxes, such as KoBo, to collect real-time data and establish short-term feedback loops. CARE highlighted the importance of monitoring a representative group for the programme and concentrating on specific indicators developed in tandem with the donor. Challenges to this approach include (a) the volume of analyses required within a short timeframe, (b) the lack of robust quantitative and qualitative skills among team members, and (c) negative perceptions about the feasibility and validity of participatory exercises. CARE M&E specialists and project implementers met such challenges through frequent field visits, heavy investment in training and capacity building, and data analysis support at the headquarters level. To enable the effective uptake of evidence generated through feedback loops, CARE held regular meetings with project partners, discussed data challenges, and made collective decisions on how to advance the project. User-friendly and concise presentations of data facilitated this process, in addition to noting and highlighting links between findings/outcomes and the programme’s theory of change. Working with donors and government partners was another fundamental process for enabling methodological flexibility (CRE001, 02/02/17; Gure, 2016).

Selecting Complementary Partners

When partners are ‘fit for purpose’, they allow programmes to be context-sensitive and adapt effectively to local feedback. Good partners are better positioned to understand local dynamics and promptly identify changes in circumstances. They also serve as a mechanism to ensure the sustainability of a programme after its end. Country situation overviews, social network analysis (SNA), and stakeholder mapping are part of the ‘toolbox’ for selecting partners that align in organisational mandates and have the legal, administrative, and fiscal capacity to implement programmes effectively.

Case Studies

South Caucasus

Stakeholder mapping and SNA have allowed staff to maintain particularly strong networks and alliances in the South Caucasus programme. Through SNA, the Georgia office realised that the Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA), a longstanding partner, was an ideal ‘bridger’ to other key CSOs, prompting the office to double down on this vital partnership (OXF015, 01/03/17). SNA also helped Oxfam identify ‘anchoring’ organisations that could help it secure alliances in broader networks. Both tools provided staff with opportunities to reflect on Oxfam’s partnerships and paved the way for course corrections. Moreover, in this case, identifying vital partners allowed Oxfam to broaden its influence across networks and commit to working through partners to maximise the programme’s impact. A potential weakness of SNA is that it measures the quantity of links within a network, but not necessarily their quality or durability over time. In doing so, it may misrepresent certain power dynamics or misestimate the influence of certain actors. This is especially true if those undertaking it do not have knowledge of context. Thus, SNA is most useful for identifying ideal partners when paired with other tools and methods, such as stakeholder mapping (OXF015, 01/03/17).

WWS

The experience of the WWS South Sudan office highlights opportunities and challenges to partner selection. The process was extensive: staff carefully mapped out potential CSO partners, which delayed implementation for more than a year and confused country staff (OXF014, 22/02/17). Selecting partners can thus be time- and resource-intensive, especially if external circumstances change country context and force staff to restart the selection process frequently. Partners in these contexts may also lack the financial and programmatic flexibility to match Oxfam’s diverse mandate, forcing staff to choose among second- or third-best options. For WWS South Sudan, it took a strong incoming country director to facilitate this process and clarify its importance amid challenges with finding complementary partners (OXF014, 22/02/17).

After narrowing the list through extensive consultations with CSOs and donors (Anthony, 2014), Oxfam selected partners that most closely aligned with its objectives. In addition to finding compatible partners, this inclusive and open process of partner selection mobilised CSOs who were not selected to work on governance reforms, bolstering overall civil society participation in the country. However, due to the lack of formal mechanisms for collaborating between partners, such as face-to-face meetings, momentum gained from an inclusive partnership selection process dissipated overtime (OXF014, 22/02/17).

Promoting Bottom-up Decision-making and Data Collection

Inclusive data collection and analysis is a vital component of adaptive M&E approaches. Staff closest to operations have the best understanding of context and are well placed to suggest and try novel approaches. This is especially relevant in complex environments, where a shallow understanding of context can render planned activities irrelevant. Capitalising on local knowledge and being sensitive to change is thus a hallmark of adaptive programmes that grant significant autonomy to staff and involve them in inclusive decision-making processes (Proud et al., 2016).

Case Studies

Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) | Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps' Concept Note System, adopted in its PRIME project in Ethiopia, is a technology-driven approach to adaptive management by facilitating inclusive decision-making and bottom-up data collection. The Concept Note System is an online platform (Ki-projects) that stores all suggested, approved, and completed programme activities in the form of an electronic 'concept note'. Every new activity (i.e. a change in the programme) is suggested through the system by uploading a brief 'concept note', which can be done by any member of Mercy Corps or its partner NGO staff. After submission, the system notifies four approvers of the proposed activity, usually a budget holder, an intermediate results leader, an operational staff member, and a technical approver from the field (Picon and Wild, 2015). The system enables inclusive programming by involving field, regional staff, and management across partner organisations in programmatic decisions. Additionally, the system encourages progressive learning across all implementing partners by providing and storing real-time data about the project's progress, which is easily accessible for every staff member across Ethiopia. However, initially the system faced several constraints: it was criticised for (a) creating additional administrative burdens for staff; (b) failing to nudge staff members to actively suggest activities, and (c) requiring internet access. These challenges, however, were met by providing specific trainings to staff members and creating an offline version of the system that is now in use (MCS002, 20/04/17).

GRAISEA

In GRAISEA, staff established a programme steering committee to allow partners to provide strategic guidance and problem-solving (Coghlan and Meloni, 2016). Though such committees, the programme can leverage partners' local knowledge and sensitivity to nuances of the context. In GRAISEA, these committees have been moderately effective, partly because of a lack of follow-up between committee meetings to hold management accountable. This has limited the committee's ability to hold programme implementers accountable to community needs (OXF007, 15/02/17). Nevertheless, a key constraint to the committee's effectiveness lies in management's inability to "step back" and facilitate active community feedback (OXF004, 08/02/17) for learning and adaptation. Moreover, issues with branding and the perception that delegation can comprise programme quality has also curtailed steering committees' ability to be third-party monitors and actively propose decisions about the programme (OXF013, 20/02/17).

WWS

The programme design did not initially plan for community steering committees. However, in a feedback workshop, community representatives in the DRC signalled a desire to be involved (OXF012, 20/02/17). In turn, Oxfam facilitated steering committees to be third-party monitors, providing feedback, promoting locally-sensitive and bottom-up approaches, and ensuring community buy-in to the programme. They were instrumental for ad-hoc internal evaluations that helped identify implementation challenges and course-correct in a contextually-sensitive manner. Two challenges arose to using committees for M&E in WWS: (a) communities had to be regularly apprised of progress, which was difficult in the rapidly-changing environments of WWS countries; and (b) community norms initially clashed with attempts to include them in M&E and decision-making. In the case of WWS in DRC, staff had to seek additional funding from Oxfam HQ to develop materials that would allow them to communicate effectively with communities. Moreover, because community members had set schedules and worked during the daytime, attempts failed to have community meetings that represented both genders. Staff had to work with communities to adjust their schedules and move meetings to the evenings (OXF012, 20/02/17).

4.3 LEARNING

An enabling environment for learning is crucial to allow stakeholders to reflect upon, use, and share lessons in a transparent and honest manner. Adaptive learning therefore entails the establishment of formal and informal spaces of reflection to bring together partners and different levels of management. This is especially relevant for MCPs, for two reasons: first, given similar contexts and objectives, country offices across MCPs must have mechanisms to capture, store, and share lessons; second, transaction costs to coordinate and share lessons are higher for MCPs than single-country programmes because there are more stakeholders involved, pointing to the need for strategies that can lower such costs. This section discusses the relevance of learning events and informal learning channels, as well as working groups, as mechanisms for sharing learning within Oxfam, especially within MCPs.

Leading Learning Events and Informal Learning

New information and external shocks are important for encouraging innovation and adaptation (Faustino and Booth, 2014). Carefully-designed learning strategies therefore stand at the heart of adaptive programming. Face-to-face meetings, as well as informal types of reflections such as blogs and process diaries, are especially useful in this context (Valters et al., 2016).

Case Studies

MRMV

Annual global learning events and online communication platforms feature prominently for adaptive learning in MRMV. These face-to-face learning events were organised by Oxfam’s Global Learning Team and brought together youth representatives, partner staff, and Oxfam colleagues from country and global teams to share experiences. Despite their usefulness to event participants, staff face significant difficulties in sharing lessons from such events to partners that are not present. A possible solution is to encourage event participants to organise mini-workshops upon their return, with room for discussion and collective decision-making on possible adaptations. Another risk is that event sessions focus too much on ‘sharing’ at the expense of ‘learning’. Event planners should therefore actively encourage discussions on how programmes can effectively learn from one another. In MRMV events, for instance, participants presented their country-level action plans, discussed them with their counterparts, and altered them based on feedback. As a result, the Nepal team, for example, adopted a strategy to work with religious leaders based on the strategy of the MRMV Pakistan team (OXF002, 31/01/17).

Another important effect of the global learning events was that membership and participation in online communication and information-sharing platforms (e.g. Ning and Facebook) increased significantly in their aftermath. The exchange of learning in Facebook groups especially intensified among youth participants. Learning events also helped build a common identity (the ‘MRMV family’). They bolstered the culture between country teams and even led to a ‘friendly competition’ that positively impacted the programme (OXF002, 31/01/17).

WWS

Learning is central to WWS, both between country offices and outside of the programme. Oxfam HQ facilitates lesson-sharing at a micro-level and through learning events. For example, the DRC office shared its experiences of working with communities in fragile environments with the Oxfam Nepal office, which faced challenges with community engagement following the Kathmandu Valley earthquake. The DRC office also shares lessons regularly with staff in South Sudan through in-person meetings or webinars. However, webinars are not ideal in these cases due to challenges with language barriers and lack of engagement; face-to-face learning, especially through learning events, is much more effective because it facilitates dialogue and reflection. For example, in January 2015, country offices met to construct a timeline of WWS implementation, which was helpful to capture lessons learned across country offices and address gaps in institutional memory (OXF012, 20/02/17). Changes in external circumstances are also a learning barrier, such as when conflict in South Sudan prevented peer-to-peer learning meetings between the DRC and South Sudan offices (OXF014, 22/02/17). Lastly, a major challenge lies in learning approaches that focus excessively on documenting lessons in reports rather than encouraging deliberation, reflection, and observation among staff. Our interviewees stress the latter’s importance for ensuring that staff internalize and act upon lessons (OXF012, 20/02/17; OXF014, 22/02/17).

Facilitating Working Groups

Building relationships of trust between team members is another important dimension for creating safe spaces for learning, reflection, and adaptation. Establishing working groups with partner organisations is one mechanism to build such trust and collaboration for adaptive learning (Valters et al., 2016).

Case Study

GRAISEA

GRAISEA facilitated learning and information-sharing by establishing working groups around broad thematic areas. These groups steer the programme at the regional level by serving as a forum for sharing information, learning new practices, and advising country leads on yearly plans, budget exercises, and other programmatic components (Coghlan and Meloni, 2016). Initially, the lack of concrete deliverables and specific learning questions curtailed the effectiveness of working groups. This was compounded by unrealistic burdens on MEL staff to facilitate group discussions, as well as a lack of capacity building to develop local partners' ability to share learnings (OXF004, 08/02/17). Ultimately, management and external consultants helped improve working groups' effectiveness by supporting the design and implementation of specific learning objectives and evaluations. Our interviewees identified budgetary constraints as well: face-to-face meetings, Skype calls, and group discussions require money, highlighting the need for the timely disbursement of earmarked funds for learning (OXF007, 15/02/17).

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous section, we examined salient examples of PMEL practices and approaches that enable adaptive management. Based on our case studies, key informant interviews, and desk research, we devise the following recommendations to help practitioners, within and outside Oxfam infuse adaptive management approaches to their PMEL frameworks.

5.1 PLAN FOR FLEXIBILITY

- ✓ **Experiment with evolutionary approaches.** Implementing evolutionary approaches, such as setting up multiple pilots, can improve the design of programmes in contexts where processes for achieving outcomes are not clear. Consulting extensively with stakeholders and developing a shared understanding of objectives can bolster the effectiveness of experimental, pilot-based practices. They can also help offset problems associated with high transaction costs.
- ✓ **Negotiate flexible budgets and funding streams.** Flexible budget and funding could include several mechanisms:
 - Facilitating the transfer of targets between partners or countries, especially in programmes where milestones are combined or shared (such as in MCPs). In this case, if a target is not met by one office, it can be compensated by over-achieving targets in another context (Feeny, 2016).
 - Setting up a centralised, discretionary project fund - i.e. 'rainy day' fund - among country offices in a MCP, as well as allowing frequent budget adjustments based on information gathered in progress reports, data, and community consultations. Such a fund could compensate for unforeseen, but necessary, activities during programme implementation and enable need-based adjustments for certain activities.
 - Improving the flexibility of PbR contracts could entail combining them with the provision of upfront grants (Mason, 2015). This strategy's effectiveness depends on the type of programme being implemented. When a programme contains soft, hard-to-measure components, such as community mobilisation or capacity building initiatives, PbR may not be appropriate because results cannot be readily measured. Such an arrangement is instead more suitable for programmes with 'hard' deliverables and demonstrable results (Feeny, 2016, UK DFID, 2014).

Adopting such flexible financial frameworks involves training staff on their nuances. Such training can increase familiarity and ease the uptake of flexible budgets.

- ✓ **Work with donors to design adaptive logframes and contracts.** Though donors are interested in adaptive management (OXF016, 05/03/17), they may lack the knowledge or capacity to devise adaptive logframes and contracts. They are also beholden to traditional logframes as an accountability device; often, they may not understand why adaptation is necessary, especially if they remain unaware of day-to-day realities. Organisations such as Oxfam can help fill in this gap by designing suitable logframes and engaging proactively with donors to implement them. This involves communicating regularly and building long-term trust-based relationships,

such as by inviting donors to roundtable discussions, site visits, and learning events.

5.2 DEVELOP LOCALLY-OWNED M&E SYSTEMS

- ✓ **Train all programme staff on the importance of M&E and how M&E systems work within the organisation.** Training and awareness-raising promotes a sense of shared responsibility for building comprehensive, bottom-up M&E systems. For this to work, clear M&E guidelines and processes need to be established, not only formally, but also within informal communication and staff behaviours. Effective M&E training can also help off-load the burden of maintaining reporting systems to in-field staff instead of HQ, which also has the added benefit of increasing local ownership of M&E.
- ✓ **Select partners who are aligned with Oxfam in mandate and resources.** Strong implementing partners provide feedback, enable creative approaches, and broker relationships with other actors. Working through them can also help overcome shortages with money, time, and staff, which is especially crucial in fragile contexts marred with unexpected circumstances and high staff turnover. But, selecting the right partners can be resource-and-time intensive. Using stakeholder mapping, social network analysis, and donor and CSO consultations at the programme's onset can allow organisations to find partners that are aligned with its objectives and have relevant connections to the broader network.
- ✓ **Delegate power and facilitate more decision-making to actors on the ground.** Utilising adaptive methods or processes, such as steering committees or the Concept Note System, can encourage spaces for reflection and information-sharing with staff and partners that have on-the-ground knowledge. This expertise allows staff to make appropriate changes to an ongoing programme. It also helps overcome resource constraints that are associated with relying solely on Oxfam staff, particularly in HQ, for M&E.

5.3 CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

- ✓ **Promote horizontal communication.** Regular, extensive communication between country offices is crucial to promote the sharing and use of learnings. This is especially true for country offices within MCPs. Oxfam staff stressed that improved communication could bolster knowledge-sharing and result in faster decision-making (OXF012, 20/02/17). Even offices under the same MCP need to speak directly to each other more on country level instead of going through HQ, which contains people who are separated from the problems on the ground.
- ✓ **Communicate face-to-face.** Webinars and internal management systems can be useful for sharing information, but they are not substitutes for robust discussions. We find that meeting face-to-face, whether through micro-engagements between country offices, or broader learning events, are key to make sure that learning 'soaks in' and is carried forward. Securing funding – whether by establishing centralised funds or building it into overhead costs – is thus necessary to enable such events regularly.
- ✓ **Change mindsets, not only practices.** Being adaptive, especially in fast-paced, fragile environments, is daunting, especially for staff who are trained in linear, logframe thinking. Shifting mindsets is thus as important to enabling adaptive

management as training staff to use certain tools and approaches. Strategies to enable such shifts include investing in coaching from managers, especially for new staff or at the start of a programme, and facilitating discussions to create spaces for reflective learning.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview List

Citation Code	Organisation	Date
CRE001	CARE	02/02/17
DFD001	DFID	10/03/17
MCS001	Mercy Corps	17/02/17
MCS002	Mercy Corps	20/04/17
OXF001	Oxfam	25/01/17
OXF002	Oxfam	31/01/17
OXF003	Oxfam	02/02/17
OXF004	Oxfam	08/02/17
OXF005	Oxfam	14/02/17
OXF006	Oxfam	15/02/17
OXF007	Oxfam	15/02/17
OXF008	Oxfam	16/02/17
OXF009	Oxfam	17/02/17
OXF010	Oxfam	20/02/17
OXF011	Oxfam	20/02/17
OXF012	Oxfam	20/02/17
OXF013	Oxfam	20/02/17
OXF014	Oxfam	22/02/17
OXF015	Oxfam	01/03/17
OXF016	Oxfam	05/03/17
SDA001	Sida	06/02/17
SDA002	Sida	24/02/17
STC001	Save the Children	07/02/17