



# Institutions for Inclusive Development (I4ID) LEARNING BRIEF

## MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

### Making Results Frameworks Work for Adaptive Programmes

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# MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING - Making Results Frameworks Work for Adaptive Programmes

## KEY LEARNING POINTS

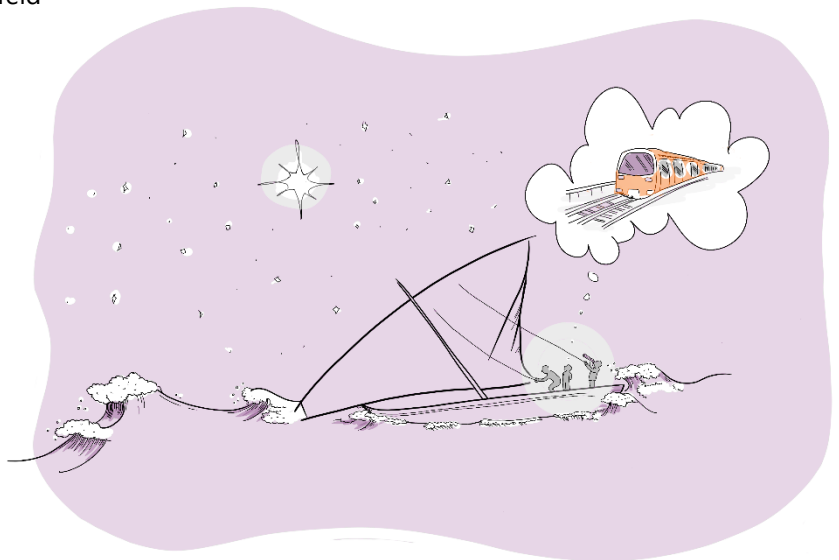
- Donor organisations need to set a clear and realistic overarching objective and ambition for adaptive programmes at the design stage.
- Open-ended change indicators provide adaptive programmes with the necessary flexibility to experiment and adapt, but might fail to incentivise transformational change if not designed well.
- Open-ended indicators can be complemented or replaced by contextual change indicators at outcome level.
- 'Searchframe'-type results frameworks offer a means of capturing the story of adaptive programmes.
- Incorporating process indicators among results framework outputs can provide a more accurate measurement of adaptive programme performance.
- Reporting on results framework indicators should include concise qualitative analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a strong agreement among development professionals that linear and rigid results frameworks are ill suited to monitor the performance of adaptive programmes working on complex, often political problems, and using flexible and experimental approaches. As a recent report by Rachel Kleinfeld<sup>1</sup> so aptly put it, these tools are:

*"Set to measure the equivalent of a train progressing down a track: a straight line that starts a little slowly and then gains speed, with clear checkpoints along the path that should be hit at specified times. Social and political reform looks like a sailboat tacking toward its destination, sometimes over the course of fifty years."*

Yet, the reality of international development is that donors need results frameworks. What is more, while only one part of a programme's MEL system, these results frameworks are often the most visible presentations of programmes to their political sponsors in donor organisations and other external stakeholders.



<sup>1</sup> Rachel Kleinfeld. (2015) *Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation – Plan for Sailboats Not Trains*. Available at:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/02/improving-development-aid-design-and-evaluation-plan-for-sailboats-not-trains-pub-59159>

This Learning Brief aims to provide recommendations on how donors and implementation teams can make results frameworks work for adaptive programmes. The Brief captures lessons from the experience of the Institutions for Inclusive Development (I4ID) programme in Tanzania. It also draws on solutions from other adaptive programmes to provide recommendations on how to overcome some of the challenges experienced by the users of I4ID's results framework.

The Brief starts with highlighting the importance of agreeing the overarching objective of adaptive programmes early on. It then discusses the advantages and challenges of open-ended change indicators often used by adaptive programmes and provides examples of alternative approaches. Finally, the Brief makes a case for the use of process indicators and qualitative analysis to complement open-ended indicators.

#### **Institutions for Inclusive Development (I4ID)**

was a £11.6 million adaptive governance programme funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and IrishAid until 2020. The programme aimed to 'work with government, representative institutions, civil society and the private sector to strengthen institutions in Tanzania to become more inclusive and accountable so that economic growth and services bring more benefits to women, youth, and poor and vulnerable people'. It was designed as an adaptive facility to show how complex development problems can be resolved by testing and iterating scalable solutions with diverse stakeholders to broker collective action and systems change. I4ID took an issue-based approach, covering a set of workstreams in diverse areas such as water access, urban spatial planning, inclusive education and menstrual health management. The programme was implemented by a consortium, led by Palladium, that included SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and BBC Media Action.

## **LESSON 1**

***Donor organisations need to set a clear and realistic overarching objective and ambition for adaptive programmes at the design stage.***

**Robust results measurement frameworks require clearly defined outcomes and impact. Adaptive programmes also need a 'goalpost' or 'North Star' they are aiming for**, after all - once programmes are underway - adaptive management is about being flexible around how a given problem is being solved and not about what problem is being solved. Yet, negotiations between donors and implementing teams about the expected outcomes of adaptive programmes can last beyond the inception phase. In I4ID's case, FCDO stakeholders did not feel that agreement on the ultimate objective of the programme was ever reached. In other words, it was not clear whether the programme was expected to deliver inclusive institutions at scale or generate learning on what approaches work best in Tanzania in strengthening institutions to be more accountable and inclusive. This posed obvious challenges to determining whether I4ID was successful in delivering the results expected by donors.

**Donor organisations need to set the overarching objective and ambition for adaptive programmes up front.** There is often reluctance to define expected outcomes for adaptive programmes in advance. This likely comes from the notion that for adaptive programmes to be effective, they should not have preconceived ideas about the nature of change their work helps to bring about. This might be true insofar as it relates to the concrete changes or solutions delivered by individual interventions. The experience of I4ID, however, suggests that donor organisations need to set a clear and realistic overarching objective and ambition for the programme as a whole from the earliest design stages (e.g., during Business Case development). This objective can then be revisited with the implementing team at the start of the programme – and in regular intervals afterwards – to ensure that it remains realistic given changes in the political economy context. Decisions on the reach of the programme – i.e., whether it is covering one sector, a small number of specific sectors or has the freedom to engage in any sector – should also be made at this stage.

## Box 1: The I4ID Results Framework

'Open-ended' change indicators are frequently used by adaptive programmes as they provide implementers with considerable flexibility to experiment and adapt their delivery. I4ID's results framework was dominated by open-ended indicators at output and outcome level (with the exception of Output 3). These counted the number of instances workstreams delivered changes consistent with output and outcome indicators, but without specifying in advance what these changes would be. For each year, the I4ID team forecasted the expected number of changes under each indicator in each workstream, which was agreed with donors. The programme's performance was judged against delivering a set number of these changes against the forecast. In the 2018/19 financial year, for example, I4ID had to deliver 10-12 out of the forecasted 31 changes across its workstreams under Output 1 to score an A in the Annual Review. If they delivered 13 or more, the Output received an A+ score.

Statement	Indicator
Outcome 1: Government, civil society and the private sector collectively put into practice institutional arrangements that promote the common interest	OC 1.1 Recorded improvements in policy, policy implementation, and/or institutional arrangements with evidence that I4ID contributed to that change
	OC 1.2 Instances where improvements in policy, policy implementation, and/or institutional arrangements supported by I4ID will have a significant impact on inclusive development issues.
Outcome 2: Key democratic institutions have more capacity, and are more accountable and inclusive	OC 2.1 Significant instances where democratic institutions involved in the programme demonstrate behaviour that is consistent with a more inclusive decision-making, planning or policy process
	OC 2.2 Significant instances where democratic institutions involved in the programme demonstrate sustained or repeated behaviour that is consistent with more inclusive decision-making, planning or policy process
Output 1: Stakeholders are facilitated to coordinate better and work collectively	OP 1.1 Extent to which I4ID and partners are advancing issue-based work
Output 2: Democratic governance stakeholders and citizens meaningfully contribute to identifying and resolving constraints to inclusive development	OP 2.1 Instances where political stakeholders demonstrate improved capacity, willingness, accountability and/or inclusiveness to work on policy and institutional reform processes
	OP 2.2 Instances where citizen groups and stakeholders demonstrate improved capacity, willingness, accountability and/or inclusiveness to work on policy and institutional reform processes.
Output 3: I4ID and its partners successfully implement effective principles of adaptive programmes	OP 3.1 Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering an adaptive programme with partners
	OP 3.2 Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering a learning programme with partners
	OP 3.3. Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering a politically aware programme with partners

## LESSON 2

***Open-ended change indicators provide the flexibility needed by adaptive programmes, but might fail to incentivise transformational change if not designed well.***

**Open-ended change indicators provide adaptive programmes with the necessary flexibility to experiment and adapt.** I4ID's outcome – like many other adaptive programmes' – was defined very broadly and measured through open-ended indicators that counted the number of changes

achieved in the outcome (and output) areas, without specifying in the results framework what these changes might look like (referred to as 'open-ended' indicators in the remainder of the paper). The clear advantage of this type of indicator is that they do not constrain the programme's ability to adapt. As I4ID put it: *"This design allowed us the flexibility to go where the energy was, take advantage of low hanging*

*fruit and go with the grain, increasing the chances for locally driven change.”<sup>2</sup>*

**However, if not designed well, open-ended outcome indicators carry the risk of insufficiently incentivising adaptive programmes to deliver more ambitious results.** Solely reporting on the number of changes (without any qualifications to their significance, reach and quality) might not provide sufficient incentives for implementing organisations to ensure that their interventions deliver transformational change. Broadly defined expected outcomes also carry the risk that programme interventions become too dispersed and do not add up to the expected higher-level results. These were clear challenges in I4ID, which focused on a diverse range of issues, from regional trade facilitation to inclusive education and menstrual hygiene, without a clear vision of how these will come together to deliver high-level inclusive development objectives. For donors, this carries a clear value for money risk, as they might find themselves having made a significant investment that only delivers small, isolated changes without a clear pathway to scale.

**Experience from other adaptive programmes suggests that challenges around incentives can be resolved while keeping the open-ended indicator model used by I4ID.** FCDO’s Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn in Nigeria (PERL),<sup>3</sup> for example, devised a scoring system to assess the significance of the reported changes. Its performance is assessed based on how much the collective significance of reported results is increasing year-on-year (Box 2). FCDO’s Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems (PROKAS)<sup>4</sup> programme in Bangladesh has a menu of options of ‘Expected’ and ‘Likely’ results to back up its open-ended indicators at impact, intermediate and immediate outcome levels. ‘Expected’ results have a higher expectation of being realised, while ‘Likely’ results are more ambitious and

harder to achieve, and PROKAS has to deliver a certain number of changes from both categories. The menu of anticipated results is attached to the results framework (Box 3). FCDO’s Transparency and Accountability to Improve Economic Development and Service Delivery (TRACTION) programme in Malawi has open-ended outcome indicators similar to I4ID’s but they are more specific regarding the types of changes that the programme should achieve (e.g., changes in the degree to which budgets and expenditure are responsive to citizen’s needs; changes in the effectiveness of regulation and oversight in how public goods and services are managed, etc.) (Box 4).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Gloria Sikustahili, Japhet Makongo & Julie Adkins. *Lessons from MEL System Development and Practice in an Adaptive Programme*

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204822/documents>

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-203488/documents>

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300035/documents>

## Box 2: Lessons from the Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn in Nigeria

FCDO's Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) programme is a seven-year adaptive governance programme that is helping the government and citizens of Nigeria to work together to improve basic services by supporting policymaking, planning, budgeting, project monitoring and accountability.

Significant results delivered by PERL are captured through qualitative case studies referred to as Most Significant Change Case Studies, which are used to report against the output and outcome indicators in the programme's results framework. Results harvested from various sources, such as progress reports and learning activities, are categorised into outcomes (these are the results reported under the output indicators in the results framework), impact and super impact-level changes. The significance of each result is then established using a scoring system that assesses the changes based on the following criteria:

- a) Alignment of Governance Processes (voice, policy, budget and service delivery)
- b) Scale of Population Benefitting (going from small constituency to whole nation)
- c) Equity of Reform
- d) Sustainability of Reform
- e) Trajectory of Reform (going from emerging island of reform to transformational system-wide change)
- f) Impact on Service Delivery

Reported results are revisited annually to establish whether they have progressed further on the significance scale (e.g., see if an emerging island of change progressed into an extending island of change).

During the annual review process, PERL's performance is assessed based on the collective significance of the results reported. Two significance criteria are used in particular to score PERL's performance: Trajectory of Reform and Impact on Service Delivery. Scoring also takes into account any negative changes in the political economy context. According to the 2020 Annual Review, PERL outputs score an A if: "The collective significance of PERL results reported has annually progressed by 1 level on the scale of Trajectory of Reform and/or Impact on Service Delivery; OR remained the same where the context for reform is moderately more challenging; OR regressed by 1 level where the context for reform is substantially more challenging." If results progressed by two or three levels, an output is cored A+ and A++ respectively.

By scoring the significance of results and linking the programme's performance review to the delivery of results, whose significance gradually increases year on year, PERL's approach incentivises the implementation team to focus on reforms with the greatest transformational potential. Furthermore, PERL's Most Significant Change Case studies – which are structured around the scoring criteria of the significance of results – also provide detailed analysis of issues such as equity, scale of benefiting population and sustainability of reforms that open-ended indicators in other adaptive programmes often struggle to adequately capture.

**Source:** *Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) 2020 Annual Review*, available at: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204822/documents>

### Box 3: Lessons from the Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems programme in Bangladesh

Promoting Knowledge for Accountable Systems (PROKAS) is a flexible and adaptive programme funded by FCDO that has taken an issue-based approach to addressing transparency and accountability challenges. It is being implemented through four issue-based projects (IBPs), similar to I4ID's workstreams, in the areas of: (i) climate finance transparency mechanism; (ii) fairer labour migration; (iii) food safety; and (iv) climate-induced migration.

Each of these IBPs has a menu of anticipated results the programme seeks to deliver at impact, intermediate outcome and immediate outcome levels. The anticipated results are derived from contextual analysis, research and scenario planning, and are categorised into 'Expected' and 'Likely' results. 'Expected' are results that have a higher expectation of being realised, whereas 'Likely' refers to results which are harder to achieve.

Examples from the Food Security IBP's menu of anticipated results include:

Immediate Outcome	
Expected Results	Likely Results
Consumer committees are functional and demonstrate diverse and representative membership/participation in leadership and decision making	Consumer committees work effectively with other PROKAS IBPs for strengthening local oversight mechanisms
Effective engagement with relevant stakeholders at both national and local levels to communicate information needs to the government	Government, private sector and IBPs work together to produce necessary information to be disclosed
Close co-ordination amongst multi stakeholder actors on strengthening compliance with food governance regulations	Effective engagement with business entities to strengthen compliance with food governance regulations
Intermediate Outcome	
Expected Result	Likely Result
Consumer committees strengthen government market monitoring and oversight mechanisms at the upazila level	Replication of consumer committees in other upazilas
In pilot upazilas, government and private sector make information available on food safety, which is accessible by citizens and small-holder farmers	In pilot upazilas, government officials put systems in place in order to enable routine sharing of consumer information (e.g. assigned designated information officers)
In pilot upazilas, more business entities start adhering to the existing regulatory framework	In pilot upazilas, relevant authorities do not need to sanction business entities in order to ensure compliance
Impact	
Reduction in reported cases of illness due to unsafe poultry	
Reduction in corruption in government and private sector governing the food safety industry	
Improved social accountability through inclusive processes involving consumer committees, government and elected public representatives	

These menus of anticipated results serve as reference points for IBP managers during ongoing implementation, helping them develop and test working theories on how change may happen. They are also used to report against results frame indicators at impact and outcome levels. For each year, PROKAS is expected to meet a certain number of 'Expected' and 'Likely' results across its IBPs. For example, by July 2021, the programme is expected to deliver under its Intermediate Outcome 1: 'Number of reforms in formal and informal institutions achieved' 12 'Expected' and 8 'Likely' results across its IBPs.

PROKAS's menu-of-options approach provides delivery teams with the same level of flexibility as in I4ID to adapt, experiment and add/drop workstreams, and manages the risk associated with slower than anticipated progress in some workstreams. At the same time, specifying the results the programme seeks to achieve at different levels gives donors more confidence that the programme is working toward results that meet their ambition and vision. By working toward a set of concrete high-level outcomes, there is also a lower risk that interventions become too dispersed and fail to 'add up to something bigger'.

**Source:** PROKAS Results Framework (version March 2020) shared by FCDO Bangladesh

### Box 4: Lessons from the Transparency and Accountability to Improve Economic Development and Service Delivery programme in Malawi

FCDO's Transparency and Accountability for Improved Growth and Services (TRACTION) programme aims to improve accountability and responsiveness of local and national government in Malawi and increase action by government, civil society, private sector, politicians and others to deliver critical economic and service delivery outcomes.

TRACTION's expected outcome of 'Better regulation and responsiveness in the delivery of public goods and service' in its results framework is measured through the following indicators:

- 1) Number of significant changes in the *degree to which budgets and expenditure are responsive* to citizen's needs
- 2) Number of significant changes in the *effectiveness of regulation and oversight in how public goods and services*, including market chains, are managed
- 3) Number of instances where *groups of citizens with sufficient influence engage with duty-bearers* [in themes and issues addressed by the programme]
- 4) The number of significant instances of *elected representatives seeking credibility through improvements to the delivery of public goods and services* etc.

Similarly to I4ID, these are open-ended indicators, but they are more specific regarding the types of changes the programme seeks to achieve. The advantage of this approach is that it incentivises programmes to focus on a small number of reform issues, reducing the risk that interventions become too dispersed.

Source: TRACTION Results Framework, available at <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300035/documents>

## LESSON 3

### **Open-ended indicators can be complemented or replaced by contextual change indicators at outcome level.**

**To better incentivise transformational change and provide a more accurate picture of programme performance, open-ended indicators can be complemented or replaced with outcome indicators which capture the changes in the wider operating context that the programme seeks to contribute to. Merely counting changes or reforms through open-ended indicators tells little about the performance of a programme.** After all, it is not straightforward to decide what makes a programme more successful: delivering three 'quick win' changes or contributing to only one reform but

around an issue that previously seemed intractable. Most reforms that adaptive programmes pursue are also deeply political in nature and the pathways to change are usually non-linear. There might not be much progress for a long time, but then suddenly the system gets to a tipping point or a window of opportunity opens, paving the way for reform. This means that it can be difficult to tell if a programme's successful contribution to reform was because it is well designed and implemented, or because it was at the right place at the right time. Reforms are also easily reversible – the I4ID-supported VAT exception for menstrual health products that was reversed a year later being an example of this.<sup>6</sup>

**An alternative approach to counting, through open-ended indicators, instances of reforms that might be reversed in a few years, is introducing**

<sup>6</sup> Rachel Kleinfeld. (2015) *Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation – Plan for Sailboats Not Trains*. Available at: [https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/02/improving-](https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/02/improving-development-aid-design-and-evaluation-plan-for-sailboats-not-trains-pub-59159)

[development-aid-design-and-evaluation-plan-for-sailboats-not-trains-pub-59159](https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/02/improving-development-aid-design-and-evaluation-plan-for-sailboats-not-trains-pub-59159)

**outcome indicators that capture the changes in the wider operating context that the programme has contributed to.** For example, the FCDO's Strengthening Action Against Corruption programme (STAAC)<sup>7</sup> in Ghana has 'Number of cases of asset seizure and forfeiture' as one of its outcome indicators, while FCDO's Cities and Infrastructure for Growth (CIG) programmes<sup>8</sup> have 'Volume of public and private finance mobilised through Implementing Government Agencies'. The CIG Myanmar team found that these indicators provide a strong incentive to strategically select and design interventions that can meaningfully contribute to changes in the said contextual indicators, thus ensuring that its workstreams add up to the expected higher-level outcome results. However, this approach carries the risk that programmes become overly focused on shifting the context indicators, possibly at the detriment of tackling more challenging and thus uncertain reforms. Furthermore, these contextual indicators are often quite transactional and tell little about the quality of change being measured. For example: is the public and private finance mobilised with help from CIG reaching vulnerable groups? Is it being spent on tackling key development challenges?

**Another option, particularly for programmes that pursue social and institutional change, would be to devise indicators that can measure shifts in behaviours, incentives, political and social structures, and the 'unwritten rules of the game', many of which may emerge through political economy analysis.** These would be more meaningful measures of reforms, and harder to reverse than policy or legislative changes. Due to the tipping point challenge mentioned above, measuring shifts rather than concrete reforms also gives a more accurate picture of a programme's performance. Measuring change in intangible metrics such as behaviours and incentives is, of course, not easy – which is likely why we could not find an example of this approach among FCDO's adaptive governance programmes.

There have, however, been attempts in other sectors to capture difficult-to-measure social change. The Everyday Peace Indicators,<sup>9</sup> for example, developed a method that allows communities to come up with their own indicators that signal changes in peace and conflict for them. The indicators that have emerged include, for example, 'no barking dogs at night', 'people can be at the street at any time' or 'commerce in the village is reactivated' (Box 5).

### Box 5: Everyday Peace Indicator

The Everyday Peace Indicator is an innovative approach to understand and track changes in difficult-to-measure concepts like peace, reconciliation, governance, and violent extremism. The concept is based on the premise that people affected by war know best what peace means to them and therefore should be the primary source of information on how to measure peacebuilding effectiveness. Communities are asked to generate a list of indicators that signals peacefulness for them. For example, indicators looking at justice and coexistence in the community of San Jose de Urama in Colombia include:

- Armed groups and the State tell the truth about the war
- Ex-guerrillas build families
- The State maintains the access roads to Urama
- The community celebrates special days such as Mother's Day
- People treat street animals well

The indicators identified by community members are then verified to ensure that the final list is representative and measured longitudinally to assess changes in community perspectives over time.

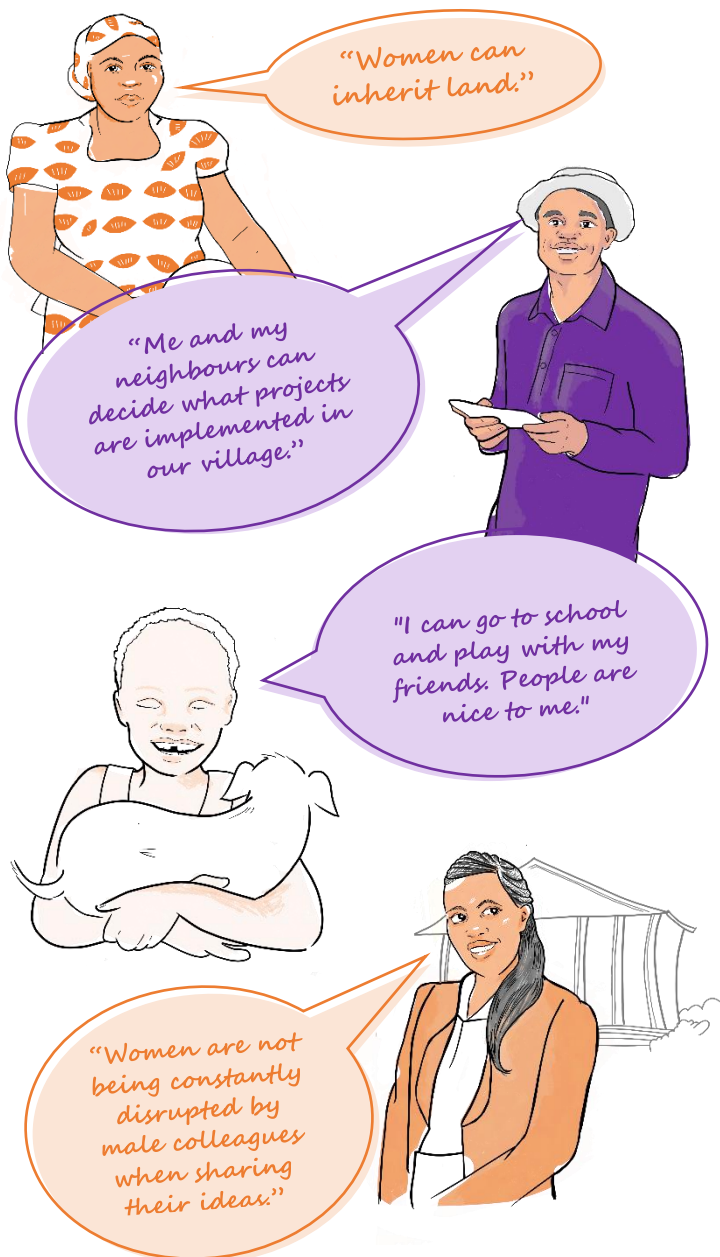
**Source:** <https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org/>

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204659/documents>

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-205222/documents>

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see <https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org/>

## Perspectives



the results framework of all donor governance programmes, in addition to the open-ended change indicators. The indicator could also be tracked over several funding cycles. This would ensure that programmes are sufficiently incentivised to deliver transformational change, but are not held accountable solely to changes that are difficult to deliver in a single programme over a 3- to 5-year funding cycle.

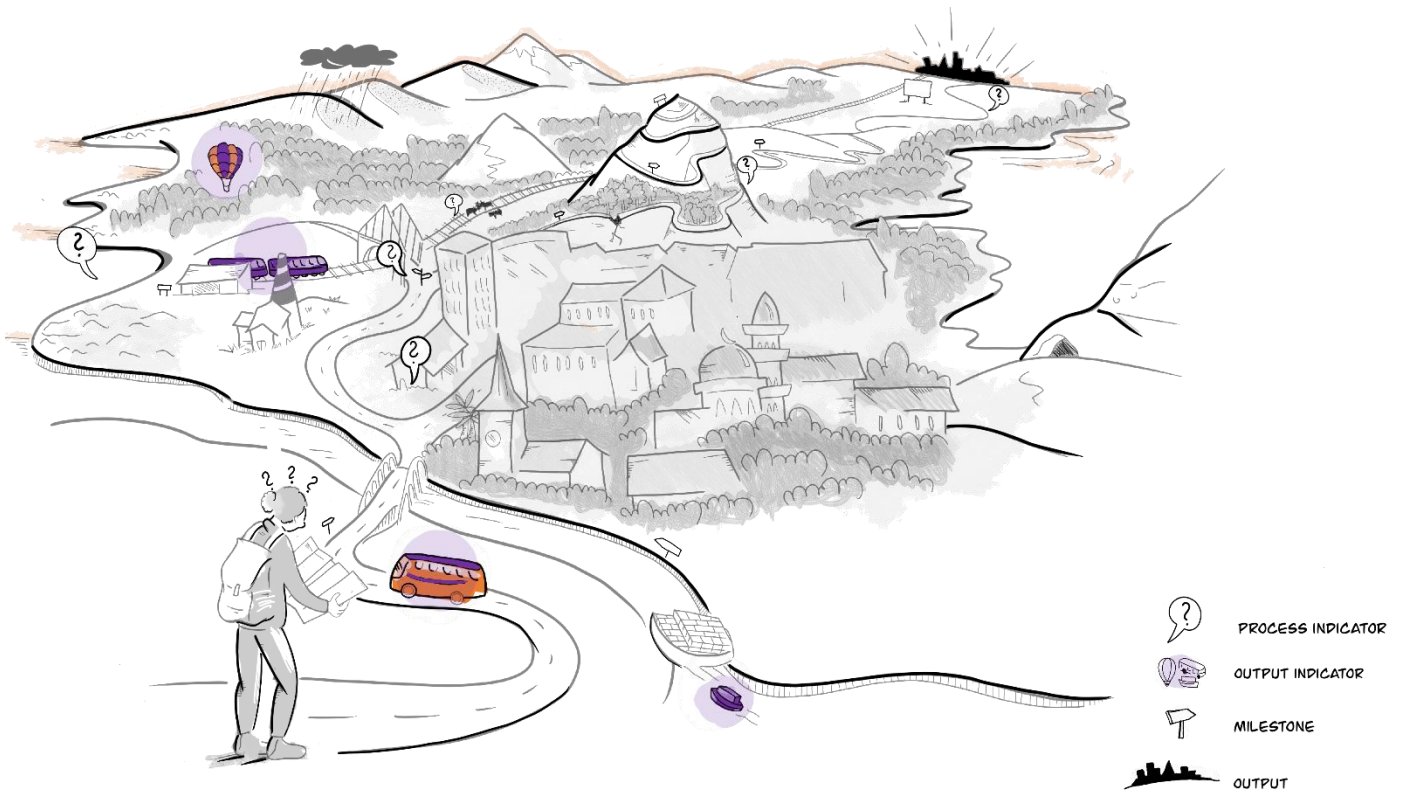
## LESSON 4

**'Searchframe'-type results frameworks offer a means of capturing the story of adaptive programmes.**

**Open-ended output and outcome indicators might struggle to 'tell the story' of adaptive programmes in a compelling manner.** For most people not directly involved in management and implementation, results frameworks and annual reviews (also conducted based on the results frameworks) are the most accessible descriptions of adaptive programmes. Therefore, many SROs are keen for results frameworks to 'tell the story' of their programmes – including what issues it is working on and what results it has achieved or intends to achieve – in a way that is easy to understand for non-technical staff and political sponsors in donor organisations. I4ID's experience suggest that broad and open-ended output and outcome indicators make it difficult for results frameworks to convey this story in a compelling manner.

**The equivalent of the Everyday Peace Indicator approach for a programme like I4ID would be locally defined indicators of inclusive institutions.**

This would involve asking a wide range of local stakeholders (including in civil society, government, urban and rural areas, different sectors, men and women, people with disabilities, etc.) about what would signal that institutions are becoming more inclusive in Tanzania, and then monitoring shifts in these indicators throughout the lifetime of the project. An indicator like this could be introduced in



An alternative to results frameworks with open-ended indicators that is better able to capture the 'story' of an adaptive programme is a 'Searchframe' type results framework, recommended by the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) literature.<sup>10</sup> This captures the concrete issues or problems a programme is working on at any given point of time, together with the different approaches it uses to address them and the changes or reforms it expects to deliver.

**Box 6: In practical terms, adapting 'Searchframes' to FCDO's results framework model would mean that:**

- **Outcomes** describe how the overarching problem that the programme aims to tackle would look like solved.
- **Outputs** are focused on the sub-problems through which the larger, overarching problem is being tackled.
- **Output indicators** represent the different approaches to solving the sub-problem, with **milestones** being the critical points in the pathway to solving the sub-problem.

<sup>10</sup> Matt Andrews. (2016) *SearchFrames for Adaptive Work (More Logical than Logframes)*. Available at: <https://buildingstatecapability.com/2016/06/06/searchframes-for-adaptive-work-more-logical-than-logframes/>; Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, and Michael Woolcock. (2016).

*Doing Iterative and Adaptive Work*. Available at: [https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/files/bsc/files/adaptive\\_work\\_cd\\_wp\\_313.pdf](https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/files/bsc/files/adaptive_work_cd_wp_313.pdf)

**‘Searchframe’ type results frameworks need to be highly flexible.** In programmes that used results frameworks resembling ‘Searchframes’ – such as the Strategic Support to The Ministry of Interior II (SSMI-2) programme in Afghanistan<sup>11</sup> (Box 7) or the Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility II (NIAF -II)<sup>12</sup> (Box 8) – implementing organisations had significant flexibility to add, put on hold, revise or remove outputs and their indicators, milestones, and targets to reflect programme adaptations and changes in the delivery context.

They also had some flexibility to revise outcome indicators, and their milestones and targets. Results frameworks in these programmes are reviewed on a regular basis (typically annually), and changes are made working closely with the donor organisation, an independent reviewer and/or a local counterpart. This is to ensure that they reflect true programme adaptations and learning, and do not stem from poor performance.

### Box 7: Lessons from the Strategic Support to The Ministry of Interior II (SSMI-2) programme in Afghanistan

FCDO’s SSMI-2 used the PDIA approach to support the long-term institutional development of the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoIA) of the Government of Afghanistan. In line with this approach, the outputs in SSMI-2’s results framework were the problems the programme worked to tackle. These problems were identified jointly with MoIA, and agreed by FCDO (then DFID). Output results and indicators captured what the programme was doing to solve these problems, and milestones measured the extent to which the problems had been solved. The objective of the programme (i.e., the broader, overarching problem tackled) at outcome level was set at the start, but some amendments were made later on to reflect the more nuanced understanding SSMI had gained of the problem and possible solutions. Milestones at both outcome and output levels were only set a year in advance, in line with recommendations in the PDIA literature.

	Result	Indicator	Baseline	Milestone Year 1
<b>Outcome:</b> MoIA exercises functioning good governance arrangements to improve its management of the Afghan National Police.	<b>OC Result 1:</b> Capability – MoIA has expertise to carry out core functions with efficient use of resources.	<b>OC 1.1.</b> MoIA Strategic Plan is developed which incorporates results-based management.	MoIA Strategic Plan contains results and indicators, but baselines and targets are not set.	Baseline and targets established, gender-disaggregated where relevant.
		<b>OC 1.2.</b> Number and importance of instances in which evidence (for example research, monitoring, or reporting data) is made visible to support MoIA reform plans, policies, implementation plans, etc.	No systemic use of existing research or monitoring data or gender-disaggregated data.	2x MoIA management-level products (policies, implementation plans, etc.) visibly incorporate evidence to support decisions made.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204952/documents>

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see: <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-201433/documents>

	Result	Indicator	Baseline	Milestone Year 1
<b>Output 1:</b> Improved ability of the MoIA to plan and implement evidence-based reform.	<b>OP Result 1:</b> MoIA develops the mechanism and capacity for reform and change management as a key priority process at strategic, operational and tactical levels.	<b>OP 1.1.</b> Mechanism for reform and change management established by the MoIA.	Reform process ad-hoc, no MoIA comprehensive mechanism for managing reform and change management at strategic or operational levels	MoIA reform and change management mechanism is developed and piloted at the Independent General Directorate level or below.
		<b>OP 1.2.</b> Number of reform assessments, recommendations, or change management plans developed by the MoIA utilising the established mechanism.	Previous MoIA Reform Commission developed 4 draft proposals (Aug 2015–Feb 2016), but their poor quality and lack of evidence base hinders further implementation.	One assessment developed, utilising the established mechanism at the Independent General Directorate level or below.
		<b>OP 1.3.</b> Extent to which MoIA reform recommendations are approved by MoIA as part of their planning processes.	No formal reform proposals from the previous reform commission have been approved.	One action plan, based on assessment recommendation, is developed and approved for implementation.

The results framework was reviewed after each six-monthly learning cycle to reflect learning, stakeholder priorities and changes in the political economy context. SSMI-2 was allowed the flexibility to revise, add, remove or put on hold output indicators, and also to add outputs. FCDO – and to some extent the MoIA – was closely involved in the revision of the results framework to ensure that changes were justified.

The SSMI-2 delivery team found that this results framework model provided the flexibility they needed to effectively implement the adaptive management and PDIA approaches, and responded to the priorities of the main local counterpart, the MoIA. Yearly milestone setting also provided a strong motivation for the team to meet its targets. Unlike many other adaptive programmes, SSMI-2 was expected to meet all of its milestone targets.

**Source:** *SSMI-2 Results Framework, 2016 Annual Review and Project Completion Review*, available at <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204952/documents>; and interview with SSMI-2 Programme Manager

### Box 8: Lessons from the Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility II (NIAF II)

FCDO's NIAF programme did not use the PDIA approach but, being a flexible, demand-driven facility, its results framework resembled 'Searchframes'. Each of NIAF II's outputs were dedicated to one of its workstreams. Output indicators reflected changes the programme aimed to deliver, and milestones were key progress markers toward this change. Milestones were included for the whole duration of the programme, but NIAF II was expected to deliver 50% of these to be considered successful. Just like SSMI-2, NIAF II had considerable flexibility to amend, add, remove or put on hold indicators and milestones.

Indicator	Baseline	Milestone 1	Milestone 2	Milestone 3	Milestone 4
OP 3.1. Status of system for the economic appraisal, costing and prioritisation of capital investments for inclusion in the Capital Budget.	No systematic prioritisation process. Many projects start, and then stall for lack of funding.	OCEAP produces draft screening and appraisal templates.	50% new capital projects (>\$25m) screened used approved templates.	Screening of capital projects with a total projected spend in 2015 of at least \$450m, in not fewer than 2 MDAs.	Cumulatively, 150 Budget Officers from at least 2 additional Federal MDAs trained.  Screening of capital projects with a total projected spend in 2016 of at least \$350m, in not fewer than 3 MDAs.

NIAF II was working with an independent Technical Review Panel contracted by FCDO, which was tasked with assessing bi-annually the programme's progress and performance against results frame milestones and, based on this, determining the quantum of payments due to the implementing organisation under the results-based payment system. The Panel's role also included assessing the delivery context, highlighting issues and constraints facing the programme, and recommending changes to milestone targets and indicators accordingly.

**Source:** NIAF II Results Framework and Formative Evaluation, available at <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-201433/documents>

## LESSON 5

**Adding process indicators at output level can help measure the performance of adaptive programmes more accurately.**

**Incorporating process indicators among results framework outputs can provide a more accurate measurement of adaptive programme performance.** There is a tendency in adaptive programmes to set output and outcome targets in results frameworks higher than standard guidelines on definitions. PERL's results framework, where the programme is reporting outcomes under its output indicators (see Box 4), is a clear example of this trend. This model, without a doubt, provides a powerful incentive for implementing organisations to focus on the delivery of high-level results, and is in line with FCDO's results agenda. However, to get a true picture of a programme's performance – after all, results frameworks are intended to be performance

measurement tools above all else – metrics capturing programme deliverables are also needed. Integrating a process indicator as I4ID did at output level (Box 9) around how the adaptive management or PDIA approach is being implemented can give a more accurate view of programme performance – provided that it is also complemented by robust monitoring at intervention level.

**Allowing adaptive programmes to report on progress indicators at the early stage of their implementation could help alleviate harmful pressures for the delivery of quick but less ambitious results.** Another consequence of populating results frameworks with high-level result targets is that it puts pressure – no doubt intentionally – on programmes to quickly deliver visible results. However, this pressure might provide perverse incentives, where implementers shy away from risks and experimentation to make sure they can show quick wins to meet their results-based

payment targets and score an A on their Annual Review. In practice, this often means focusing on apolitical reforms, which are difficult to scale or link to more transformational change.<sup>13</sup> Introducing process indicators and holding programmes accountable to these rather than higher-level changes in their early stages of implementation

could help alleviate harmful pressures, while also giving confidence to donors that the programme is on the right track to deliver results. The weighting of process indicators in the results framework can then be reduced once the programme progresses further with the implementation.

### Box 9: Adaptive management process indicators in I4ID

I4ID's success as an adaptive programme was linked to its ability to adapt to a changing context, be politically savvy, and put learning and iteration at the centre of its interventions. Output 3, 'I4ID and its partners successfully implement effective principles of adaptive programmes', aimed to capture the extent to which the programme had adhered to these principles. Output 3 was measured through three indicators:

- Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering an adaptive programme with partners.
- Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering a learning programme with partners.
- Level of effectiveness of I4ID in delivering a politically aware programme with partners.

I4ID assessed its own performance against these indicators using a Principle Focused Monitoring tool, based on the adaptive programming literature. According to I4ID: "principles focused monitoring strikes an appropriate balance between flexibility and accountability, focusing assessment on whether a programme adheres to meaningful guiding principles, and how this fosters change – rather than focusing on the specific deliverables required to bring about change in different contexts." The tool comprised a set of scales against core principles of adaptive programming (e.g., creating the culture and space for adaptation to occur; being responsive to changes in the context and emerging opportunities, etc.), along with a rating system and a means of verifying these ratings. I4ID's own scoring against Output 3 was then verified by the independent Results and Challenge function, rendering robustness to the self-assessment approach.

The feedback of the I4ID team suggests that Output 3 and the Principle Focused Monitoring tool were useful for internal reflection on how they were doing adaptive programming and where they needed to change how they operate. However, as an accountability-focused results framework indicator, it was likely unnecessarily complex and time consuming to assess.

**Source:** I4ID Indicator Reference Sheet (2018)

<sup>13</sup> Duncan Green and Irene Guijt (2019). *Adaptive Programming in Fragile, Conflict and Violence-Affected*

*Settings: What works and under what conditions? The Case of Institutions for Inclusive Development, Tanzania*

## LESSON 6

*Reporting on results framework indicators should include concise qualitative analysis.*

**Qualitative analyses accompanying results framework reporting are important to answer donors' questions around the significance of changes reported and cross-cutting issues.**

Qualitative analysis – for example, I4ID's 'Outcome Stories' and 'Annual Results Reports' – can help to alleviate donor concerns about a programme's contribution to, and the trajectory and significance of, changes reported in results frameworks. If designed well, they can also capture and communicate to donors critical but less tangible and quantifiable change processes, such as shifts in behaviour, relationships, power dynamics, norms and informal processes. Finally, results frameworks with open-ended change indicators often struggle to capture results around gender and social inclusion (GESI) in a meaningful way. **Incorporating GESI analysis into outcome stories or other qualitative analysis could help provide a more nuanced assessment of a programme's performance in this area.**

### Box 11: I4ID Outcome Stories

Changes reported under I4IDs Outcome 1 and 2 indicators were recorded through outcome-harvesting derived case reports – called Outcome Stories – produced within three months after the change occurred.

Each Outcome Story covered one reported change, and included:

- Description of the problem being addressed
- How the problem was identified and why it was selected by I4ID
- What I4ID did to contribute to the change
- How the change occurred
- Outcomes achieved
- The change's prospect for scale and sustainability
- Lessons learned

**To reach the political sponsors and external stakeholders of adaptive programmes, a short and concise summary (about a paragraph long) of the qualitative analysis should accompany more detailed reports.** SROs and external MEL providers found I4IDs Outcome Stories and Annual Results Reports very informative and useful. However, these documents, particularly the Results Reports, tended to be very long – likely to capture the important nuances about the change stories and I4ID's contribution. For example, the 2019-2020 Results Report was 109 pages long. The Outcome Stories were around four pages. While considerably shorter, this is often still too long or detailed for senior officials in donor organisations to read. The downside of such detailed results records is that they become less accessible to political sponsors and other important external stakeholders. Future programmes should, therefore, consider short summaries to accompany longer reports, and ensure that these are visible alongside results frameworks and Annual Reports.

## CONCLUSION

Adaptive programmes should have a clear and realistic objective and ambition from their outset. Open-ended change indicators are frequently chosen by adaptive programmes to measure the achievement of these objectives. While these have the advantage of providing programmes with flexibility to experiment and adapt, they need to be designed carefully to incentivise the delivery of transformational change, and should ideally be complemented by contextual change indicators and high-quality qualitative analysis, as well as process indicators at the output level to better measure programme performance. Adaptive programmes seeking an alternative to open-ended change indicators should consider 'Searchframe' type results frameworks.

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