

- > Getting there from here: knowledge, leadership, culture and rules towards adaptive management

BEAM Exchange webinar

25 October 2016

Study Purpose and Process

- **Examined the incentives and constraints to adaptive management for donors and implementers**
- **Interviewed more than 60 informants from donors and implementers**
 - Included technical, compliance and operations-focused staff
- **Lit review (NRM, IT, business and development)**

What is and what isn't “adaptive”

- **A basic definition: reacting to changes in operating environment**
- **A better definition: purposefully experimenting to answer questions that are critical to the achievement of results**

Findings

- **There are many barriers to basic adaptive management in market systems work, we put them in four ‘buckets’:**
 - Knowledge
 - Leadership
 - Culture
 - Rules

Findings: Knowledge

- **Knowing what the rules really say**
 - Default to risk aversion and restriction
 - *Perception* of flexibility permitted is more important than actual rules
- **Knowing the context through Results Measurement**
 - Bias toward quantitative info
 - Too much data requested but not needed/used
 - Donors are OK with programme changes in response to significant changes in the context
 - But not OK with programme changes because of pilot failures
 - Under-investment in RM, seen as overhead
 - Logframe as straightjacket

Findings: Leadership

- **Political leadership**
 - Emphasis on burn rate
 - Emphasis on easily communicated results
 - “Too often counting is considered equal to impact.”
- **Practical Leadership**
 - Some commonly-agreed personal qualities of leadership inspire adaptive programs
 - Leadership churn dampens enthusiasm for adaptation in both donors and implementers

Findings: Culture

- **Office culture**
 - Hinges on individual personalities – not easily transferred or replicated – and needs nurturing
 - Strongly linked to Knowledge & Leadership
 - Shift from accountability to responsibility
- **National culture**
 - Ignore it at your peril
- **Communication and trust**
 - Sufficient info needed to promote trust between agencies
 - Communication and clear messages within organizations will shape how rules are interpreted

Findings: Rules

- **Programme procurement**
 - Technical and budget specificity limits adaptation
 - Need to increase the pool of team leaders and hire for management, not necessarily technical acumen
 - Weighing “program” vs “overhead” costs
- **Contract features**
 - Inception periods get mixed reviews
 - Incentives: Payment by Results at DFID
 - Partnering with private sector actors – a huge challenge with a few promising practices

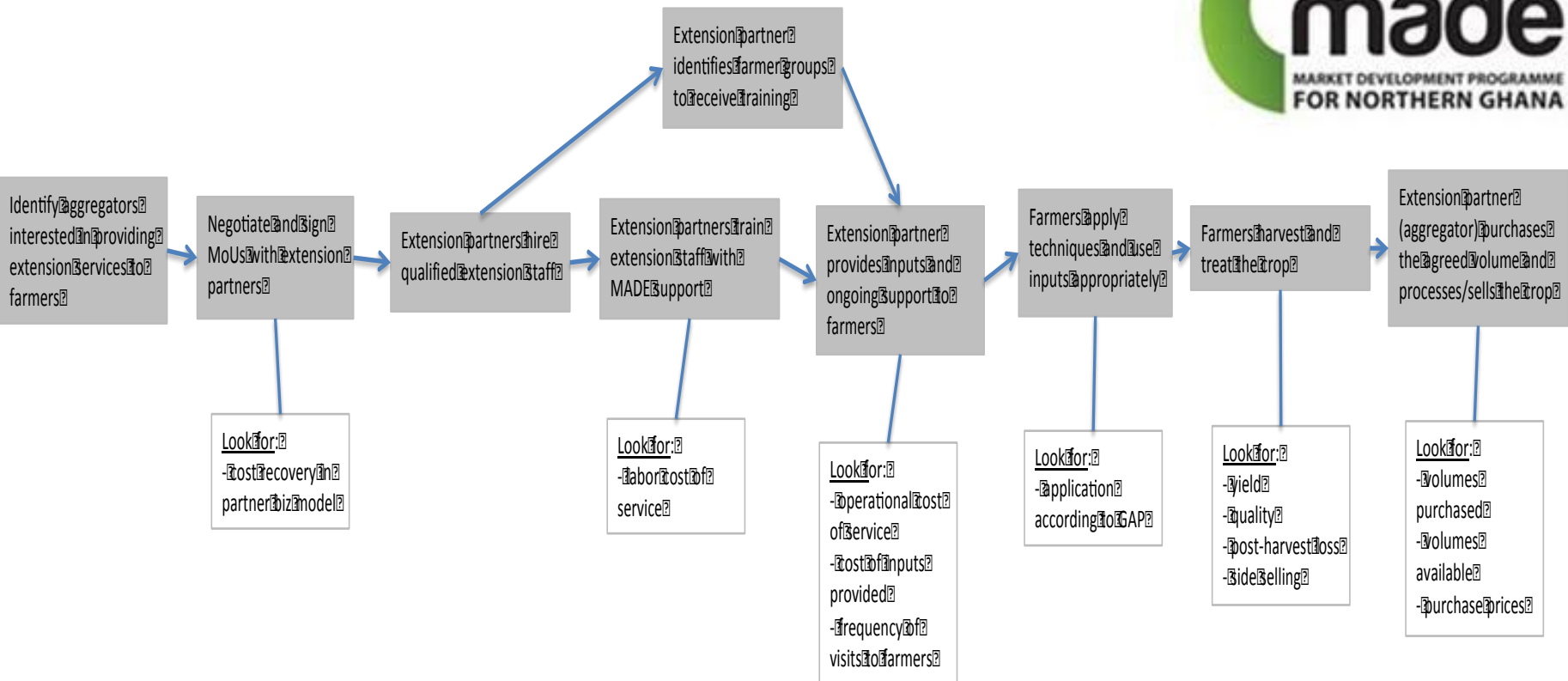
Recommendations

- **Move toward hypothesis-based planning**
- **Separate the logframe's 2 functions:**
 - Mechanism for accountability
 - Expression of a programme's theory of change
- **Donors and implementers develop guides for navigating existing rules and tools**
 - The SDC's "Managing MSD/M4P Projects" is a good example
- **Procurement and contracts staff need more involvement at all stages of the programme cycle**

Recommendations (cont'd)

- **Focus on indicators at higher levels of market and systems change**
- **Consider reducing donor field staff responsibilities (allowing more engagement)**
- **Allow more ambiguity in proposal budgets**
- **Reconsider how we hire leadership positions (TLs/COPs/Project Directors)**

Example of hypothesis-based planning





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