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
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
• 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

Identify aggregators interested in providing extension services to farmers

Negotiate and sign MoUs with extension partners

Extension partners hire qualified extension staff

Extension partners train extension staff with MADE support

Extension partner identifies farmer groups to receive training

Extension partner provides inputs and ongoing support to farmers

Farmers apply techniques and use inputs appropriately

Farmers harvest and treat the crop

Extension partner ( aggregator) purchases the agreed volume and processes/sells the crop

Look for:
- cost recovery in partner biz model
- labor cost of service
- operational cost of service
- cost of inputs provided
- frequency of visits to farmers
- application according to GAP
- yield
- quality
- post-harvest loss
- side selling
- volumes purchased
- volumes available
- purchase prices