ReDSS ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Focus and characteristics

November 2019
What is adaptive management?

Adaptive management involves **testing, monitoring, getting feedback** and – crucially - making adaptations/course corrections if necessary.

An adaptive programme learns, has opportunities to use that learning and actually adjusts (Bond).
“Whatever the quality of information, no assumption can be made that the increased availability of good information and analysis will in itself result in better informed decisions.”

ACAPS - TUFTS, 2013
Figure 1  The role of evidence in adaptive management

There may be changes in:
- External environment
- Needs and opportunities of intended beneficiaries
- Organisations, systems, incentives
- Programme results and effects
- Emergence of new understanding/evidence/research

Why do we need to adapt?
- Statistical and administrative data
- Analytical research-based evidence
- Feedback from stakeholders
- Evidence from MEL systems

Evidence for adaptive management

What do we need to adapt?
- Allocation
- Activity
- Modality (e.g. from delivery to capacity)
- Stakeholder/partner
- Intended beneficiaries
- Location
- Staffing/resourcing
- Strategy/objectives

How do we need to adapt?
- Capacities
- Incentives
- Contexts
证据是有效和严谨的适应性管理的核心。然而，尽管其核心重要性，证据具体如何被用来为适应性发展和人道主义项目的决策提供信息，过去和现在仍然是许多人不可观测的。

- 有必要加强和记录基于证据的适应性管理。

- 寻求使用证据进行适应性管理的人需要在确保一个严谨、有记录（可审计）的基于证据的行动轨迹和对文档化的时间和资源分配持有现实态度之间做出权衡，并认识到在没有严谨证据时可能需要继续前进。

- 需要对证据进行更广泛的使用，以获得更具体的信息。
### 4 steps for evidence informed adaptive management

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<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Key questions or prompts</th>
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| 1. Establish the need for evidence in adaptive management           | • What triggers or changes support or challenge hypotheses and assumptions and might require a programme to change course?  
| • Identifying different evidence needs according to why there is a need to adapt, what might need to be adapted and how | • What specific elements of a programme might need to change?  
| • How should decisions be made so they are sensitive to capabilities and the enabling environment? |                                              |
| 2. Consider the types and levels of evidence for adaptive management | • How will we gather data, organise it into information, interpret it to create knowledge and use it to inform wise decision-making?  
| • Identifying the role of data and information, as well as its interpretation, often involving forms of judgement and wisdom, in order to create appropriate evidence | • How will trade-offs be identified and managed – for instance between a rigorous, documented trail of evidence-informed actions and the time and resources allocated to documentation?  
| • What might we need to proceed without rigorous evidence when it is unavailable, and what steps can be taken to build that evidence over time? |                                              |
| 3. Assess the robustness of evidence for different decisions        | • Quality and credibility: Are appropriate data collection and analytical methods used? Does it say something meaningful about whether change is (or isn’t) happening?  
| • Relevant criteria for ensuring that, wherever possible, evidence used for adaptation is robust and rigorous, including how it is used | • Relevance: How widely applicable are findings? Are they limited to particular timeframes or contexts?  
| • Reliability: Are consistent measurement and analytical methods used? If not, why not and how has this been documented? | • Reliability: How strong and weak evidence identified and assessed? How is evidence triangulated?  
| • Consistency: How has potential bias been identified and have appropriate techniques been used to minimise that bias? | • Strength and consistency: How is strong and weak evidence identified and assessed? How is evidence triangulated?  
| • Rootedness: Whose values and viewpoints have been considered in framing and gathering evidence? Does the evidence meet the demands for decision-making, and what are the gaps? |                                              |
| 4. Ensure the basis of adaptive management decisions is sound, transparent and documented | • How costly or significant is the decision?  
| • Criteria for assessing the burden of proof needed to make decisions to adapt or change course based on the evidence available | • What is the urgency of the decision and degrees of uncertainty?  
| • What are the consequences of errors of action and inaction? How reversible is the decision? |                                              |
USAID: 3 components of an enabling environment

USAID’s Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) framework defines three components of the enabling environment that support continuous learning and adaptive management: culture, processes and resources.
Characteristics of adaptive management

1. **Accept and treat** the problems as “**complex**” in nature
2. **Focus on “course-correction” of activities within the lifetime of the program** as well as from one program to the next
3. A strong emphasis on **rapid learning and feedback to inform changes**
4. **Flexibility in implementation to enable the above** (including within budgets and results frameworks)
5. **Responsibility for decision-making is delegated to staff as close to implementation of work as possible**, recognising that those close to the intervention (both affected populations and frontline staff) are thought to have the best knowledge of circumstances
6. The focus should be on problems that are identified and agreed at **local level – context specific**
7. A **politically-smart or power-sensitive approach is taken**: this recognises that problems look different depending on whose perspective they are viewed from, allows space to explore the politics underpinning a problem and emerging contextual opportunities for action
8. Accountability focuses on progress towards agreed high level results and on learning, rather than on pre-defined implementation plans and milestones (asking “**did we do the right thing?”** rather than “**did we do what we said we would do?”**)
What does adaptive management mean to ReDSS in practice?

- Seeking and nurturing staff with competencies in reflection, learning, curiosity and open communications
- Ensuring that finance, planning and performance management systems enable and do not unduly hinder changes in interventions and budgets based on learning
- Promoting ongoing, open communications with members and partners to build trust and mutual understanding, as this can enhance speed of decision-making around proposed changes in interventions
- Enabling greater decision-making by staff closer to programme implementation
- Focusing more on past evidence of learning and adaptation
- Adequately funding reflection and learning over time and retain the knowledge
## ReDSS learning principles

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<th>Principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>Collaborative</strong></td>
<td>Ensure our work is generated and grounded in a collaborative and collective process involving all relevant members and external actors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adaptive</strong></td>
<td>Embed adaptive working approaches where durable solutions strategies and activities are designed assuming change is inevitable</td>
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<td><strong>Iterative</strong></td>
<td>Promote the use of continuous learning and adaptation in improving programmes processes and decision making – repeated cycles of reflection and action</td>
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<td><strong>Locally-led</strong></td>
<td>Enable a context-specific and problem-oriented approach to strategies and activities for improved programming and policies for durable solutions</td>
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Consultative workshops with national authorities and partners at field level to develop joint recommendations

Learning events on studies: convening authorities and practitioners to adapt programming based on findings & recommendations

Documenting progress of application of core programing principles

Real time learning: 3 thematic areas identified to monitor and document: DAC engagement, government engagement, area-based approach

Adjusting of programme

Results Matrix Framework

Political economy analyses shared in DS TWG and PSC meetings

Joint planning with authorities: to better understand their priorities

Use of evidence generated to inform policy dialogue

Technical support to key donors in developing and adapting their solutions strategies

Peer learning: convening various DS consortia for periodic reflections and learning

Focus on field level DS consortia TWG thematic discussions