Listen carefully. Tread Lightly. Adapt quickly.

CARE's approach to Adaptive Management

Adaptive management is an approach to planning, implementing, and understanding projects in a way that is sensitive to context, anticipates issues which may arise, and centers voices from communities. It requires an ability to quickly understand what is happening with our work and provide flexibility over the life of a project to change our approaches when they are not having the desired impact for the people they should reach, or when the operating context changes. In an increasingly dynamic and uncertain world, using evidence to adjust our programming as we go is critical to achieving our goals.

The benefits of adaptive management are many. Most importantly, it creates better impact for the people that we intend to serve. It also allows improved sustainability when projects can work with local stakeholders to build approaches that will work for them in the long term. More efficient use of resources, more engaged staff and participants, greater resilience in the face of crisis, and quicker application of learning to improve the work are all additional benefits of adaptive management.

Moving the needle on intricate emergency and development issues requires that we recognize and work with complexity. Our programming doesn't exist in a vacuum, and we frequently must manage shifting environments, competing stakeholder needs, complex power dynamics, and diverse barriers to and drivers of change.[1] Amid the competing needs, we must to center the voices of people in the communities we serve. Not only is this the ethically correct choice, it also allows us to combat bias and come to more sustainable, locally owned solutions that work in context.[2] In this complexity it is necessary to take deliberate action to ensure that our programs can cope with the unknowns and the soon-to-be known.

CARE's approach to adaptive management focuses on building in mechanisms for continuing learning and evidence-based adaptation throughout the program cycle as part of a thoughtful program design. This should go beyond experimenting, piloting and scaling to base adaptation on:
- Shifting contexts and changing needs of communities
- Changing power dynamics—especially gender power dynamics and other forms of exclusion
- Developing knowledge about what is (and is not) working in this environment and why.

Creating high quality programming requires incorporating a robust Theory of Change, clearly defining

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[1] https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/GADNCARE_PuttingGenderInPEA_2018.pdf
[2] https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE_British-Council_DDD-workshop-report-Dec-2018.pdf

assumptions to test, and appropriately resourcing ongoing evidence, learning and reflection. Adaptive management also requires governance structures which look to devolve meaningful and appropriate decision making. With these elements, programming is better able to meet its objectives, and the needs of communities, while maintaining a program structure which enables ongoing accountability to donors, stakeholders, and project participants.

It is important to note that adaptive management approaches must exist across the whole of the organization. While program and project teams have a key role to play, they also need support from more operational divisions like finance, grant management, procurement, human resources, and others, to ensure that we are truly able to adapt. Program quality and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) functions are critical to this endeavor to provide the necessary evidence to guide adaptation. For this to work, it requires supporting managers and leaders who are committed to adaptive management principles to improve impact.
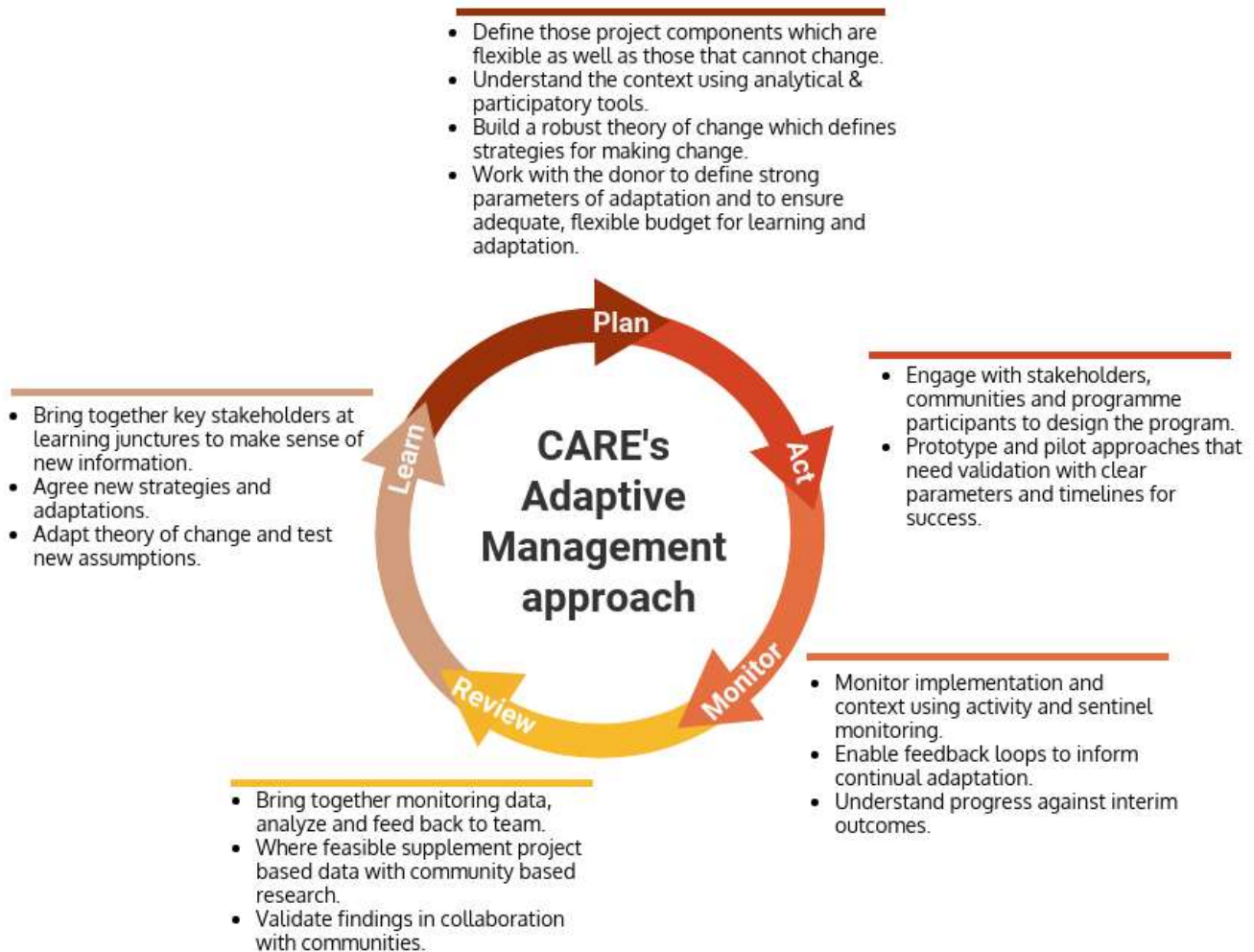

Plan
- Define those project components which are flexible as well as those that cannot change.
- Understand the context using analytical & participatory tools.
- Build a robust theory of change which defines strategies for making change.
- Work with the donor to define strong parameters of adaptation and to ensure adequate, flexible budget for learning and adaptation.

Act
- Engage with stakeholders, communities and programme participants to design the program.
- Prototype and pilot approaches that need validation with clear parameters and timelines for success.

Monitor
- Monitor implementation and context using activity and sentinel monitoring.
- Enable feedback loops to inform continual adaptation.
- Understand progress against interim outcomes.

Review
- Bring together monitoring data, analyze and feed back to team.
- Where feasible supplement project based data with community based research.
- Validate findings in collaboration with communities.

Learn
- Bring together key stakeholders at learning junctures to make sense of new information.
- Agree new strategies and adaptations.
- Adapt theory of change and test new assumptions.

Figure 1: CARE's Approach to Adaptive Management.[3]

[3] Adapted from Ashton, I., Baldwin, B., Bobowski, B., Esser, S., & McLaughlin, P. Rocky Mountain Science Centennial. PARK SCIENCE, 32(2).

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How we conduct adaptive management

Using this overall definition and approach, CARE outlined several practical tips for teams on how to improve adaptive management in programming. At each phase in the cycle, the adaptive management approach provides practical suggestions and tools for staff. These tools and tips draw heavily not just from CARE's experience, but also from key external resources like USAID's Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Toolkit or the work from DFID and Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on Adaptive Development.

CARE's Tips for Adaptive Management

PLAN	Understand your context	Focus on Key Areas (Use ToC)	Set the Limits	Build in budget (flexibility)	Resource the skills
ACT	Invite Others	Include Women and Youth	Take Small Bets	Implement Ideas	
MONITOR		Use your data	Consider multiple kinds of data		
REVIEW		Find key moments	Get leaders involved	Propose (multiple) Solutions	
LEARN		Decide on actions	Communicate proactively	Decentralize decisions	

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What this looks like in practice

Phase 1: Plan

Understand your context: It's critical to build programs with an understanding of the context in which they operate, and how that is changing. Tools like a Political Economy Analysis, a Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis, or a Rapid Gender Analysis are all tools that involve a variety of stakeholders early on to understand the key factors in an existing context. This understanding is vital for setting up a framework within which we can implement and adapt safely and thoughtfully. These do not have to be new studies—reviewing existing literature and having conversations with key participants and partners is a good way to start.

CASE EXAMPLES: UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTEXT

Rapid Gender Analysis: CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis process has recently been validated by the Inter Agency Standing Committee, and CARE has used it in more than 20 countries in large-scale emergencies and more than 30 countries in their preparedness phase. The tool provides information about the different needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys and girls in a crisis. It does this in part by examining the relationships between women, men, boys and girls. An RGA is built up progressively, providing an initial but incomplete analysis of gender relations in an emergency, and links to more in-depth Gender and Power Analysis using the CARE Good Practice Framework. Because RGA is built into project cycles during emergency response, and can happen quickly, it also provides an excellent tool for adaptive management—regularly getting gender issues into the forefront of conversations about improving emergency response.

Every Voice Counts (EVC), Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan: EVC is a 5-year strategic partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs which aims to contribute to inclusive and effective governance processes in fragile settings. The project started with each country using participatory gender and power analysis to contextualize the global Theory of Change. Armed with knowledge from their experience and solid MEAL systems, the team review their ToC every year to focus more closely on what advocacy priorities are working and where there are new opportunities. The team uses a close connection between knowledge management and monitoring to understand the context and ensure decisions are made with the best possible understanding of context. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs uses EVC as an example for other INGOs to learn from on how to be effective by practicing an adaptive approach to lobby and advocacy programming in fragile and (post) conflict settings.

Use your theory of change: Your Theory of Change and your assumptions should drive your key areas of inquiry. These should focus on decisions you as a team can make, or areas where you need evidence to influence others. This requires a strong vision and a theory of change that looks at assumptions, pathways of change, and alternatives, not just a plain logical framework. The Theory of Change should guide adaptive management and learning throughout the life of the project, and at different critical points in the cycle—such as after your initial context analysis, during your pause and reflect moments, during annual reviews, and at mid-term.

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CASE EXAMPLES: USE YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Hamzari, Niger: With funding from USAID's Food for Peace, CARE is implementing Hamzari—a 5-year project that aims to improve food and nutrition security and diversify livelihoods for 142,000 people in Niger. In year 1, Hamzari identified key areas from its theory of change to conduct in-depth research on the context and to validate the assumptions the team made in the initial design phase. The management team meets to discuss findings from the studies, and the implications for revising both the theory of change and project activities. After this initial meeting, the team meets with other stakeholders—like the donor and local government officials—to brainstorm and implement changes.

Agriculture Extension Support Activity, Bangladesh: In partnership with the Dhaka Ahsania Mission, and with funding from USAID's Feed the Future project, CARE worked on the Agriculture Extension Support Activity from 2012-2017. One component of the project focused on working with the private sector to improve agriculture extension more sustainably and cost effectively. A core project assumption was that private sector suppliers would work with women farmers to improve women's access to information and inputs. However, a mid-term assessment on the private sector component revealed that only 1.5% of customers receiving services from the private sector were women. This required the project to review its approach, and develop new ways to reach women, as well as to encourage the private sector to work more with women. Understanding a clear hypothesis from the TOC, and using the project's planned evaluations to test that assumption allowed the team to re-set their strategy when the hypothesis proved to be incorrect.

Focus on key areas: set up your data systems to highlight and analyze progress towards a few key goals (especially outcome goals that look at the changes we hope to see happen) or areas of concern. Your Theory of Change is a good starting point to find this focus and setting indicators that measure your key assumptions.

CASE EXAMPLE: FOCUS ON KEY AREAS

Kore Lavi, Haiti: With funding from USAID's office of Food for Peace, CARE implemented Kore Lavi from 2013-2019. One key goal of the project was to increase the capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST) so that they could eventually take over the project. In 2015, it became clear that the project needed better data and indicators to track progress towards this goal. So the project added the MAST Institutional Capacity Index—which allowed both the project team and MAST staff to specifically track progress toward improved capacity, and set action plans based on the strengths and weaknesses in that scale. Having a targeted indicator and data set built into project reporting made progress much clearer and allowed the team to focus on key areas for change.

Set the limits: define early what is fixed and what is flexible. If there are some places where there is no room to allow adaptation—for donor requirements, ethical considerations, project effectiveness, resource constraints, or other reasons—communicate that clearly from the beginning. That will help keep teams on track and focus adaptive management activities into the most productive areas.

Indashyikirwa, Rwanda: with funding from DFID, CARE implemented the Indashyikirwa project from 2014-2018. The project specifically adapted the SASA! model of community mobilization to fit with programming based in the Village Savings and Loan approach. In adapting the model, the team identified four key pillars of fidelity—gender-power analysis, a phased-in approach, holistic community engagement, and activism—that must be included in any adaptation in order to be successful. This set the tone for where there was space for exploration, and what was non-negotiable.

Build in budget and budget flexibility: adaptive management is most effective when there is budget to implement solutions, and when we can reallocate budgets towards changed approaches. Guidelines like 10% budget flexibility can be very helpful here.

Somali Girls' Education Promotion- Transition Programme: With funding from DFID, CARE implements the Somali Girls Education Promotion Programme from 2013-2017. In the second phase of Girls' Education Challenge projects, DFID has introduced several ways in which they look to make adaptation easier. One example is adding flexibility of 10% within budgets, meaning that it is no longer necessary to engage in complex negotiations in order to be able to fund adaptations to strategies. This has enabled these projects to meet the needs of a rapidly shifting context and to adapt based on new knowledge of what is working that the projects continually generate.

Resource the skills: using data for adaptive management requires a deep understanding of the context, an ability to work in politically savvy ways, fast data analysis and an ability to quickly sort through and present data of what is changing in the context and the project. It also requires good facilitation and management skills to help stakeholders get on the same page and make quick decisions about what to change. People can learn these skills, but it is also critical to bring in people with the right skills, as well as to provide training and coaching opportunities for staff develop those skills.

Harande, Mali: With funding from USAID's Office of Food for Peace, CARE is implementing the Harande program in Mali with the goal of supporting 270,000 people living in poor families in the Mopti region achieve sustainable food, nutrition and income security by 2020. In 2019, the project realized that the initial process for recruiting field staff focused on a very complex and comprehensive set of technical skills, which narrowed the field of candidates to a pool that did not always have the local language, context understanding, and facilitation skills they needed to work with communities in a complex and changing environment. The team worked with local partners to re-write job descriptions and hire new field staff who had more focused technical expertise coupled with a better ability to perform adaptive management functions and local stakeholder consultations—resulting in much quicker achievement of project goals on the ground.

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CASE EXAMPLE: RESOURCE THE SKILLS

Emergency Response, Pakistan: When working in emergency contexts in Pakistan, the CARE team realized that many assumed it was not possible to hire women staff because of the complex security situation. By making special efforts to both recruit women, and provide the support they needed to operate—like providing safe transport, creating safe spaces in the office, and creating day care options for all working parents—the team was able to include women in its field staff. It also required taking firm disciplinary action to prevent harassment. As a result, the project team had more diverse perspectives and was able to do more gender-sensitive work because they could work more directly with women and girls on their specific needs.

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Phase 2: Act

Invite others: bring other stakeholders into the room to get diverse perspectives. Stakeholders—like project participants, partners, local government, allies, other NGOs, the donor, coordination groups—should be a part of your whole data system and see what results we are collecting, in addition to joining the learning conversations.

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CASE EXAMPLES: INVITE OTHERS

Rawasi, West Bank/Gaza: With support from the Austrian Development Association, CARE West Bank and Gaza 's Rawasi project took a localized, participatory, and sustainable road to empowerment for our target groups as demonstrated in CARE's Strengthening Livestock Holders' Livelihoods in Area C (Rawasi). The team realized that a focus on large, multi-national market actors had missed the opportunity to work with smaller-scale local market actors with a bigger buy-in for the success of local producers. By inviting these previously excluded actors into the conversation, and focusing on local and regional private sector actors to strengthen market connections, the project was able to improve production by as much as 50%, reduce food waste by 57%, and cut the cost of extension services in half.

Constituent Voice and Feedback Commons: CARE is piloting a Constituent Voice program in 5 countries that is built on the Feedback Commons platform—allowing micro-surveys in a range of participant interactions to collect rapid and specific feedback from project participants and take action more quickly to resolve any challenges in particular areas of interest. In Nepal, during the earthquake response, CARE used this regular micro-surveying technique in order to gather feedback from partners on performance. In making sense of this data with those partners CARE co-created action plans with them on how to improve. In Bangladesh, CARE Social Enterprise Krishi Utsho used this feedback mechanism in order to listen and adapt agro-products in order to more effectively meet farmers' needs for smaller fertilizer packaging. As a result, people using the service were more satisfied.

Emergency Response, Pakistan: In CARE Pakistan's emergency programs, it became obvious that no single complaints mechanism was enough to work in isolated communities. Telephone hotlines did not work in rural areas with low network coverage. Complaint boxes excluded those who could not write. Restrictions on project staff for security reasons meant that only some accountability meetings could regularly be held in person. Combining several feedback mechanisms meant that it was possible to include a broader range of perspectives in project decisions and adaptations.

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Include women and youth specifically: It is important to create genuine spaces for participation to hear the voice of women and youth—and other marginalized groups—and ensure that the team is valuing those opinions. It is easy to create consultation spaces where women are either absent, or worse, in the room but ignored. Ticking the box to say women were included is not enough. This may require creating separate spaces for women to voice opinions, giving youth a specific leadership role so their voice is present, or building specific mechanisms for leadership to focus on the needs of traditionally marginalized groups.

CASE EXAMPLES: INCLUDE WOMEN AND YOUTH SPECIFICALLY

Safe Justice, Nepal: As part of its Community ScoreCard (CSC) process, Safe Justice held separate focus groups in the community, one with adult men only, one with adult women only, and one with youth. This revealed that women and men in the community had very different opinions; in fact, they were farther apart in their ratings of service providers than men were from the police. Minority women advocated for even more extreme scores. Men had a tendency to brush off the women's scores as coming from a lack of experience with the police. Female frontline staff pushed back on this idea, saying typically explained that they feel the police are less responsive toward them and less concerned about 'women's issues', like GBV. Without including women and their perspectives specifically—both in separate focus groups and in the staff—these important issues would likely have been overlooked.

Youth-led Community ScoreCard, Malawi: Following the Maternal Health Alliance Project in Malawi (2011-2015), which tested the Community ScoreCard model's impact on maternal health services health centers, young people saw the promise of the approach in improving services for adolescents, and as an opportunity to lift collective voice with power holders. Working adaptively, CARE made space to support these youth, who now lead CSC facilitation across 3 district health facilities, and support across an additional 5 facilities. To ensure that youth could participate, the project team held continual meetings with community leaders and members to review action items; monthly meeting with health officials and district leadership (CHAGs, and DHMT). They also held on-going conversations with women and youth leaders on how the process can be improved.

Take small bets: It is important to start small and rapidly test to see what works. With more experimental ideas, try possible solutions with a small group of people to test if there is traction. If so, scale up to a larger group of people. If it doesn't work, be willing to quickly discard the idea and move onto another option. Shorter and smaller trials make it easier to move on when something is not working.

CASE EXAMPLE: TAKE SMALL BETS

IMAGINE, Niger and Bangladesh: With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the IMAGINE project is working to support healthy timing of first birth in two child and early forced marriage hotspots, Bangladesh and Niger. IMAGINE designed potential solutions based on this formative research, built rough prototypes of these solutions, and rapidly tested and modified them in the field. For example, in Bangladesh research told us recently married couples felt that health services were inaccessible to them. The team prototyped a few solutions for in-home counselling, and found options that worked to roll out to broader scale.

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Implement ideas: Put the theory into practice. Pilot approaches and test ideas in the field to see what works. Give yourself clear timelines for when you will review.

CASE EXAMPLES: IMPLEMENT IDEAS

Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain, Bangladesh: Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation from 2007-2016, the Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain project worked with local, regional, and national private sector actors in Bangladesh to identify and address key failures in the Dairy Value Chain. Working together, farmers, CARE, and Arong Dairy—the second largest dairy company in Bangladesh, a subsidiary of BRAC—identified a lack of information and transparency around the quality of milk and how it related to milk prices as a key obstacle in the market. CARE and BRAC then worked with local milk collectors and wholesalers to pilot Digital Fat testing machines that test milk quality and publish the results—along with a price premium for higher quality milk. After the initial pilot was successful, the project rolled the machines out to 89 local collection centers, and BRAC expanded to the rest of their supply chain. As a result, the supply of quality milk more than doubled, and incomes went up more than 70%. This solution was only possible because several actors in the value chain were able to come together and agree on a solution.

Digital Sub Wallets, Uganda: With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CARE implemented the Digital Sub Wallets program from 2016-2019. Part of the intervention was a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) that gave a full implementation package to some communities, and not to others. In working with the communities that did not receive the full package, CARE staff realized that people had a high demand for the services they had not received. Taking that into account, the team was able to work with the donor to rollout services in all target communities, even the ones not initially slated for the intervention.

Phase 3: Monitor

Use your data: look at what the evidence is telling you about what is changing and how. Set a few key indicators that will allow you to regularly monitor what's happening (in the project and the broader context) and where we need to adapt. MEAL systems, feedback and complaints mechanisms, risk registers, and staff experience are all sources of information that can help inform conversations about what to do next.

CASE EXAMPLES: USE YOUR DATA

Somali Girls' Education Promotion- Transition Programme: During the first phase of the SOMGEP project (2013-2017) regular monitoring data showed that numeracy gains among target groups were slower than expected, particularly when compared to improvements in literacy. Triangulating this data on outcomes with qualitative data revealed gaps in teacher knowledge. This information allowed CARE to formulate and negotiate a plan with the Fund Manager and the donor to address accelerate progress on numeracy outcomes in the latter stages of the project by developing a 'numeracy boost'1 intervention targeted at teachers. The plan was effective and numeracy gains were accelerated in the last year of the project.

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CASE EXAMPLES: USE YOUR DATA

SWASH+, Kenya: With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation the School WASH project ran in Kenya from 2006-2019. Early on, the project decided to focus on targeted operational research rather than Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), and held regular stakeholder meetings with implementers, schools, and local governments to identify the most important operational questions in designing interventions that local governments could sustain over the long term. They focused on opportunistic studies that used rigorous methods to suggest new approaches. Some key questions they focused on were: what factors are required for sustaining interventions and impact, what approaches improve soap and handwashing behaviors at school, what staffing and materials are required for sustained maintenance, and how to improve menstrual hygiene management. Having both rigorous evidence and the right stakeholders in the room that could advance successful approaches resulted in the government of Kenya doubling subsidies for public school WASH. This change has impacted the approximately 22,000 public primary schools around the country and consequently millions of schoolchildren.

Consider multiple kinds of data: Community and participant experiences are critical to making good adaptive decisions. Partner reflection meetings, in-depth interviews, focus groups can often reveal data about change that more formal systems overlook.

CASE EXAMPLES: CONSIDER MULTIPLE KINDS OF DATA

SHOUHARDO III, Bangladesh: With funding from USAID's Office of Food for Peace, SHOUHARDO works to reduce poverty and vulnerability for 384,000 poor and extreme poor people in the Northern, including activities on food and nutrition security, women's empowerment, livelihoods, and resilience. The project uses a unique combination of formal MEAL systems, project team meetings, data coming in on the feedback hotline, staff surveys, and guided conversations with participants during field visits to identify areas of concern and change project implementation appropriately. For example, the project's couple's dialogues sessions—designed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment—used to take place at the union level with bigger number of participants. Conversations with project participants revealed that since the couples are not familiar with people in the broader group, they had reservations talking about intimate issues in these bigger groups, and the dialogues were not having the desired impact. After hearing this, the project team adjusted the approach to host dialogues at village level. This paved way for more open sharing among participants that informed the program what other issues they face as husbands and wives and how to address them.

Tipping Point, Nepal and Bangladesh: With funding from the Kendeda Foundation, CARE's Tipping Point project works with 12,946 adolescent boys and girls, parents, and community leaders to address the social norms leading to child marriage. The project combines a feminist evaluation approach in its MEAL system with community-based techniques like SenseMaker and Photovoice to understand the deeper context and issues that communities face. Once the first phase identified the most promising approaches and areas for further exploration, the project added a Randomized Controlled Trial component to create more robust evidence for influencing policy. While this will create more robust evidence, it also reduces the ability to be adaptive over time. To compensate for this, the project continues many of its community-based monitoring components to ensure that they are adapting the project as necessary, and maintaining open communication with the research partner to document adaptations over the life of the project.

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CASE EXAMPLES: CONSIDER MULTIPLE KINDS OF DATA

Ardhi Yetu, Tanzania: As part of a CARE Denmark pilot, outcome mapping was introduced into the Tanzania Ardhi Yetu project as a method for learning about how change was occurring against the project theory of change. Outcome mapping looks to monitor changes in behavior and seeks to supplement more traditional results-based management approaches in order to promote deeper learning about dynamic and unpredictable nature of behavioral change. Outcome Mapping provides practical concepts and tools that help program stakeholders to map and monitor the change pathway that they envision and to understand whether and how they need to adapt in the face of challenges. Within Ardhi Yetu, outcome mapping played a positive role in monitoring progress against the Theory of Change: allowing stakeholders to refine indicators, keep track of whether necessary behavioral changes were occurring, and understand the extent to which changes were meaningful.

Phase 4: Review

Find key moments: build in deliberate spaces to review and change your approach along the project cycle. Maybe you review small changes during your monthly team meetings, have a quarterly learning session including external partners, and an annual review of your theory of change/implementation activities that is offsite and includes many stakeholders. Bringing in partners and other external stakeholders offers an opportunity to take a wider, reflective look at the whole context and our roles in it.

CASE EXAMPLES: FIND KEY MOMENTS

IMAGINE, Niger and Bangladesh: The IMAGINE project includes bi-annual reflection meetings with project staff, project participants, and other stakeholders such as government extension workers and health care workers as part of their implementation learning cycle to ensure that there is adequate space for reflection, learning, and adaptation for all staff. During these meetings the team facilitates a structured review process that starts by revisiting a timeline of achievements, external events, roadblocks, and decisions over the last 6 months; reflects on and analyzes successes and persistent challenges; plans for any changes in strategy to capitalize or address these; and documents and justifies any changes in the theory of change.

Somali Girls' Education Promotion- Transition Programme: DFID introduced Review and Adaptation Meetings (RAMs) across the Girls' Education Challenge Programmes. RAMs perform a role somewhat similar to strategy testing, occurring on a biannual basis and providing an opportunity for project stakeholders to consider what adaptations needs to occur: effectively closing the learning loop. The introduction of RAMs also codifies the need to ensure an evidence driven approach to adaptation. They build in critical junctures for appraisal of evidence and ensure that stakeholders interpret results collaboratively: increasing the explanatory power of the data gathered.

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Make sure leaders are involved: this system depends on having managers and project leads and leaders of partner organizations bought into the process, and actively encouraging learning and adaptation. Leaders are key in socializing the adaptive management approach—which is often new—and helping staff be accountable to changes.

CASE EXAMPLES: MAKE SURE LEADERS ARE INVOLVED

Made by Women, Asia: CARE's regional Made By Women strategy, which links innovative programming on Dignified Work across several countries in Asia Pacific, has influenced policy decisions that could benefit 3.6 million women across the region with new legal protections, and directly serves more than 88,000 women in the projects where we work. A key component to this success has been leadership buy-in across the different countries, with specific adaptations planned as part of annual reflection meetings with project and country leaders. It also works with leaders in factories and at large companies to ensure that they are supporting decisions that affect their broader supply chain and creating a safer and more supportive environment for women workers.

Propose (multiple) solutions: once you've spent some time understanding the challenges and context, start thinking about what's next. What can you change or implement to address the challenge? Solutions should come not just from leaders, but also from participants and project staff. Giving a choice among several possible solutions can be more clarifying than only discussing one.

CASE EXAMPLES: PROPOSE (MULTIPLE) SOLUTIONS

DryDev, Niger: With funding from the World Agroforestry Center and the government of the Netherlands, CARE implemented the Drylands Development (DryDev) project from 2014-2019. Faced with the recurring challenge of how to plant trees so that they would survive beyond the project, the project team went to women's groups in the communities to ask them how they would solve the issue. Women proposed multiple options—from adopting a traditional community gathering where people work to create a public good in exchange for a meal to including key community members in the decision of what trees to plant where. The project adopted both of these solutions, and as a result, was able to overshoot government targets for re-planting trees for 20% of the traditional cost of a development project.

Phase 5: Learn

Decide on actions: Pick which solutions you're going to implement in the next cycle. All questions and conversations should be driving toward action—practical changes in what we are doing and how the project works.

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Communicate proactively: when you are making a change to activities, make sure everyone—from communities to field staff to the donor—understands what's changing and why. Document changes and the reasons for them clearly so others can follow what has happened.

Decentralize decisions: as much as possible, make it possible for communities, field agents, and local actors to make adaptive management decisions. Reduce the administrative burdens of getting multiple sign-offs on changes for relatively small adjustments.

What can we do next?

Teams should look at their systems to find ways they can apply these adaptive management tips. Even small steps applied regularly can lead to significant improvements and create more impact for the people we serve.

Annex 1: Cited Projects

Project	Reach	Donor	Dates
Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia	42,000* people	DFID	2018-2022
Agriculture Extension Support Project	110,800 people	USAID Feed the Future	2012-2018
Ardhi Yetu, Tanzania	90,724 people	DANIDA	2014-2021
Digital Sub-Wallets for Increased Financial Empowerment of Women, Ugnada	2,166 people	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	2016-2020
Drylands Development (DryDev), Niger	51,336 people	World Agroforestry Centere	2014-2019
Every Voice Counts, Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan	106,699 people	Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2016-2020
Hamzari, Niger	142,000 people	USAID Food for Peace	2018-2023
Harande, Mali	52,000 people	USAID Food For Peace	2015-2020
IMAGINE, Bangladesh and Niger	4,000 people	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	2016-2020
Indashyikirwa, Rwanda	78,576 people	DFID	2014-2018
Kore Lavi, Haiti	108,000 people	USAID Food for Peace	2014-2019
Rawasi, West Bank and Gaza	12,000 people	Austrian Development Corporation	2013-2016
Safe Justice, Nepal	25,323 people	DFID	2016-2019
SHOUHARDO III, Bangladesh	382,000 people	USAID Food for Peace	2015-2022
Somali Girls' Education Promotion Programme, Somalia	28,573 people	DFID	2013-2017
Somali Girls' Education Promotion- Transition Programme, Somalia	32,360* people	DFID	2017-2021
Strengthening the Dairy Value Chain, Bangladesh	30,000 people	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	2007-2016
SWASH+, Kenya	128,909 people	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	2006-2019
Tipping Point, Bangladesh & Nepal	12,946 people	Kendeda Foundation	2014-2020

*Target number of beneficiaries