Linking constituent engagement and adaptive management

Lessons from practitioners

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Key messages

- Constituent engagement and adaptive management are both important tools for implementing responsive and effective development programmes. Together, they can be a powerful combination: input from constituent engagement can be a key source of information and evidence that meaningfully informs programme design and adaptation, and closing the feedback loop in this way increases the quality of future engagement.

- Both adaptive management and community engagement principles recognise that, for a programme to be effective, it must be responsive to the people meant to ultimately benefit from it. Beyond providing a key source of information for potential programme adaptations, constituent engagement efforts also help build trust with stakeholders, align expectations and promote accountability.

- This paper explores five key elements for ensuring that constituent engagement and adaptive management are effectively linked within a programme: strong internal systems and external channels; skilled staff that value engagement and adaptation; decision-maker champions; clear points for reflection and action; and a meaningful role for constituents.

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Acronyms

CBO	community-based organisation
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSSF	Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEL	monitoring, evaluation, and learning
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1   Introduction

Adaptive management and constituent engagement are two essential tools for effective and responsive development programmes (see Boxes 1 and 2). Evidence-based adaptive management has emerged as a way to enable programmes to test, learn and adapt when it is not clear how to reach programme goals and respond to ever-changing and complex contexts, recognising that programmes can only be effective when they are set up to adapt to such changes and new information (USAID Learning Lab, 2018). Constituent engagement is central to being responsive to the problem at hand as information from programme constituents

can and should inform programme design and adaptation. By collecting, analysing and using feedback directly from constituents, a programme 'will have a greater impact, greater sustainability and greater ownership from those it is seeking to support' (UK Aid Direct, 2019: 1).

Over the past few years, development partners have made great strides in establishing good practices and internal systems to support adaptive management and constituent engagement. For example, the UK Department for International Development (DFID)[1] developed guidance on how to embed an adaptive approach across the whole programme cycle, from concept notes, business cases and terms of reference through to annual reviews and continual monitoring, evaluation and learning. The agency recently released its internal 'Smart guide on beneficiary engagement', which highlights the strong mandate for constituent engagement across the agency (DFID, 2019). Within the larger development actors' network, staff have developed strong adaptive management and constituent engagement practices. Yet the link between adaptive management and constituent engagement could be made stronger and more explicit: specifically, on the ways in which programmes can *respond* to constituent feedback through programme actions.

Constituent engagement and adaptive management together can be a powerful combination; high-quality constituent engagement can reinforce effective adaptive management, and vice versa. Constituent engagement can be a key source of information and evidence that meaningfully informs programme design and adaptation, and constituent feedback can also be used to

Box 1   What is adaptive management?

While programmes that employ adaptive management have clear goals in terms of contributing to larger development outcomes, how to achieve these goals is not known in advance. Adaptive management therefore builds in deliberate processes of testing, learning and experimentation. Interventions are designed with humility, testing assumptions embedded in theories of change (Wild et al., 2017). Teams listen to key stakeholders and monitor information and changes in context in order to learn and adapt, rather than simply to report (Pett, 2020), and there are regular junctures to pause and reflect. If these interventions are designed collaboratively, with local input and participation, feedback and adaptation can be part of the process from the outset, ensuring that the intervention is meaningfully contributing to outcomes.

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1   Now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

demonstrate the value for money of adaptive programmes (Laws, 2020). Effective adaptive management helps ensure that programmes act on constituent input, which has been shown to be an essential practice for building trust with constituents and ensuring that engagement leads to better outcomes (Sarkisova, 2016). As highlighted in the adaptive management literature, problems that are locally debated, defined and refined are likely to identify solutions that are more meaningful and sustainable (Andrews et al., 2017). Constituent engagement is also important on its own merits – reflecting a principle that stakeholders should have a say over what assistance they receive, and how they receive it.

> In terms of sustainability, if there isn't [constituent] voice in design, or adaptation to reflect priorities from the community, then when the project ends, it really ends. If the project is to make a sustained difference, it has to be based on community preferences and opinions (Clara Hagens, Catholic Relief Services).

Yet the literature on how to link constituent engagement efforts and adaptive management effectively is sparse. For example, although many of the case studies in DFID's 'Smart guide on beneficiary engagement' note the importance of adapting based on constituent engagement, the source material does not provide many details on *how* that was done. An important question remains for programme teams: how best to ensure that constituent engagement and adaptive management reinforce and strengthen each other in practice.

1.1   Guide to this paper

By highlighting stories from leading practitioners and their organisations, this paper explores how programmes ensure that constituent engagement informs meaningful adaptation. The paper draws on survey responses from 23 programme staff representing 17 organisations and in-depth

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Box 2   What is constituent engagement?

Constituent engagement is the two-way process of involving constituents in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. A programme may have multiple types of constituents. Direct constituents are people who are immediately involved in programme activities. Ultimate constituents are the people whose lives a programme intends to improve. Other terms for constituents may include clients, end users, affected persons, stakeholders or beneficiaries. As the term 'beneficiary' is highly contested, and because few of the organisations interviewed for this report use it, we have chosen not to use it here.

All of the strategies presented in this paper are relevant to ensuring meaningful adaptation based on constituent engagement regardless of whether the constituent is a direct or ultimate constituent. The data informing this paper is drawn from organisations with a range of constituents – from those that directly deliver services to affected populations after a shock or conflict (such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Chemonics and the British Red Cross), to those that work with government ministries and agencies to support policy-making and systems change (such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Root Change).

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interviews with 10 programme or monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) staff from different development actors/agencies.[2] Although the survey respondents and interviewees work across a range of countries, sectors and contexts, they all work on programmes that successfully ensure constituent engagement and adaptive management reinforce and strengthen each other.

Through the LearnAdapt programme, which has taken stock of constituent engagement and adaptive management efforts at the FCDO to

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2   For a full list of organisations surveyed and interviewed, see Annex 1; for details of the survey questions, see Annex 2.

date, we found that programmes that successfully ensure constituent engagement leads to meaningful adaptation tend to do the following:

1. Build enough flexibility into programme design to be able to respond to constituent engagement.
2. Engage constituents in learning and improvement throughout the programme cycle.

In this paper, we explore *how* the programme teams we spoke to build flexibility into programmes, triangulate information gathered through constituent engagement with other sources of evidence (see Box 3), set up internal systems for reflection and learning from feedback and create meaningful roles for programme constituents. Specifically, we share how the programme teams put five key elements in place so that constituent engagement fed into decision-making to improve programme outcomes. These five elements were emphasised by survey respondents and interviewees as essential to ensuring that constituent engagement and adaptive management are effectively linked within a programme:

1. Strong internal systems and external channels: constituent input and feedback formed a central part of the MEL framework. Robust internal systems ensure that this information is fed into ongoing programme learning, and external channels ensure that constituent insights and suggested adaptations are shared with other actors and stakeholders.
2. Skilled staff that value engagement and adaptation: the programme leadership built a team with skills relevant to adaptation and learning, and invested in their ability to engage constituents and adapt based on what they heard through that engagement.
3. Decision-maker champions: the programme cultivated decision-makers as champions of adapting based on constituent engagement.
4. Clear points for reflection and action: the programme pre-identified decision points

at which constituent feedback would be reflected on, and decisions made.
5. Meaningful role for constituents: the intention to engage constituents and act on feedback was articulated early on to constituents and integrated throughout the programme cycle. A meaningful and active role was created for them in the programme – working with them to continuously design and carry out necessary adaptations.

These five elements are generally within the control of the programme team, and the stories in this paper highlight what different programme teams or individuals did to ensure that these elements are in place. The survey and interviews on which this paper are based also identified some necessary conditions that are often *outside* the control of programme teams, but which also need to be in place to ensure that constituent engagement leads to meaningful action, for example the donor being open to adaptation. This paper also outlines those conditions and highlights ways that programme teams are working to influence them.

> The system that you're working within is constantly changing, always, wherever you are, if you're a development practitioner. If your goal is to work yourself out of a job, there's no way you can do that without a constant feedback loop with the system (Nicola Glendining, UNDP).

The stories in this paper do not represent an exhaustive list of what organisations are doing, nor are the strategies described here intended as guidance. Rather, this collection of stories in the paper illustrates practical ways in which specific programme teams are ensuring that constituent engagement and adaptive management activities are meaningfully linked and mutually reinforcing. We hope that the individual case studies and common themes highlighted here will provide a useful point of reflection – for both donors and implementers – and facilitate future conversations in this area.

Box 3   What do we mean by triangulating information?

A question that often comes up with regard to using constituent feedback is when to know what feedback to act on. Although many of the organisations we interviewed detailed processes by which *all* feedback is recorded, there may be a wish to first triangulate information before bringing it forward to programme decision-makers. In addition, communities and constituents will not all speak with one voice, so how do programmes confronted with conflicting narratives and stories make use of this information in their potential adaptations?

- **Cycles of deliberation:** when Accountability Lab Nepal heard community members discussing rumours after the earthquake in 2015, they used a deliberative process, going back to the community with further information and triangulating facts together. They continued to do this throughout the programme cycle, sharing information about what was written in policy documents or what the person in authority was saying, in order to ensure a two-way dialogue as part of their constituent engagement.
- **Political economy analysis:** Kenneth Ene from Oxford Policy Management (OPM) told us that, when stakeholders provide information, the FOSTER II team do a mini-political economy analysis where they try to determine whether it resonates with the true state of things, applying their understanding of the system and checking other sources to validate information.
- **Feeding information back into the community:** in their Ebola health messaging programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Red Cross collected unstructured feedback directly from the community, allowing the health team to identify the main rumours around Ebola, and perceptions of health messaging. Information was then fed back into the community via updated health messaging – the ongoing constituent engagement showcased the impact of the programme's activities over time via the frequency of certain rumours.
- **Credibility through scale:** so that decision-makers take information from constituent engagement more seriously, actors such as the Red Cross, CRS and Search for Common Ground (Search) delay making a judgement on programme changes until they have collected enough feedback to give an impression of the whole picture, even with its contradictions. Chemonics also gathers constituent feedback at scale; key findings are then shared within the project and with constituents.

2 What difference does linking constituent engagement and adaptive management make?

Adaptive management and constituent engagement are powerful processes contributing to more effective, responsive and sustainable programmes. Adaptive management enables a programme to systematically reflect on a complex and changing environment, and then tweak activities or even shift entire theories of change – if such an adaptation is found to be necessary to improve programme outcomes and impact.[3] This is not about change and adaptation just for the sake of it; rather, high-quality flexible and/or adaptive programmes rely on local information, ideally directly from constituents, to make decisions around potential changes in direction or experimentation needed to 'get it right'.

> International development challenges are so complex, honestly speaking no one can pretend they understand the problem let alone the solution. You have to have listening and adaptive management, otherwise it's irrelevant, it's unsustainable (Moortaza Jiwanji, UNDP).

This means that, when adaptive management and constituent engagement are effectively and meaningfully linked, they can contribute to better outcomes than either can on their own. Information gained through engagement efforts can lead to a recognition that the programme team could be doing something better, or may need to change its ways of working to address concerns, or even potentially avoid harm (BOND, 2017). In that sense, constituent engagement is at the core of the evidence meaningfully informing programme decision-making.

The interviews on which this paper is based highlight that linking constituent engagement and adaptive management can help manage and align expectations, increase accountability, establish trust and set up necessary incentives and organisational cultures. This creates a virtuous cycle that leads to more effective and responsive programming and sustainable outcomes.

2.1 Expectations

The way in which programme teams engage constituents strongly affects the expectations those constituents have for the programme's future actions. Expectation misalignment and perceptions of 'broken promises' are a common source of grievance and dissatisfaction with development/humanitarian programmes

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3 Essentially, adaptation is responding to an issue or challenge/barrier to the intended outcome of the programme. For more on knowing when to adapt, see https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/030619_knowing_when_to_adapt_u_final.pdf.

(Amanela et al., 2020). Linking high-quality engagement of communities and constituents with adaptive management can help manage expectations, by pairing clarity about what is possible with the ability to act on feedback. For Search, this meant 'setting the story straight' about what could and could not be delivered through a particular programme. In Malawi, Root Change substantially changed a programme in response to feedback early on – in effect redesigning it – thereby cementing the expectation of their practice of engagement and adaptation for the remainder of the programme.

2.2 Accountability and power

Engaging with constituents and building this engagement into decision-making demonstrates that the programme is accountable to constituents, as well as donors and other stakeholders. This can make programmes more effective: the knowledge that constituents bring – from multiple angles – underpins the learning process, as only they have insight into what is needed (Burns and Worsley, 2015). Prioritising local knowledge and feedback and then jointly deliberating on solutions (i.e. a community approach versus an expert-driven or technical approach) means a shift of power towards constituents, allowing them to say when something needs to change. Embedding constituent engagement in programme decision-making requires us to ask who has influence over how the programme is conducted, and who has the power to act on feedback.

> We make a lot of assumptions around beneficiary engagement, around what we think communities will think/perceive. But we cannot know without asking! We cannot make assumptions about what is good for beneficiaries and what is not good. Engaging them is the only way to address the issues they are facing (Gregory Makabila, CRS).

Questions around accountability and power also matter internally. For CRS, it was important that the responsibility for acting upon constituent feedback did not simply sit with the MEL team, but rather that all staff – especially those closest to actual programme implementation – could make suggestions and take decisions based on what they heard. Decision-making power is thus decentralised. Another point worth noting when it comes to accountability and power is who is speaking within constituent groups. Certain feedback mechanisms, if not designed with sensitivity to local dynamics, can be prone to elite capture and end up amplifying the voices of those individuals and groups who are already connected and influential, and fail to capture opinions, perceptions and feedback from the under-represented and marginalised. Therefore, accountability needs to be inclusive of the make-up of the wider community; triangulation of feedback can play a crucial role in this.

2.3 Trust and relationships

Trust between the organisation implementing a programme and constituents is a cornerstone of development and humanitarian principles (Cechvala et al., 2020). Listening to communities by adapting based on constituent feedback can help build better trust with constituents and create a virtuous cycle. Trust is necessary at multiple levels, including between donors and implementers, so that they have the space to manage adaptively (Goeldner Byrne et al., 2016). Most programme teams interviewed for this paper found that acting in response to constituent feedback and input with programme actions built trust with constituents over time, and helped make the case for working adaptively with their donors. For example, the Red Cross team responding to Ebola in the DRC found that adapting based on feedback collected by community volunteers built trust with those communities, improving outcomes.[4] Several programme teams interviewed for this paper noted that increased trust with

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4 As an example, in October 2018 one of the main feedback trends the Red Cross team was receiving was around problems with safe and dignified burials. As the response team made changes to the way burials were conducted – based directly on feedback from community members – the rate of negative feedback on this issue fell, and by March 2019 it did not feature at all.

constituents also meant they could connect better with the most vulnerable people the programme aimed to serve. This contributed to more successful safeguarding measures (in particular, increased reporting of issues), which helped ensure positive programme outcomes for the most vulnerable constituents. In fact, both CRS and Chemonics identified more effective safeguarding as one of the outcomes of and justifications for an increased focus on constituent engagement. Safeguarding is a key responsibility of all programme teams, but in order to be able to know when to act on a threat or safeguarding risk, trusting relationships with the community need to be in place.

> Trust builds by asking people what is of value, then adapting programming, letting them see changes, and then asking again (Elizabeth Martin, Chemonics).

2.4   Culture and incentives

In an uncertain and changing context, where a process of listening, learning and adapting is needed in order to reach programme goals, it is important to create an organisational culture – a set of shared attitudes, values, expectations and practices – where this is valued and encouraged. A culture of psychological safety, where colleagues can express themselves without fear of being penalised, and responsiveness, where reflection leads to action, creates the conditions for more effective adaptation and therefore programme outcomes (ODI, 2018). Conversely, hierarchical or controlling cultures may discourage reflection and adaptation as people do not want to be perceived as 'having done something wrong', and in any case do not have the discretion to take action.

> If donors want the investment of taxpayer funds to have the maximum impact and legacy, meaningful constituent engagement and adaptation is critical. But you cannot just build this out of a kit in 48 hours in the inception period. Doing it just to check the box will backfire. You've got to build in the space for engagement (Elizabeth Martin, Chemonics).

By more explicitly linking programme decision-making and constituent engagement, programmes can align incentives, creating a positive feedback loop inside the team as well as for the programme. Where constituent engagement leads to adaptation, and organisational cultures prioritise reflection and learning, programme staff can have frank conversations when something might need to change. Some partners, such as Search, spoke about trying to change culture so that staff are accountable for reflection and learning, as opposed to how much money is coming in or donor implementation scores. Getting these incentives 'right' can help improve the targeting and design of services and programmes, aligning them more with the lived realities of constituents. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) felt that continuous consultation and collaboration with clients throughout the project cycle, and regular adaptations based on that feedback, strengthened the quality, relevance and appropriateness of aid and services – including modes of delivery, accessibility of services and adaptation to context. Programme adaptations based on ongoing feedback from constituents then increased staff incentives to continue to implement feedback mechanisms and provide timely responses and actions.

3 Five elements for ensuring constituent engagement and adaptive management reinforce each other

To ensure that constituent engagement and adaptive management reinforce each other, our research suggests that five key elements need to be present. In this section, we look at each element in turn, highlighting stories that illustrate how programme teams put these elements in place.

1. **Strong internal systems and external channels**: constituent input and feedback formed a central part of the MEL framework. Robust internal systems ensure that this information is fed into ongoing programme learning, and external channels ensure that constituent insights and suggested adaptations are shared with other actors and stakeholders.
2. **Skilled staff that value engagement and adaptation**: the programme leadership built a team with skills relevant to adaptation and learning, and invested in their ability to engage constituents and adapt based on what they heard through that engagement.
3. **Decision-maker champions:** the programme cultivated decision-makers as champions of adapting based on constituent engagement.
4. **Clear points for reflection and action:** the programme pre-identified decision points at which constituent feedback would be reflected on, and decisions made.

5. **Meaningful role for constituents:** the intention to engage constituents and act upon feedback was articulated early on to constituents and integrated throughout the programme cycle. A meaningful and active role is created for them in the programme – working with them to continuously design and carry out necessary adaptations.

3.1 Strong internal systems and external channels

To ensure that data collected through constituent engagement can inform adaptations, programmes need to set up robust pathways that allow information from constituent engagement (see Box 4) to feed into learning, decisions and actions. This entails strong systems to ensure that teams regularly reflect on constituent feedback, combine it with data from other sources and use it to inform decision-making. Many programme leaders viewed information from constituent engagement activities as a key source of MEL data. However, they also recognised that responsibility and accountability for incorporating feedback into programme decision-making should sit with all staff, rather than being delegated to MEL staff only. These processes rely

on a culture of valuing constituent engagement, and a safe environment to discuss feedback and potential programme changes.

> Structures, cultures, and clear pathways! (Valentina Shafina, IRC).

Programmes that develop channels to share constituent feedback with other actors and stakeholders can increase the scope of adaptations and the relevance of programming to the local community and context. A commitment to raising issues with actors who have the power to make changes – or directly connecting constituents with those actors – can help a programme progress towards its intended outcomes, and allows actors to engage in forms of positive advocacy for change with other stakeholders. For example, when a concern could not be addressed in-house by CRS, strong referral pathways meant that the case could be shared confidentially with other implementing partners. This also led to better shared understanding of the needs of a particular community, or the specificities of a particular context.

Internal systems and external channels can work in tandem to triage and respond to constituent engagement. As part of their regional practice in the Middle East and North Africa, the IRC uses a 'ticketing' system for ideas, insights and issues arising during community engagement. Feedback via this 'ticket' is then automatically referred to a sector advisor or programme manager, and regular meetings are held to discuss the feedback. Because all feedback from communities and constituents is collected and recorded by IRC, if that particular team is unable to act on a particular request, with the constituent's permission the issue is referred to another organisation operating in the same location.

3.1.1 The case of Catholic Relief Services

CRS created a safe environment for learning, both internally within the programme team and with local partners and constituents, in order to enable constituent engagement activities to feed into adaptations. It was important that staff did not feel that they might be 'punished' for reporting what constituents shared during engagement activities, even if it was negative feedback or in conflict with other perspectives on the programme. The programme team at CRS protected confidentiality when reporting on feedback (e.g. at reflection sessions and in referring to senior leaders).

In order to incentivise staff to report, learn from and adapt based on constituent feedback, the Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) programme in CRS's country office in Ethiopia went beyond the organisation's minimum requirement of quarterly reflection

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Box 4   Which constituents should programmes engage to maximise programme responsiveness and adaptation?

Including a wide variety of voices in constituent engagement is important to better understand how the programme should adapt. But this is not always straightforward due to issues of access, cultural norms or safeguarding concerns. Time and resources should be dedicated to engaging with those closest to the programme. For example, in its education programming in Syria, Chemonics seeks constituent feedback not only from school officials, communities and families, but also from those most directly impacted: the students. Student feedback is gathered monthly and used to inform education interventions and prioritise the topics covered in psycho-social support sessions. For example, after a large movement of internally displaced people, student feedback indicated the urgent need to address bullying in schools. The project responded with a coordinated campaign focused on countering bullying and encouraging acceptance of new students, as well as training for school staff. The team is also careful to provide regular updates to children on the feedback received using age-appropriate approaches, and how the project has acted on that feedback so that the children can see that they are influencing what happens.

sessions and set up additional internal systems and structures:

- Accountability Feedback Management Committees were set up to report on constituent feedback and input at two levels: project level (where the group included project managers, technical leads, MEL staff and the deputy chief of party) and intervention level (where the group included community volunteers, youth officers, women's affairs officers and specific accountability and monitoring staff). The function of these committees is to monitor and act upon information from constituents. The committees meet regularly to discuss feedback and identify solutions; in cases where there is not a straightforward adaptation, there are referral pathways from one level of committee to the other.
- Through this system, the country office implemented a policy of tracking and reporting on all adaptations. This encouraged individuals to report on even the smallest of adaptations based on constituent engagement as they happened, for example changes in the timing of food distributions or separating out discussion groups by gender and age. Where an adaptation based on constituent feedback or input affected the theory of change, a pilot intervention might first be considered. Where an adaptation could not be made, the committees would often continue to receive

the same feedback, at which point it would be referred externally to another organisation or government body with the power to make the necessary change. As much as possible, teams sought to close the loop with constituents through discussion and focus groups, letting them know what adaptations the programme team had made based on constituent feedback or input.

- Reporting templates asked programme teams to report on adaptations based on constituent engagement. The templates asked staff to share what had been adapted, and the rationale linking the adaptation to programme effectiveness or quality.

By prompting staff to reflect on the rationale for adaptations, their links to constituent feedback or input and their benefits, CRS-Ethiopia has developed a strong culture of adaptive management and responsiveness to constituents. As a result, programmes were more felt to be more relevant to the dynamic needs and view of communities, and the two-way communication improved trust and access.

Constituent feedback and input collected by a specific programme may contain valuable information and ideas for other actors (see Box 5). While keeping confidentiality in mind, lessons from constituent engagement can often be usefully shared with external partners, who may also adapt their own decision-making on the basis of this information.

Box 5   Different layers of feedback

In Root Change's Malawi Social Labs programme, not only was feedback shared with multiple actors beyond the programme, but this was also a core part of the intervention in itself. The programme convened government officials, NGOs, civil society actors and constituents to share feedback. For many stakeholders, the gathering was their first chance to do this. This was particularly important during the design phase of the programme, as it helped to create a shared understanding of the problems facing the local development ecosystem, including poor relationships and distrust among community-based organisations, government, traditional authorities and citizens. The programme helped ensure that constituent feedback led to adaptation by supporting teams to undertake two-month 'micro-actions' – short-term experiments designed to test solutions and strengthen relationships within the development ecosystem.

3.2 Skilled staff that value engagement and adaptation

Many of the programme leaders we spoke to highlighted the importance of other team members in linking constituent engagement with programme adaptation. Two aspects came out particularly strongly: first, having a team comprising people skilled at engagement, and second, having people who were inclined towards flexible and iterative strategies, and were comfortable working adaptively.

> I also doubted how this actually works, because it seems to take a lot of time. But now I can see that it's much better to address the actual problems and offer realistic solutions (Summer Lee, UNDP).

The programme teams we spoke to proactively equipped and encouraged staff through recruitment, training and performance management. Root Change sees listening to constituents as a learned skill, which is why it trains partner staff in Constituent Voice, a specific constituent engagement methodology that focuses on listening and facilitating dialogue.[5] IRC developed a staff management guide to building strong teams with the skills and values to systematically, deliberately and regularly listen to and collect the diverse perspectives of their clients – and then analyse and use that feedback to inform programmes. Country programmes aim to have dedicated staff who are responsible for high-quality constituent engagement, and offer advice to programmes on adaptations. They work with local staff, community outreach workers and existing community structures to develop the networks to engage constituents, build trust and strengthen ownership of engagement mechanisms. Training and rewarding staff in a way that reinforces those values is also important. Internal organisation-specific studies,

such as one conducted at IRC, have shown that dedicating human and financial resources to collecting, analysing and responding to client feedback and adapting activities according to clients' priorities was one of the enabling factors in quality community engagement. CRS similarly identified positive staff attitudes towards engagement and adaptation as important. 'Interest in learning', 'open-mindedness' and 'curiosity' are key criteria when recruiting senior programme staff in order to help ensure that programme teams are composed of people that value listening and adaptation.

3.2.1 The case of UNDP-Fiji

For UNDP-Fiji's regional resilience programme, team composition was key.[6] The programme required individuals who were agile and comfortable taking risks, as well as willing to engage deeply with programme constituents. These people did not need to be experts in a particular field but did need to value learning and flexibility. Working within UNDP contracting guidelines, the team preferred to recruit staff on short consultant contracts initially, to see if they would fit the programme team's culture. All staff were onboarded at length, with a focus on understanding the programme's theory of change and end goals rather than outputs and activities. Onboarding emphasised the high degree of flexibility built into the programme plans and encouraged staff to adapt and learn from constituents in order to meet the programme's end goals. Programme team staff and leadership consistently reinforced the importance of adaptation and providing and accepting feedback, and rewarded staff where they made efforts to reach end goals, even if these efforts were unsuccessful.

3.3 Decision-maker champions

Senior management has a critical role to play in developing an institutional culture where constituent engagement is valued and acted on. When programme staff and partners see

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5   See https://feedbackcommons.org/constituent_voice.

6   See www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/blog/2018/the-innovation-journey-of-the-pacific-risk-resilience-programme.html.

decision-makers role- modelling the importance of engagement and adaptation, it makes them more likely to act based on constituent engagement. Both CRS and the Red Cross emphasise that senior decision-makers' behaviour and attitudes trickles down to programme staff. When decision-makers support adaptive programming, this helps to reassure programme staff and partners that making changes based on feedback is not a sign that someone has done something 'wrong'.

3.3.1   The case of the International Rescue Committee

IRC's approach to adaptation based on constituent engagement is captured in their Client Responsiveness Framework, introduced to ensure organisation-wide commitment to engagement, feedback and adaptation.[7] The Framework includes tips on how to incentivise programme teams to take proactive actions to include client views in programme decision-making and act on feedback.[8] In developing this framework, and looking specifically at organisation-level enabling factors, IRC identified the commitment of senior management to adaptation based on constituent engagement as a key condition. When senior managers backed programme staff up on the importance of adaptations in response to constituent feedback, other team members were more likely to help with adaptations, and barriers and bottlenecks became less common. Senior champions of this feedback-based adaptation set the narrative that constituent-facing staff know the community context best, and so their suggested adaptations need to be taken seriously. This championing of feedback-led adaptation by senior decision-makers emboldened teams to take feedback data and client perspectives more seriously, and also sent a signal to programme teams that client engagement should be properly resourced and built into operations.

3.4   Clear points for reflection and action

Programme teams that identify decision points at which constituent feedback and input will be reflected on and decisions made are more likely to effectively link adaptive management and constituent engagement. The DFID 'Smart guide on beneficiary engagement' highlights the importance of asking 'when, according to the delivery plan, will decisions be made about the programme? Who will make them? When and in what format does [constituent] input or feedback need to be delivered to those decision-makers in order to feed into their decision-making?' (DFID, 2019). For the Malawi Social Action Labs programme, for example, Root Change carried out a listening tour at the beginning of the programme and planned in advance to reflect on what they heard and decide how to adapt the programme. Having the decision point planned in advance helped the team change the programme design based on feedback during the listening tour.

> It's important to secure commitment from leadership and decision-makers to build internal organisational structures, and human and financial resources to design and adapt our activities according to client priorities (Valentina Shafina, IRC).

3.4.1   The case of Catholic Relief Services

CRS is promoting a move across the organisation to shift the responsibility for reflecting on and adapting based on constituent feedback from the MEL team to programme management teams. Agreeing ahead of time on quarterly (or more frequent) reflection sessions has helped with this transition. As well as conducting constituent engagement activities, CRS-Ethiopia's Accountability Feedback Management Committees report regularly on constituent feedback to programme teams. All programme teams know in advance when they will hear from the committees.

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7   See www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/4402/irc-clientresponsiveprogrammingframework-191211.pdf.

8   IRC aspires to best practice as defined by the sector in ensuring that feedback channels are accessible to women and men, girls and boys of all ages, people with or without disabilities, as well as other marginalised groups in each particular context.

This means that teams are ready to respond to constituent feedback as they have already set up space for tweaks or small changes, and pathways to consider potentially larger changes if needed. Because programme teams know in advance when constituent feedback will be coming, they can seek approvals for adaptations ahead of time and manage the expectations of other stakeholders. This regular schedule for reflection maximises the chances that programmes will be adapted (as necessary) based on constituent feedback.
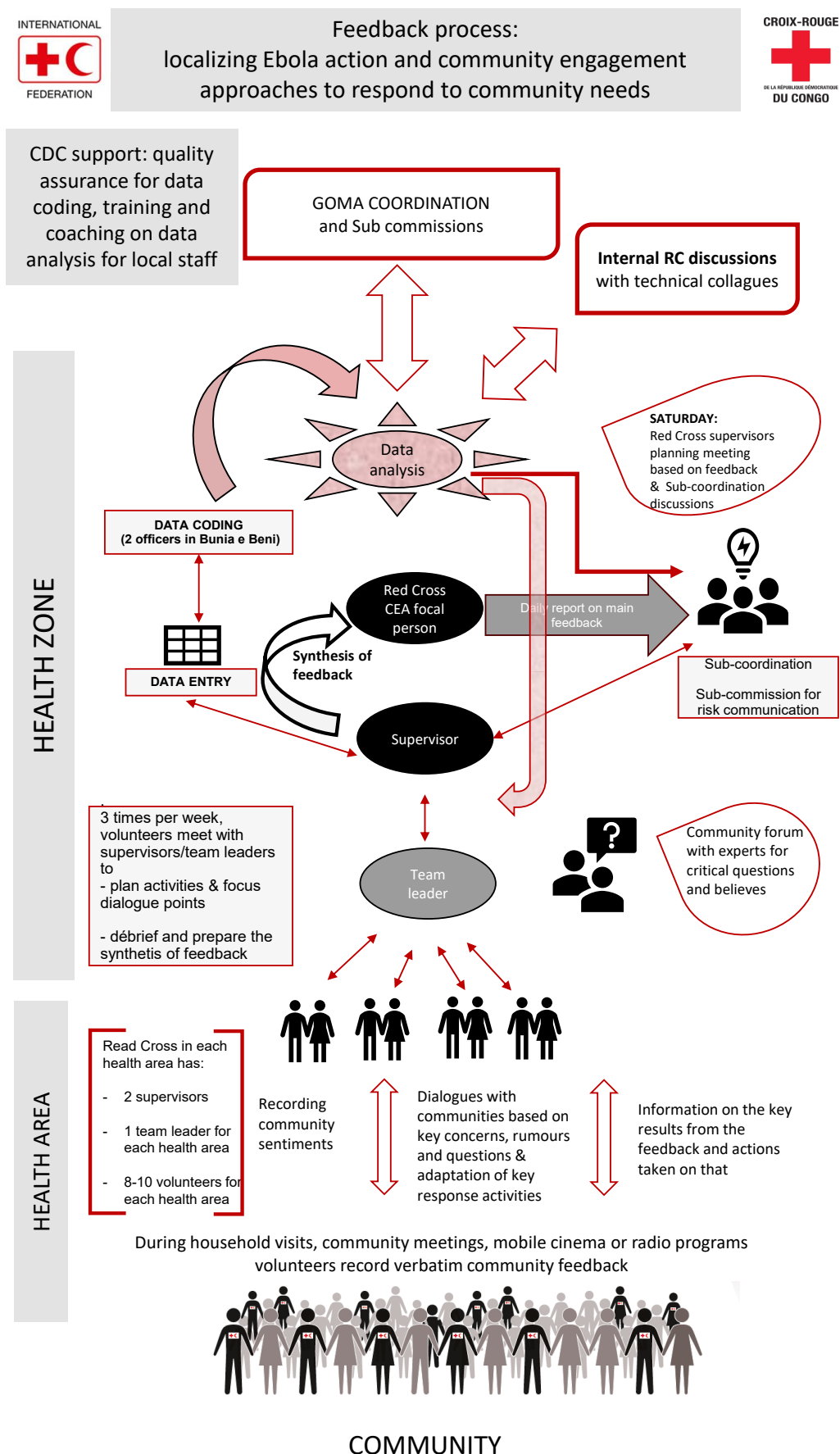
3.5 Meaningful role for constituents

As the DFID 'Smart guide on beneficiary engagement' puts it, programmes that engage constituents as more than just data sources are more likely to actually use feedback in programming (DFID, 2019). Such programmes engage constituents throughout the programme cycle and offer them meaningful roles, including in the design and implementation of activities (see Boxes 6 and 7). They avoid one-way extractive processes and create pathways of engagement that are empowering. Continuous, dynamic engagement takes time, but can build trust between constituents and programmes. Where possible, programme teams work with constituents to design activities and adaptations, evaluate programme outcomes regularly and clearly articulate opportunities to engage at the beginning of the programme. For example, Search for Common Ground works directly with communities to design programme activities, and incorporates their feedback throughout programme implementation. This participatory model places a strong emphasis on community ownership, and makes it more likely that teams will act on feedback.

> If the aim of any programme is to serve the audience, why wouldn't they be involved in the entire design, implementation, evaluation process? Their opinion is the most important (Alexis Banks, Root Change).

3.5.1 The case of the Red Cross Ebola response in DRC

The Red Cross Ebola response in DRC relied on continuous feedback, input and observations from the community to inform health messaging in real time (see Figure 1). The feedback was collected in a qualitative and unstructured way: volunteers from the community who were constituents themselves led outreach activities that asked people 'what have you heard about Ebola this week?' or 'what have your family, friends or neighbours said to you about Ebola recently?'. These volunteers also received training and then led on some of the immediate responses to commonly asked questions (through, for example, a regularly updated FAQ sheet). By putting constituents' voices at the centre of the programme and having community members lead on gathering these perspectives, the Red Cross team was able to respond to what was being said on the ground in real time (recording and acting on perceptions, opinions, wants and rumours with regard to Ebola). This information, in all its forms, was then used to shape Red Cross health messaging from start to finish, aligning content with what people were saying to each other. Messaging not in line with that lived experience would not be trusted, leading to community disengagement with the programme and making it less likely to prompt the health-seeking behaviour change the programme sought.

Figure 1   Red Cross DRC Ebola response feedback process

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION

Feedback process:
localizing Ebola action and community engagement approaches to respond to community needs

CROIX-ROUGE
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE
DU CONGO

CDC support: quality assurance for data coding, training and coaching on data analysis for local staff

GOMA COORDINATION and Sub commissions

Internal RC discussions with technical collagues

Data analysis

SATURDAY: Red Cross supervisors planning meeting based on feedback & Sub-coordination discussions

DATA CODING (2 officers in Bunia e Beni)

Red Cross CEA focal person

Daily report on main feedback

Synthesis of feedback

Sub-coordination

Sub-commission for risk communication

DATA ENTRY

Supervisor

HEALTH ZONE

3 times per week, volunteers meet with supervisors/team leaders to
- plan activities & focus dialogue points

- débrief and prepare the synthetis of feedback

Team leader

Community forum with experts for critical questions and believes

Read Cross in each health area has:

- 2 supervisors

- 1 team leader for each health area

- 8-10 volunteers for each health area

HEALTH AREA

Recording community sentiments

Dialogues with communities based on key concerns, rumours and questions & adaptation of key response activities

Information on the key results from the feedback and actions taken on that

During household visits, community meetings, mobile cinema or radio programs volunteers record verbatim community feedback

COMMUNITY

Source: IFRC (n.d.)

Box 6   'Do no harm' in constituent engagement efforts

The process of adapting based on constituent engagement should follow 'do no harm' principles, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas, or where populations have undergone multiple rounds of stress and trauma. For example, Chemonics staff in Syria are trained not to over-promise or commit to programme adaptations when engaging with constituents, in order to avoid disappointment and the impression of broken promises. Staff should be listening to constituents about how they would like to be engaged, and reporting back to constituents on how the programme adapted based on their feedback. Staff receive additional training in conflict sensitivity and trauma-informed approaches, including safeguarding, child protection and psychological first aid, to ensure that they are able to engage even the most vulnerable populations without doing harm. In addition to dedicating resources and time to constituent engagement, Chemonics prioritises making space for project managers to reflect on feedback and adapt programming accordingly. Programme senior management and staff discuss constituent feedback during weekly programme implementation meetings.

Box 7   An active role for constituents in monitoring, evaluation and learning

Constituent engagement is central to MEL processes at Search for Common Ground. Data collection through constituent engagement is ongoing, especially through participatory needs assessments, the results of which are then fed into programme design. Community-led approaches – the essence of Search's MEL – mean that teams often rely on trained community members to collect and record feedback from their own communities. After that, a dialogue process is held with community members to discuss these options with a programming lens (i.e. what activities can be done next, what might need to change). It is not until the group agrees on what options should be taken forward that the programme is implemented – often through small grants. However, an active and meaningful role for constituents does not mean a one-way extractive process. When the role is 'meaningful', this means a shift in power from the programme implementer to communities and constituents themselves, allowing feedback to flow both ways, and giving constituents a say in what activities should look like, and how and when they should be delivered.

4   Necessary conditions beyond the programme team's control

The previous chapter outlined five key elements to ensure that programme teams can meaningfully adapt based on constituent engagement. Other factors strongly influence a programme team's ability to use information from constituent engagement, but may be outside their control. If these conditions are present, programme teams have the opportunity to fruitfully link constituent engagement and adaptive management. Conversely, if they are not present, it can be an uphill struggle even with a capable, dedicated programme team.

In the survey that informs this paper, respondents identified four such necessary conditions:

1. **The donor for the programme was open to adaptation**: donors that set expectations (in concept notes, business cases and terms of reference) that a programme will need to test, learn, and adapt based on constituent engagement – and that reinforce those expectations over the programme cycle – will attract and encourage implementing partners that are skilled at this and committed to meaningful adaptation based on engagement.

2. **Sufficient flexibility in programme results frameworks:** even programmes that have set results frameworks or logframes can build in flexibility to deviate from the project plan if the context requires it. High-quality engagement with constituents allows a programme to be more responsive to context, and it is important that the results framework, and particular outputs, can change to reflect these adaptations.

3. **Sufficient budget for constituent engagement and adaptation:** working adaptively and engaging with constituents can be resource-intensive, and this should be costed in by the donor and implementer from the outset.[9]

4. **Sufficient flexibility in programme operations:** although some level of authorisation is often required for larger programme changes, the operational process for doing so must be flexible enough to allow a project to deviate from its original plan if necessary.

While these conditions are often set at programme inception and are often outside the programme team's control thereafter, the teams we interviewed have found ways to work with less-than-ideal conditions. For example, a programme team with UNDP-Fiji encountered donors that were not entirely supportive of significant programme adaptations, even where based on stakeholder engagement. The programme team initially presented the programme in a more traditional, linear way, while searching for internal champions within the donor, understanding that funders are not monolithic, and this stance may not in fact represent the donor agency as a whole. In this case, they found champions on the donor's innovation team, which helped the programme make the case for the importance of adapting based on constituent engagement in a way

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9   See Sharp et al. (2019) on how to manage complexity in development programming.

that resonated with their primary interlocutors at the donor agency. The programme team also highlighted constituents talking about the importance of adaptations based on their views in communications with the donor. These actions helped increase the donor's acceptance of programme adaptations and allowed the programme team to be more explicit about how they were adapting the programme in response to constituent views. See Box 8 for a discussion of adapting based on constituent engagement during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Box 8   Adapting based on constituent engagement during Covid-19

Increased uncertainty makes engaging with constituents and adapting in response even more important. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the level of uncertainty for aid programmes as circumstances change rapidly and unpredictably. One interviewee described the first months of 2020 as crammed with five years' worth of adaptation. The need for programmes to absorb constituent views and adapt accordingly quickly and well is more urgent than ever.

The programme teams interviewed for this paper emphasised that adaptation based on constituent engagement is crucial for effective safeguarding during a crisis such as Covid-19. When programme staff are not able to be on the ground with communities and partners, strong constituent engagement and adaptation is essential in order to hear about and then address potential issues before they develop. It is also useful for maintaining relationships with, and accountability to, constituents during a crisis. Ramping up constituent engagement and diligence in closing the loop helps constituents feel that programmes are helping them through the crisis and helps to keep channels of communication open, even if they are not face-to-face.

Constituent engagement can guide adaptations to help confront Covid-19 at a time when contexts are changing rapidly and other sources of information are more difficult to access. High-quality engagement becomes more important than ever: any requests for constituent feedback should demonstrate solidarity and empathy for the situation, and programme teams should be diligent in responding to what they hear from constituents.

5 Key conclusions and recommendations

Both adaptive management and constituent engagement principles recognise that, for a programme to be effective, it must be responsive to the people meant to ultimately benefit from it. Beyond providing a key source of information for potential programme adaptations, constituent engagement efforts also help build trust with stakeholders, align expectations and promote accountability. These are worthy aims on their own, and also key ingredients in achieving sustainable development outcomes.

This paper has outlined five elements that have helped specific programme teams ensure that constituent engagement and adaptive management reinforce each other in their own projects. For each element, we have highlighted stories about how teams at different organisations are putting these element in place, from creating structures and pathways for learning to hiring staff able to listen, and create empowering roles for constituents in the collection and then use of feedback. However, we recognise that every situation is different and individuals and teams designing and implementing programmes may wish to make use of these strategies – essentially, to create that space for acting on and potentially adapting based on constituent feedback – but do not know where to start. Below are some key questions that can help in assessing how these elements may play out or be best put to use in your own programme.

Key questions

Strong internal systems and external channels

- Where in the MEL framework can constituent feedback or input be integrated?
- How will we ensure that constituent feedback and input flows from the staff that collect it to the staff who will adapt based on it in a trusted, credible way?
- Who are the external actors that could improve their own programmes or activities based on what we are hearing from constituents? How will we relay constituent feedback or input to them in a way that protects confidentiality?

Skilled staff that value engagement and adaptation

- How will we assess whether prospective new programme staff are open to working adaptively and learning from constituents?
- What resources will we put in place to train staff on adaptive approaches and constituent engagement best practices?
- How will we reward adaptation based on constituent engagement in our performance management systems?

Decision-maker champions

- How is adaptive management and constituent engagement currently discussed or role-modelled by senior decision-makers?
- Which senior decision-makers are most supportive of adaptation based on constituent engagement, and how will

we work with them to strengthen the link between adaptive management and constituent engagement within our programme?

- How will we support senior decision-makers to more openly communicate the need for adaptation based on constituent engagement?

Clear points for reflection and action

- When and how do we currently reflect on constituent feedback and input and decide how to adapt based on it?
- How can we make those moments of reflection more frequent, more formalised or more effective?

- Who needs to be involved in those moments of reflection to ensure that we adapt in ways that reflect constituent views and improve the programme?

Meaningful role for constituents

- What role do constituents currently play in our programme?
- How can we extend the role of constituents beyond that of data source, at every stage of the programme cycle?
- How will we 'close the loop' with constituents – that is, let them know how the programme has adapted based on their feedback and input?

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Annex 1 List of organisations interviewed and surveyed

Initial consultations:

- Search for Common Ground
- ODI, former IRC and REACH staff
- UNDP-Fiji
- Accountability Lab
- PwC, Girls Education Challenge
- OPM team for FOSTER II, Nigeria

Survey respondents:

- Chemonics
- Search for Common Ground
- UNDP-Fiji
- Mercy Corps
- Root Change
- IRC
- VSO-Nepal
- World Vision-Somalia
- Plan-Indonesia
- Concern-Sierra Leone
- Palladium
- OPM
- Moonshot Global
- Freelancers/contractors
- DevLearn
- Catholic Relief Services
- British Red Cross

In depth-interviews:

- Search for Common Ground
  - Anais Caput, Design & Learning Specialist
- DevLearn
  - Adam Kessler, Managing Partner

- Catholic Relief Services
  - Clara Hagens, Senior Advisor for MEAL
  - Gregory Makabila, MEAL Manager, Development Food Security Activity, Ethiopia
- British Red Cross
  - Sophie Everest, Community Engagement and Accountability Advisor
- Root Change
  - Alexis Banks, Programme and Communications Manager
- Chemonics
  - Elizabeth Martin, Senior Director Portfolio Management
- UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji
  - Moortaza Jiwanji, Project Manager, Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific
  - Nicola Glendining, Resilience Mainstreaming Advisor
  - Summer Lee, Partnerships Liaison and Communication Specialist
- International Rescue Committee
  - Valentina Shafina, Client Responsiveness Technical Specialist

Annex 2   Survey questions

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey, giving respondents one month to complete. The questions were based on the following guide:

LearnAdapt is a collaboration between DFID, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Brink, and Feedback Labs to explore how to manage adaptive development programmes better. It draws on approaches from the development and tech sector including adaptive management, agile ways of working and lean start-up. The project works across DFID and the UK government more broadly, drawing on staff experiences, to help build flexible tools, systems and processes which can support them to deliver change in diverse and complex contexts. In addition to providing internal support within DFID via the Better Delivery team, the project seeks to develop publicly available tools and convening opportunities for shared learning on adaptive management for the wider development sector.

Beneficiary engagement and adaptive management

We're investigating examples of where beneficiary engagement has informed meaningful adaptation and improvement in development programmes, and then looking to identify the key reasons why those programmes were able to do so – focusing on front-line implementing staff.

We are looking to collect information on what has enabled people/programmes to respond to feedback and the ways in which subsequent adaptation occurred. In cases where it wasn't possible to respond to feedback, we want to learn about the barriers to this.

So far, we have found that there are strong examples of DFID programmes that are successfully responding to beneficiary engagement with meaningful adaptation and we've found suggestions that this occurred because they are integrating key elements of adaptive management, like designing for flexibility, focusing on continuous learning and improvement and ensuring evidence informs decision-making.

Yet much of the insights and evidence about **how** these programmes are ensuring that beneficiary/feedback engagement informs meaningful adaptation has not yet been documented or shared across DFID and/or implementing partners. How are programme staff building in the scope to respond to beneficiary engagement? How do they build in sufficient flexibility? How do they triangulate beneficiary feedback with other data sources?

This survey is about helping answer these questions and more. In some cases, we may follow up with a longer interview to collect details on some of what is being asked here, and collect stories on times where beneficiary feedback was led to particular programme decision-making, or not.

What we're asking you to do

Please have a look at the questions below, including the ranking exercise. If you are confident in filling this out without further discussion, please do so and send us back the document. We can also (or instead) set-up a short 15 minute Skype call to answer the survey together and also provide any clarifications needed.

1. Who are the end users / beneficiaries of your programme? What term does your organisation use to describe those that 'benefit' from your development programme?

2. Ranking enabling factors – programme design:

Think about a programme that you've worked on, or that you've heard about within your organisation that did a good job of taking on board feedback it heard from future or past beneficiaries (end users) during the design and/or set-up phase of a programme.

A. Please rank the elements that were most important to allowing the programme to adapt meaningfully by dragging and dropping. At the top of the list is most important and bottom is least important or not important at all. Feel free to add any comments in-text to explain your ranking:

- The programme ensured it built in sufficient flexibility in its operations to be able to adapt (flexible budget, contracting mechanisms, reporting, etc.)
- The programme ensured it had built in sufficient flexibility in its results framework to be able to adapt (lack of rigid logframe, openness of donor and partners to change course, etc.)
- The programme set clear expectations with front-line implementing partners for how they would solicit feedback from beneficiaries and how they would adapt based on that information
- The programme team was made up of people interested in learning and less tied to plans and pre-set outputs/outcomes
- The programme identified decision points at which beneficiary feedback will be reflected upon and adaptation decisions made
- The programme sufficiently budgeted for the time and other resources needed to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The programme invested sufficiently in staff ability to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The programme appropriately shared beneficiary feedback and suggested adaptations with other actors, for example other agencies, governments, implementing partners, etc.
- The programme built strong internal systems to ensure lessons learned from beneficiary feedback and suggested adaptations were shared between staff and departments
- The programme clearly articulated its aim for adaptation with beneficiaries from the start, explaining that this meant they would solicit feedback more often and aim to adapt the programme on that basis

B. You said [first ranked choice] was important. How was the programme staff able to achieve this [first ranked choice]? What is it that enabled the programme to do [first ranked choice] successfully?

3. Ranking enabling factors – programme implementation:

Think about a programme that you've worked on, or that you've heard about within your organisation that did a good job of meaningfully taking on board feedback it heard from beneficiaries (end users) during the programme delivery and implementation.

A. Please rank the elements that were most important to allowing the programme to adapt meaningfully, top of the list is most important and bottom is least important or not important at all. Feel free to add any comments in-text to explain your ranking:

- The programme ensured it had built in sufficient flexibility in its operations to be able to adapt (flexible budget, contracting mechanisms, reporting, etc.)
- The programme ensured it had built in sufficient flexibility in its results framework to be able to adapt (lack of rigid logframe, openness of donor and partners to change course, etc.)
- The programme set clear expectations with front-line implementing partners for how they would solicit feedback from beneficiaries and how they would adapt based on that information
- It was made clear to programme staff and partners that there was space for adaptation on the basis of beneficiary feedback
- The programme ensured decision-makers championed the importance of adapting based on feedback
- The programme team was made up of people interested in learning and less tied to plans and pre-set outputs/outcomes
- The programme did a good job of triangulating beneficiary feedback with other data sources (ie. with other beneficiaries, external stakeholders, monitoring data, etc.)
- The programme tries to identify decision points at which beneficiary feedback will be reflected upon and adaptation decisions made
- The programme sufficiently budgeted for the time and other resources needed to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The programme incorporated beneficiary feedback into the monitoring and, if applicable, evaluation framework
- The programme invested sufficiently in staff ability to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The programme appropriately shared beneficiary feedback and suggested adaptations with other actors, for example other agencies, governments, implementing partners, etc.
- The programme built strong internal systems to ensure lessons learned from beneficiary feedback and suggested adaptations were shared between staff and departments
- The programme involved beneficiaries as more than data sources, working with them to design and carry out adaptations
- The programme clearly articulated its aim for adaptation with beneficiaries from the start, explaining that this meant they would solicit feedback more often and aim to adapt the programme on that basis
- The donor for the programme was open to adaptation, even if that meant certain costs were spent on an approach that was later changed

B. You said [first ranked choice] was important. Why was the programme unable to achieve [first ranked choice]?

4. Ranking disabling factors:

Now, think about a programme you've experienced or heard about that was unable to respond meaningfully to feedback it heard from beneficiaries (by respond we mean incorporate that information into decision-making or strategy, which led to subsequent adaptation) - or that you judged was unable to do this to a satisfactory level.

A. Please rank the elements that were most important to allowing the programme to adapt meaningfully, top of the list is most important and bottom is least important or not important at all. Feel free to add any comments in-text to explain your ranking:

- The programme did not build in sufficient flexibility in its operations to be able to adapt (inflexible budget, contracting mechanisms, reporting, etc.)
- The programme did not build in sufficient flexibility in its results framework to be able to adapt (rigid logframe, donor and partners unwilling to change course, etc.)
- The programme did not set clear expectations with front-line implementing partners for how they would solicit feedback from beneficiaries and how they would adapt based on that information
- It was not made clear to programme staff and partners that there was space for adaptation on the basis of beneficiary feedback
- The programme team was not made up of people interested in learning and was instead more tied to plans and pre-set outputs/outcomes
- The programme did not identify decision points at which beneficiary feedback will be reflected upon and adaptation decisions made
- The programme did not budget sufficiently for the time and other resources needed to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The programme did not incorporate beneficiary feedback into the monitoring and, if applicable, evaluation framework
- The programme did not invest sufficiently in staff ability to solicit and adapt based on beneficiary feedback
- The donor for the programme was not open to adaptation, especially once costs had been spent on an approach.

B. You said [first ranked choice] was important. Why was the programme unable to achieve [first ranked choice]?

5. Adaptation: In cases where beneficiary feedback was sought, enabling factors were in place and there was willingness to integrate that information into programme decision-making, did the programme adapt its theory of change or approach in response to that feedback? How so? What enabled this?

6. Is there anything we've missed that you think is important to share about beneficiary feedback and adaptive management?

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