



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**



Adaptive Management in SDC: challenges and opportunities

Pedro Prieto Martin, Marina Apgar and Kevin Hernandez (Institute of Development Studies)

January 2020

Adaptive Management in SDC: challenges and opportunities© Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) 2019

All rights reserved. Reproduction, copy, transmission, or translation of any part of this publication may be made only under the following conditions:

- with the prior permission of the publisher; or
- with a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd., 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, UK, or from another national licensing agency; or
- under the terms set out below.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee for teaching or nonprofit purposes, but not for resale. Formal permission is required for all such uses, but normally will be granted immediately. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher and a fee may be payable.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Freiburgstrasse 130
3003 Bern, Switzerland

SDC Network on Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance

Web: www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN

E-mail: ddlgn@eda.admin.ch



SDC NETWORK

Democratisation, Decentralisation
and Local Governance

SDC Quality Assurance and Poverty Reduction Section

Web: www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/organisation/departments/south-cooperation/quality-assurance.html

E-mail: dezaqualitaetssicherung@eda.admin.ch

Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 606261

Web: www.ids.ac.uk

IDS is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (No. 87733)

Adaptive Management in SDC: challenges and opportunities

Authors: Pedro Prieto Martin, Marina Apgar and Kevin Hernandez
(Institute of Development Studies)

Contents

Acronyms	4
Executive summary	5
Explanation of key elements of AM approaches	6
Exploration of various donors' approaches to AM	7
Reflection around AM in SDC	7
1 Introduction	10
2 Methodology	11
3 Key adaptive management concepts	12
4 Adaptive management in the development sector	16
5 Overview of donors' approaches to adaptive management	20
5.1 USAID – United States Agency for International Development	20
5.2 DFID – UK Department for International Development	22
5.3 Irish Aid (with Christian Aid Ireland)	23
5.4 DFAT – Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	24
5.5 Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	25
5.6 GIZ – German Society for International Cooperation	27
5.7 Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	28
5.8 Summary of donor approaches	28
6 Adaptive management in SDC	29
6.1 Values and principles for adaptive management	30
6.2 Processes and practices for adaptive management	32
6.2.1 Adaptive delivery	32
6.2.2 Adaptive programming	32
6.2.3 Adaptive governance	34
6.3 Techniques and tools for adaptive management	36
6.4 Summary of strengths and weaknesses	37
6.5 Challenges and opportunities for intentional AM practice	38
6.5.1 Main challenges to more intentional AM practice	38
6.5.2 Opportunities for strengthening AM practice within SDC	38

7	Next steps for adaptive management work in SDC	43
8	References	44
9	Annex: List of interviews	52

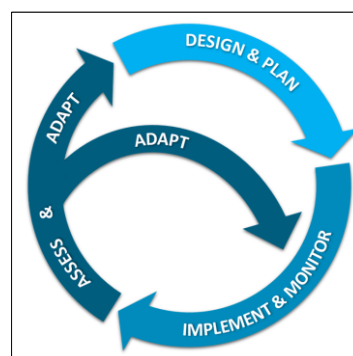
Acronyms

AM	Adaptive management
CAI	Christian Aid Ireland
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (USAID)
CSO	Civil society organisation
DDD	Doing Development Differently
DDLC	Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GLAM	Global Learning for Adaptive Management
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
KII	Key informant interview
LASER	Legal Assistance for Economic Reform
MERV	Monitoring Entwicklungs-Relevante Veränderungen – Monitoring of Development-Relevant Changes
MSD	Market Systems Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PCM	Project cycle management
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
QA	Quality assurance
PDIA	Problem-driven iterative adaptation
RBM	Results-based management
SAVI	State Accountability and Voice Initiative
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
UK	United Kingdom
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

Adaptive management (AM) is a programme management approach that helps international development organisations to become more learning-oriented and more effective in addressing complex development challenges. AM practices have been applied for decades within other sectors as varied as logistics, manufacturing, product design, military strategy, software development and lean enterprise. At its core, AM is not much more than common sense, as it essentially recognises that the solutions to complex and dynamic problems cannot be identified at the outset of a programme but need to emerge throughout the process of implementation as a result of systematic and intentional monitoring and learning. The generic AM process (see Figure ES 1) typically involves an iterative cycle of design, implementation, reflection and adaptation activities, supported both by system monitoring and stakeholder involvement to obtain a better understanding of the evolving system and improve how the intervention is managed.

Figure ES 1: Basic adaptive management process



A favourable context for AM in development. During recent decades, the international development sector has aimed to increase its results and impact orientation. As a result, a growing number of development organisations and governments have become increasingly aware of the limitations of traditional ‘linear and prescriptive’ programming approaches. They are now recognising the need to handle complexity better, and have begun to adapt their policies and practices to facilitate adaptive approaches. The World Bank, for example, now acknowledges that aid agencies need to increase flexibility of implementation, tolerate greater risk and ambiguity, devolve power from aid providers to aid partners, and avoid simplistic linear schemes for measuring results. Multilateral and bilateral organisations such as the World Bank, the United Kingdom’s (UK) Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are currently experimenting with adaptive approaches. A multitude of adaptive approaches and communities of practice have emerged that aim to improve the effectiveness of aid, including Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting, Thinking and Working Politically, Doing Development Differently, Market Systems Development, Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management, and Science of Delivery. Since generic AM approaches have existed for decades in other sectors, AM has the potential to act as a neutral ‘bridge language’ that facilitates exchange and learning among the different communities and donors.

This report is the result of a learning partnership between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). It assesses the relevance of AM to SDC, how it relates to working practices across SDC, and the key challenges and opportunities for SDC. Its process of elaboration involved a literature review on AM, an exploration of AM approaches from several bilateral donors, a series of

interviews with SDC staff and partners working in different countries and thematic domains, and a learning workshop at SDC headquarters (HQ), where staff from several SDC divisions reflected on AM and on how to advance the organisation's capacity for adaptive programming and learning.

Explanation of key elements of AM approaches

The report describes the origins of AM, its rationale, and the core characteristics and learning emerging from accumulated experience across sectors, as well as considering aspects relevant to its application within the international development sector.

Key general AM concepts include the **differentiation between passive and active AM**:

- **Passive AM** relies on regular monitoring and reflection activities to detect unpredicted challenges and, when needed, to adjust planned actions to remain on track to achieve the desired programme outcomes.
- **Active AM** explicitly plans for experimentation and regular upgrading of the strategies; it considers learning and the reduction of uncertainty and imperfect knowledge as one of the key objectives of the management effort.

Equally relevant are the **core adaptive practices** normally found in AM approaches, across sectors:

- **Promote experimental learning:** acknowledging the need for periodic, data-driven reflective deliberation among the different participants.
- **Focus on value generation:** aiming for early, frequent and incremental provision of value to recipients and relevant stakeholders, using a risk-aware and risk-avoidant iterative delivery.
- **Contextual embeddedness:** built-in continued engagement with the problem-owners (e.g. users, communities, state and non-state partners) and with the general context of work.
- **Empowered staff and teams:** teams should be trusted, motivated, sustained and creative, with open and honest communication, and be largely self-directed.

Organisations that embrace AM aim to see changes simultaneously at three fundamental levels:

1. **New values and principles:** how organisations and their staff think about the challenges they aim to solve.
2. **New processes and practices:** affecting the general process they follow to tackle the problems.
3. **New tools and methods:** the day-to-day work practices and tools used to deliver the solutions become more supportive of learning and adaptation.

AM in development. The settings in which development institutions operate are very complex and involve many agents with conflicting interests, which interact with each other in non-predictable ways. The internal structure of development organisations, their work approaches, and their accountability and funding models are also quite complex. As a result, the general AM practices and concepts need some degree of adjustment to better reflect the characteristics of the sector. A **key distinction for development contexts** is, therefore, to consider how the new adaptive practices need to operate at three distinct levels, which are typically present in all international development work:

- **Adaptive delivery:** daily adaptive practices at the ‘front line’, with staff and partners learning and taking decisions in the short term.
- **Adaptive programming:** more structured processes of management by senior staff that promote and support adaptation over longer time frames along the lifespan of a programme.
- **Adaptive governance:** wider programme management, including how programmes are designed, procured, funded and managed by donors over the whole life cycle.

Exploration of various donors’ approaches to AM

The report also provides an overview of how different donors (USAID, DFID, Irish Aid, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Global Affairs Canada, German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)) approach AM, including links to their main guidance documents and references to relevant AM programmes and cases.

Most of the donors do not subscribe to a single organisational definition of AM, but instead tend to build AM thinking and practice into their programming approaches through blending with existing frameworks and procedures. This frequently involves promoting their own jargon to refer to very similar AM ideas, while attempting also to map and leverage ongoing positive practice among their offices. While this situation contributes to create complex conceptual panorama, it also exemplifies the momentum built around AM across donors, as well as the need to promote cross-donor dialogue to elicit and consolidate shared learning.

Reflection around AM in SDC

The report’s final sections summarise key findings from the interviews and the learning workshop, reflecting more specifically on SDC’s relationship with AM and its organisational strengths and weaknesses, as well as current challenges and opportunities for moving towards more intentional AM practice. This analysis is structured around the key AM dimensions identified previously, thus reflecting on how SDC’s current values and mindsets, its work processes and practices, and the tools and methods it uses may enable (or undermine) the application of AM approaches.

Key strengths in SDC’s current AM practice

- There is a **widespread appreciation of the need for flexibility:** even if there are norms and established criteria that to a certain extent limit the capacity to adapt, exceptions are always considered possible in cases where they are needed and well-documented and justified. Change is easier when people want it, and there is widespread aspiration within SDC for bringing about positive change.
- **High levels of informal knowledge and experience around AM** – even if it is referred to by other names, such as ‘steering of programmes’. Most of it is action oriented and not conceptual.
- **Decentralisation** leads to a lack of institutionalised approaches to AM, which supports contextualisation and embedding into natural ways of working in each context.
- **Approach to the programme management cycle** is well-placed to support adaptive programming, offering opportunities to reflect at different timescales and to integrate learning in a structured way into programme adaptations.
- **Main funding modalities** – mandates and contributions – offer different and potentially complementary incentives and opportunities for adaptive steering of programmes.

Key weaknesses in SDC's current AM practice

- **AM understood mainly as 'having flexibility** to adapt when needed' (passive/reactive AM). There is limited appreciation of the need for active AM at various levels of operation – from adaptive delivery of individual programmes to management of programme portfolio at country or regional levels.
- **Processes of adaptation are not systematically documented**, limiting rigour, learning and improvement of processes and tools.
- **Culture of 'rumours'** regarding what is actually possible in terms of adaptation and of blame-shifting for not being adaptive – from partners to field office, to headquarters (HQ), and to contracting and finance departments.
- **Adaptive delivery is not always informing adaptive programming** – processes of reflection and adaptation at higher levels are slow and can be cumbersome.
- **Contracting, legal and financial management** is not necessarily conducive to AM, even though there are instances where this is possible.
- **Increasing upward accountability demands** are creating further bureaucratisation of processes, which reduces staff capacity to engage in reflection and learning.

Main challenges to more intentional AM practice

- **Shifts in the political context are closing down space for AM:** increased bureaucracy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could bring greater administrative burdens, and a more business-centred and outputs-oriented focus in response to parliamentary interests. This could undermine current openness to take calculated risks, and drive a move away from embracing experimentation and early failures as a source of learning.
- **Decentralisation and shifting mindsets:** if individuals that do not favour working flexibly and do not value learning and reflection are in critical decision making roles, they can become bottlenecks and undermine AM within a decentralised organisation.
- **Lack of tool integration:** there are various tools and guidance that could inform AM practices. These could be streamlined and integrated in order to push through to a more explicit and impactful AM practice overall.

Main opportunities for strengthening AM practice within SDC

Institutionalisation of AM across SDC should build on the strengths identified earlier, by uncovering good practices, articulating better core components and tools, and spreading their use throughout the organisation. The focus should be on:

- **Streamlining procedures for adaptation**, while at the same time, resisting the tendency to increase controls and bureaucracy. Management could create incentives for staff to showcase ways to successfully increase flexibility in programming, and work with key decision makers across SDC to more explicitly build their capacity to encourage adaptive procedures.
- **Reducing ambiguity about required processes and use of tools**, by clarifying key competencies and processes and by facilitating the exchange of experiences. Many of the inflexibilities reported by country staff as constraints to their adaptive capacity seem to result from wrong assumptions regarding what is possible.
- **Showcasing and providing guidance on how the different tools fit together** in an overall cycle of adaptation.
- **Strategic planning at country and regional levels as a key entry point for AM**, which could enable intentional AM of the portfolio of programmes, balancing them to be able to better handle existing risks and emerging crises, as well as to leverage opportunities and impact.

- **Employing a positive deviance amplification approach** to identify and increase the effect of innovative approaches (including tools, processes and practices) that are being effectively applied in different countries, by promoting peer-learning among and around these outlier cases.

Finally, the report recommends a series of steps to advance the AM agenda within SDC, including **producing short case studies**, creating a **two-pager on key components of AM in SDC**, **continuing the ongoing conversations on Theory of Change** and linking them with AM discussions, **liaising with finance and procurement departments** to address key internal factors perceived as limiting programmes' adaptive capacity, **and engaging in conversations with other donors** trying to become more adaptive.

1 Introduction

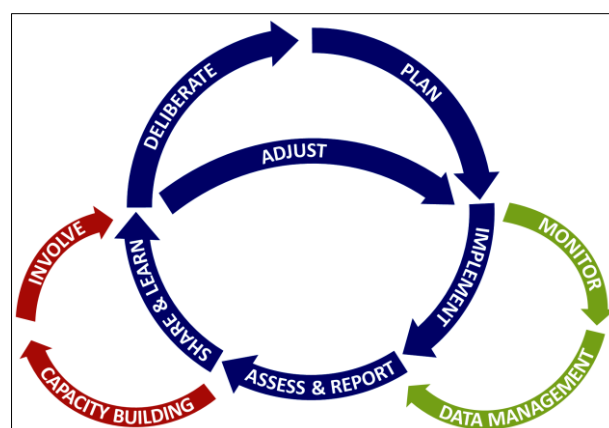
Adaptive management (AM) is being recognised by a growing number of actors in the international development sector as an approach that helps programming become more learning-oriented and more effective in addressing complex development challenges. Consequently, over recent years, many development organisations have been experimenting, in one way or another, with adaptive approaches (Vowles 2013; Honig and Gulrajani 2018).

Through this accompaniment activity, jointly implemented through the Quality Assurance (QA)/Poverty–Institute of Development Studies (IDS) learning partnership (which ended in June 2019) and the Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance (DDLG)–IDS learning partnership (ongoing), AM experts from IDS explored the relevance of AM to SDC, looking at how it relates to current thinking and working practices across the organisation, and identifying key challenges and opportunities for SDC. We first undertook a literature review to clarify key AM concepts and explored the approaches of several bilateral donors. We also conducted a series of interviews with SDC staff working in different countries and thematic domains, as well as with representatives from SDC partners. Finally, a co-facilitated learning workshop took place at SDC HQ, where staff from different SDC divisions reflected on the current state of AM thinking and practice within the organisation, as well as how to advance SDC’s capacity for adaptive programming and learning.

AM refers to a systematic and intentional approach to learning by doing in contexts characterised by complexity and uncertainty. It is a process that aims to change a system by learning about it, while interacting with it. It acknowledges that solutions to complex and dynamic development problems – and consequently achieving impact – cannot be identified at the outset of a programme but need to emerge throughout the process of implementation.

The generic process of AM, illustrated in Figure 1, typically involves an iterative cycle of design, implementation, reflection and adaptation, which is supported both by system monitoring and stakeholder involvement to promote a better understanding of the system and improve how the intervention is managed.

Figure 1 A diagram of the adaptive management process



Source: Vugteveen *et al.* 2015. Creative Commons Attribution [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) © The Authors

Much of the academic exploration of this concept has taken place in recent decades within the environmental resource management field of practice and research. In a seminal book that initiated this area of research, Holling (1978) noted that:

Adaptive management is not really much more than common sense. But common sense is not always in common use. Many industrial and engineering concerns routinely practice adaptive management. In developing a new product, not all the final details are planned and fixed before the first action is taken. Activities such as pilot projects, test modelling, and market surveys are all efforts to use information from the first stages to adapt the final outcome to greater advantage. (Holling 1978: 136)

Acknowledging the relevance of AM ideas for international development is not new. More than 30 years ago, in 1983, Dennis A Rondinelli, a recognised international development scholar, argued that:

... planning [of development projects] must be viewed as an incremental process that tests propositions about the most effective means of coping with social problems, reassessing and redefining both the problems and the components of development projects as more is learned about their complexities and about the economic, social, and political factors affecting the outcome of proposed course of action... Rather than providing a blueprint for action, planning should facilitate continuous learning and interaction, allowing... to readjust and modify programs and projects as they learn more about the conditions with which they are trying to cope. (Rondinelli 1983: 18)

What, then, has the sector learned about how AM is working over the many years of practice, and how is this relevant today for SDC? This is the central question addressed by this report.

2 Methodology

In this report we present synthesised findings from the literature review, a number of key informant interviews (KIIs) and the outputs from a co-facilitated learning workshop that took place at SDC HQ with 33 participants from SDC country offices and HQ.

The literature review has leveraged resources from an online library maintained by the project team, which includes around 1,300 resources on AM and related topics.¹ These range from academic literature, official policy documents and research reports from donors and programmes, to magazine articles, presentations and blog posts, and include not only development-related materials but also resources from other relevant sectors. As part of the research, we extended the database to include additional references on the AM approaches of several development agencies. Finally, we have also considered some of the activities and research recently carried out by SDC, including a series of webinars on AM and a learning accompaniment on remote monitoring.²

The KIIs were informed by the literature review and were all carried out remotely, using a semi-structured questionnaire. All interviewees were either proposed by the SDC core team (which provided a list of 28 candidates) or referred by one of these interviewees. As a result, the sample cannot be considered representative of the whole organisation, and we recognise a positive bias towards AM. The insights from the interviews must, therefore, be appraised with this limitation in mind. Not all candidates were available, and some interviews had to be postponed or cancelled due to scheduling difficulties.³ Interviews took place in

¹ The library resources can be accessed and queried at: <http://bit.ly/am-library>

² Final published output can be found at <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/14664>

³ See Annex for a list of the interviews conducted

April and May 2019 and included 17 SDC staff from 11 country offices and HQ at Bern, as well as 4 representatives from SDC partners *HEKS*, *Terre des Hommes* and *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Notes from the interviews were coded for emerging themes, which were subsequently analysed alongside insights from the workshop. Our analysis was also informed by the interviews performed for the learning accompaniment on Remote Monitoring in SDC.

The learning workshop took place at SDC HQ on 1 and 2 July 2019, co-facilitated by IDS and DDLG. It provided a space to share learning across various SDC divisions and thematic domains working on AM, with the support of peers from think tanks and universities. A central aim of the workshop was to support action planning for deepening SDC's AM practices.

Given this methodology, rather than being an in-depth audit of AM, the report is intended to provide conceptual clarity around AM and to summarise initial experience from across SDC. This should provide a basis for further reflection and internal policy initiatives that leverage existing strengths within the organisation.

3 Key adaptive management concepts

This section provides a 'plain English' explanation of the most important elements of AM, including its origins, rationale, and the core characteristics and learning emerging from accumulated experience across sectors leading the practice.

As already noted, much of the formal research on AM comes from the environmental (or natural) resource management field (Salafsky, Margoluis and Redford 2001; Williams 2011). AM concepts, however, have proven to be relevant for many other sectors. In fact, it is possible to trace the development of parallel theorising and operationalisation of AM approaches in sectors as varied as logistics, manufacturing, product design, military strategy, lean enterprise, public services design, and international development (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Sutherland 2014; Murray and Ma 2015; McChrystal *et al.* 2015; Nesta 2016; Wild and Ramalingam 2018).

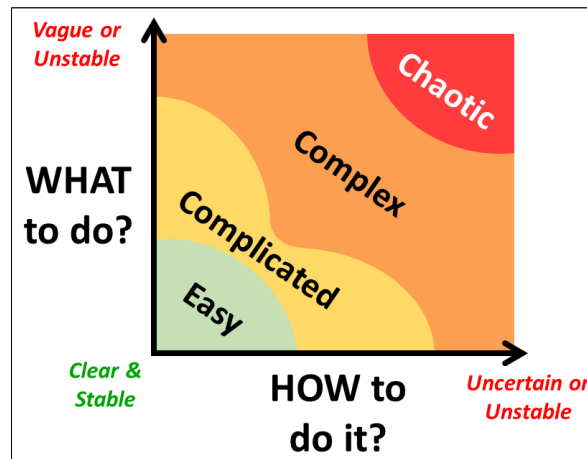
At different moments during the past 100 years, each of these sectors had to face increasing levels of uncertainty, complexity, volatility and ambiguity in the domains where they operated. As a result, the 'predictive management' approaches (also known as command and control) they were using became less reliable. In complex and unstable settings, it is not possible to plan all the details of a project upfront because cause–effect relationships are not fixed, coherent or predictable (Snowden and Boone 2007).⁴ Insisting on blindly following a pre-established plan to achieve the predetermined goals normally ends in failure; there is a need to stay constantly engaged with the operational environment to be able to sense relevant changes in the context, validate the project's assumptions, and assess the effectiveness of strategies and actions. There is then a need to make sure that these reflective processes and their associated learning provide the basis for further adaptation of the plans.

At some moment, the various sectors mentioned were forced to complement their traditional management approaches, adding adaptive and complexity-aware elements to them. Some procedures had to be replaced, others modified, and the general management methodology had to be re-interpreted and re-framed under new paradigms that focused on continuous learning and adaptation.

⁴ For more detail on Dave Snowden's Cynefin sense-making framework, which differentiates between obvious, complicated, complex and chaotic settings, see Kurtz and Snowden (2003).

As Figure 1 showed, **AM approaches integrate planning, implementation, monitoring and learning activities into a cohesive, cyclical process of continuous improvement.** The key added value of these approaches is that they help to avoid serious mistakes – and, subsequently, catastrophic failures too – by increasing capacity to recognise problems as early as possible. Rigid and prescriptive management methods are valid for easy and even complicated contexts (see Figure 2) and rely on following a ‘comprehensive and detailed plan’. AM approaches, instead, aim for a ‘good enough but rough plan’ that needs to be reviewed and developed incrementally.

Figure 2 Complex environments demand agile, lean, adaptive approaches



Source: Authors' own inspired by Stacey (2000)

A useful distinction from the AM literature is the difference between passive and active AM (Williams 2011). Passive AM recognises that, because of the complexity and uncertainty involved, there is a need to remain flexible and perform regular monitoring and reflection activities to be able to respond in a timely fashion to any emerging challenges discovered during implementation. Most of the management effort, however, remains focused on pursuing the intervention’s objectives, with learning being an unintended but useful by-product of decision making. Active AM, on the other hand, goes a step further: it does not just acknowledge the occasional need to amend strategies as a result of learning, but explicitly plans for experimentation and regular upgrading of those strategies, and considers learning and the reduction of uncertainty and imperfect knowledge as one of the key objectives of the management effort.

Table 1 Passive vs active adaptive management

Passive adaptive management	Active adaptive management
Regular monitoring to detect unpredictable challenges and adjustment to remain on track to desired outcomes.	Experimentation to test alternative strategies, addressing imperfect knowledge and reducing uncertainty.

Source: Authors own based on Hasselman (2017); Williams (2011).

What do AM approaches look like? A series of shared **core adaptive practices** have been identified across various successful AM approaches (Prieto Martin *et al.* 2017):

1. **Promoting experimental learning:** acknowledging the need for periodic, data-driven reflective deliberation among the different participants. This critical reflection promotes single-, double- and triple-loop learning (Ørnemark 2016) at different time intervals, with the aim of improving the initiative and its day-to-day working practices, changing the wider processes and organisation of work, and even evolving the institutional culture and structure of the organisations involved.
2. **Focus on value generation:** aiming for early, frequent and incremental provision of value to recipients and relevant stakeholders, using a risk-aware and risk-avoidant iterative delivery. Value delivery has primacy over plan fulfilment (or 'function over form'), as moving closer to the desired change is what matters even if it is through unforeseen pathways. Meaningful and transparent metrics are used to track progress and measure outcomes, impact and value, rather than effort or outputs.
3. **Contextual embeddedness:** interventions are designed and built *with, not for* the recipients and relevant stakeholders. Continued engagement with the problem-owners (e.g. users, communities, state and non-state partners, customers) and with the general context of work provides the evidence-based feedback loops required for continuous improvement.
4. **Empowered staff and teams:** they are provided with as much autonomy as possible but also supported to keep their work aligned with the overall shared strategic goals. Teams should be trusted, motivated, sustained and creative, with open and honest communication, and be largely self-directed.

As already mentioned, many different industries have gone through their own journey of discovery of AM concepts and practices, producing alternative brandings that are suited to their specific domain, such as total quality management, lean manufacturing, agile software development, or design thinking. There is still not much dialogue or integration efforts among these versions, yet, interestingly, many of the tools and methods developed by the oldest continue to be cross-appropriated by the newcomers. For example, tools created by Japanese corporations in the 1960s and 1970s as part of their lean manufacturing approaches – such as the A3 problem-solving template (see Figure 3) or the Fishbone diagram – have now been incorporated into some of the latest international development adaptive approaches (Andrews *et al.* 2015).

Figure 3 A3 problem-solving template, adapted for agile software development

Background		PLAN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is this important? Why should the reader care about this situation and be motivated to participate in improving? <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a clear theme for the problem report that reflects the contents? Is the topic relevant to the organization's objectives? Is there any other reason for working on this topic (e.g. learning purposes)? 		<p>A3: <problem statement></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Owner:</td> <td>Leads the problem solving and maintains this A3 doc</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mentor:</td> <td>Guides and assesses the process</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date:</td> <td>Current version Date</td> </tr> </table>	Owner:	Leads the problem solving and maintains this A3 doc	Mentor:	Guides and assesses the process	Date:	Current version Date
Owner:	Leads the problem solving and maintains this A3 doc							
Mentor:	Guides and assesses the process							
Date:	Current version Date							
Current condition		PLAN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do things work today? What is the problem? Baseline Metrics? <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is the current condition clear and logically depicted in a visual manner? How could the current condition be made clearer for the audience? Is the current condition depiction framing a problem or a situation to be resolved? What is the actual problem in the current condition? Are the facts of the situation clear, or are there just observations and opinions? Is the problem quantified in some manner or is it too qualitative? 		<p>Countermeasures (experiments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed countermeasure(s) to address each candidate root cause (this should be a series of quick experiment to validate causal model analysis) Predicted result for each countermeasure <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Are there clear countermeasure steps identified? Do the countermeasures link to the root cause of the problem? Are the countermeasures focused on the right areas? Who is responsible for doing what, by when (is '5 Why - 1 How' clear)? Will these action items prevent recurrence of the problem? Is the implementation order clear and reasonable? How will the effects of the countermeasures be verified? 						
Goal / Target Condition		PLAN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What outcomes are expected for what reasons? What changes in metrics can be plausibly expected? <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a clear goal or target? What, specifically, is to be accomplished? How will this goal be measured or evaluated? What will improve, by how much, and when? 		<p>Confirmation (results)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual result of each countermeasure (experiment) How does the system actually behave with the countermeasures that are being proposed for implementation in place? <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How will you measure the effectiveness of the countermeasures? Does the check item align with the previous goal statement? Has actual performance moved in line with the goal statement? If performance has not improved, then why? What was missed? 						
Root Cause Analysis		PLAN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the root cause(s) of the problem? Use a simple problem analysis tool (e.g. 5 why's, fishbone diagram, cause/effect diagram) to show cause-and-effect relationships. <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is the analysis comprehensive at a broad level? Is the analysis detailed enough and did it probe deeply enough on the right issues? Is there evidence of proper five-whys thinking about the true cause? Has cause and effect been demonstrated or linked in some manner? Are all the relevant factors considered (human, machine, material, method, environment, measurement, and so on)? Do all those who will need to collaborate in implementing the countermeasures agree on the cause/effect reasoning? 		<p>Follow up (actions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have we learned that does or does not improve the situation? In the light of the learning, what should be done? How should the way we work or our standards be adjusted to reflect what we learned? What do we need to learn next? <p>Assessment Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What is necessary to prevent recurrence of the problem? What remains to be accomplished? What other parts of the organization need to be informed of this result? How will this be standardized and communicated? 						

Source: Poppendieck and Kniberg (2009). Creative Commons Attribution [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

How do adaptive approaches impact organisations and industries that adopt them?

While the approaches from different sectors differ considerably in their focus and operationalisation, they are generally considered to instigate changes at three fundamental levels (Prieto Martin *et al.* 2017; Teskey 2018): institutional (how organisations think about the challenges they aim to solve); organisational (the general process they follow to tackle the problems); and operational (the day-to-day practices and tools used to deliver the solutions).

- Institutional – new values and principles:** a new 'common sense', a more complexity-aware mindset that spreads across the organisation and helps to make sense of the struggle to constantly learn and adapt in different contexts. This mindset demands a transition toward experimental and evidence-based approaches, moving from talking about 'good ideas' toward 'testable hypothesis', which then give way to a continuous critical reassessment of the organisational processes and systems, and even to the questioning of the aims and assumptions that motivate the initiatives.

For example, the core of the Agile Software Development manifesto (Agile Alliance 2001) was a call to value 'individuals and interactions over processes and tools; working [solutions] over comprehensive documentation; customer collaboration over

contract negotiation; and responding to feedback over following a plan'. Simple principles like these were able to turn the whole industry upside down, enhancing its productivity to the current levels.

- **Organisational – new processes and practices:** an overarching approach or method for engaging with challenges, devising effective responses to the problems identified, and then implementing those plans flexibly to keep improving them. These general approaches are meant to set expectations across the organisation and help to create an enabling and authoritative environment for adaptive approaches, which is essential to overcome existing institutional barriers and entrenched practices and resistances. For this to happen, there is a need to rely on clear and simple high-level processes and practices that are well-integrated with the day-to-day work at different organisational levels, and can provide adaptive value without increasing the workload for staff.

For example, in the late 1970s, Toyota instituted the regular use of A3 problem-solving templates (like the one shown in Figure 3) at all levels of management. Such a simple method is credited as a pillar of Toyota's culture of continuous improvement, which helped every organisational level of the company to better differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' failure,⁵ and thus catalysed learning and boosted results.

- **Operational – new tools and methods** that typically support adaptation and learning in different operational areas (such as design, implementation, monitoring and learning tasks) and can be combined and used according to the needs of the projects, teams and contexts. These tools should be practical and easy to use; they should not require extraordinary capacities from staff, though they should allow teams and staff to use them in more advanced ways as their experience increases.

There are many examples of adaptive techniques and tools (normally structured as toolkits) that are used to support adaptive frameworks such as agile development (Agile Alliance 2015), public service design (Nesta 2014) or problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) (Samji *et al.* 2018), which is used in the context of international development initiatives.

The learning from across sectors is that **organisations should embrace changes at all three levels simultaneously** to make adaptive approaches work and see real benefits. An organisation in which senior management is supportive of adaptive approaches but, for example, does not review their existing processes and programming cycle to enable more flexible contracting, or does not invest in tools that support operational adaptation, will still not be able to fully benefit from AM approaches.

4 Adaptive management in the development sector

This section explores the increasing relevance of AM for the development sector, presenting several approaches and characterising some of their main problematics.

The settings in which development institutions operate are among the most complex that can be imagined, involving many agents with conflicting interests that interact with each other in

⁵ 'Bad failures' can be considered as preventable failures in predictable operations, while 'good failures' are often unavoidable failures in complex systems or when entering uncharted territory and dealing with high levels of uncertainty (Edmondson 2011). A culture that promotes good failure and thus values bad news is essential for learning.

dynamic and unpredictable ways. As a result, a development intervention that introduces changes in one part of the system normally triggers unforeseen effects elsewhere (Burns and Worsley 2015; Kleinfeld 2015). Development and humanitarian actors thus require an extraordinary sensing and adaptive capacity to respond to these challenges. Indeed, there have long been calls for development programmes to better understand the social and political contexts of their efforts, to work with those directly impacted by the problem they are responding to, and to learn and experiment to ensure the continuous improvement of interventions (Hirschman 1967; Rondinelli 1983).

However, the corporate culture, organisational structures, operating procedures and behavioural incentives of the aid industry typically favour a logic of bureaucratic control and predictability, with programmes often planned and executed in a linear, technocratic and predetermined way (Natsios 2010; Ramalingam 2013). Further, the aid sector tends to separate – rather than integrate – the functions responsible for implementation, monitoring, learning and adaptation throughout the programme management cycle (Teskey 2018). A recent empirical analysis of more than 14,000 development projects concluded that, particularly in unpredictable environments and in cases where it is hard to measure the accomplishment of programme goals, tight accountability controls and a focus on reaching pre-set measurable targets often prevent programmes from maximising their impact (Honig 2018).

Critical reviews of the various results-based management (RBM) efforts carried out by donors and development agencies in recent years also stress the importance of learning, ownership and adaptation for achieving impact and aid effectiveness (Vähämäki and Verger 2019). The *World Development Report* (World Bank 2017) recognised that aid agencies need to increase flexibility of implementation, tolerate greater risk and ambiguity, devolve power from aid providers to aid partners, and avoid simplistic linear schemes for measuring results, concluding that the way forward may require a more adaptive or agile approach, in which strategies are tried out locally and then adjusted based on early evidence. A 2017 independent evaluation of SDC's RBM system commissioned by the organisation's Evaluation and Controlling Division (Schmidt, Palenberg and Vähämäki 2017) found that a critical success factor of the system is its flexibility in implementation. It also noted the need to further improve the approach to 'strategic steering', including through the use of Theory of Change.

A growing number of international organisations and governments now embrace the need to handle complexity better (Sharp, Valters and Whitty 2019) and have begun to adapt their policies and practices to facilitate adaptive approaches. Many multilateral and bilateral organisations, including the World Bank, DFID and USAID, are currently experimenting with adaptive approaches (Bain, Booth and Wild 2016; Wild, Booth and Valters 2017; USAID 2018a)⁶ and are increasingly celebrating and showcasing the programmes and teams that are able to adapt successfully. Together with civil society organisations (CSOs), academic institutions, foundations and development practitioners, they have also supported a progressive incorporation of political economy analysis as part of programming. They have promoted a multitude of approaches and communities of practice to improve the effectiveness of aid, such as Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting, Thinking and Working Politically, Doing Development Differently, PDIA, Market Systems Development, Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management, Science of Delivery, and several others. These communities advocate for more adaptive approaches in aid, and their alignment and popularity suggest the emergence of a 'second orthodoxy' in development thinking (Teskey 2017), which would be transitioning from the previous 'linear prescriptive' paradigm toward an 'adaptive politically savvy' one.

⁶ The Zotero library used for this literature review, which is accessible at <http://bit.ly/am-library>, provides access to plenty of case studies, tools, studies, reflections and policy documents.

Figure 4 summarises the differences between traditional management and adaptive management of development programmes, across a series of key dimensions, which indicate the trend we see in the sector as a whole.

Figure 4 Traditional management vs adaptive management

Assumptions	"The blueprint approach" - change is linear, context is static, we know what we need to do/measure, our activities will produce the outcomes we desire	"The learn by doing approach" - change is non-linear, context is dynamic, we have partial information, we have hypotheses, we will need to change course
Priorities:	Accountability, compliance, avoiding failure, standardisation, RESULTS	Time-sensitive learning, effectiveness, responsible experimentation, RESULTS
Methods:	Results-Based Budgeting, Project and Program Management, Logframes, M&E for accountability	Problem driven iterative development, systemic action research, strategy testing, outcome harvesting, real time M&E
Culture and organisation	Top-down/centralised management, risk aversion, replicability, favor institutional priorities, discomfort with uncertainty	De-centralised decision making, favour contextual priorities, horses for courses, risk tolerance, comfort with uncertainty

Source: Gray and Carl (2019). Reproduced with permission. <https://adaptpeacebuilding.org/blog/calibrating-adaptive-programming-across-multi-country-multi-partner-programs>

Notwithstanding this positive framing of the shifts, there are also **reasons for concern** around the calls for more adaptive development. First of all, there is a worry that despite its current popularity, it may fail to generate enough changes in the practices of programme design and implementation, and thus become **just another passing fad**. This, some argue, could stem from the conceptual complexity that currently surrounds the new paradigm (Shutt 2016) – with so many development actors **promoting their own frameworks and jargon**, despite all referring to similar ideas (Algozo and Hudson 2016; Marquette 2019) – and the failure of the sector to leverage learning across development organisations and from other sectors. We contend, therefore that one of the key advantages of using the term ‘adaptive management’ in the aid sector would be to act as a *lingua franca* – a bridge language that facilitates exchange and learning among different communities.

There are several factors that make it a good candidate to play this role: first, its all-purpose, common-sensical and practice-oriented nature enables it to act as a common denominator among approaches; second, the fact that it was not created within the development sector means that it is not ‘owned’ by any particular agency or practitioner community; and third, since the concept has been used for decades in other sectors, it not only brings strong historic credentials but can also facilitate the cross-appropriation of practices, techniques and tools already operating in other sectors, which could be adapted to the aid sector instead of reinventing the wheel over and over again.

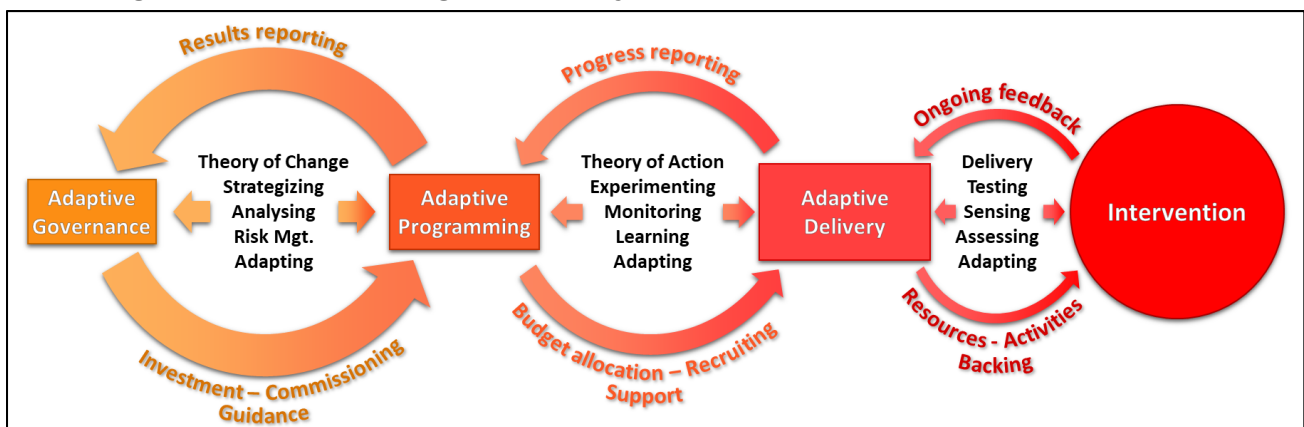
Another concern relates to the current **lack of conceptual clarity and methodological rigour**, which means that anything can present itself as AM. The flexibility that lies at the core of AM approaches can thus be used to resist accountability demands and attempt to legitimise as AM what is in fact just ‘bad management’. For this reason, there have been

calls for an increased global exchange of learning on AM (Wild and Ramalingam 2018), as well as for setting standards for rigorous AM approaches that satisfy donors' oversight needs but also provide opportunities for learning and adaptation (Ørnemark 2016; Ramalingam, Wild and Buffardi 2019).

As part of its efforts to clarify the meaning and practice of AM in international development, the research programme Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) has recently published case studies of DFID-funded adaptive programmes, and proposed a key differentiation between three aspects (Punton and Burge 2018; Green and Guijt 2019):

- **Adaptive delivery:** adaptive activities that happen at the 'front line'. This involves field staff, partners and implementers applying curiosity, evidence, emotional intelligence and instinct to learn, adapt and make decisions in the short term, continuously navigating through ever-changing, turbulent conditions, many moving parts and players, ambiguity and uncertainty. Front-line staff come up with best guesses on what to do next, then test and correct in a continuous engagement and learning process.
- **Adaptive programming:** a more conscious and structured process, usually in the hands of the programme managers within the project office in the partner country. It involves less frequent cycles of stepping back to reflect, conducting more in-depth and focused analysis, and bringing in critical friends to help question, challenge and set new directions.
- **Adaptive governance:** the wider enabling environment for adaptive programming – how donors and commissioners design, procure, fund and manage programmes to allow adaptive programming and delivery to happen in practice. This normally resides with the officer(s) at donor agency HQ responsible for the project. They need to manage upwards, coping with their internal pressures for results (political economy in the home countries), reporting and shifting priorities, while also managing relations with field offices, ensuring that the project accounts for how it is spending donor money, but also retains the freedom of manoeuvre required for AM.

Figure 5 Adaptive management life cycle



Source: Author's own, based on Green and Guijt (2019). Creative Commons Attribution [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) © Itad

This model (Figure 5), while based on insights into the way DFID operates, resonates strongly with the general practices of bilateral aid agencies. The focus of the framework is on the 'programme' as the unit of delivery of development interventions, and establishes what AM demands from the key stakeholders involved from a bilateral donor perspective: the programme implementers (i.e. partners in the field, be it multilateral institutions, non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners or state institutions), the field offices in partner

countries, and the responsible geographic desks at HQ. We believe this promising new model could be further extended to acknowledge how AM needs to be applied, not just to the management of programmes but to also consider other levels of engagement, such as the portfolios of programmes within a country (see Buffardi *et al.* 2019) or even the donor's strategy for a country or region.

The main challenge for the development sector now is to transition from the wide acceptance of the need to 'be adaptive' toward the real development and practice of AM approaches effectively and routinely (Ang 2018; Honig and Gulrajani 2018). For this, we need to make sure that the sector's funding, contracting, management and accountability arrangements enable rather than discourage AM. The importance of this aspect cannot be understated: while the external unpredictability and complexity of development contexts are frequently referred to in justifying the need for adaptive approaches in development programming, recent case studies evidence that the internal complexity emerging from the institutional arrangements of aid organisations and programmes could be an even stronger constraint to achieving impact (Christie and Green 2018; Bridges and Woolcock 2019).

Several recommendations from a recent analysis on how DFID can better manage complexity in development programming (Sharp *et al.* 2019) are also relevant for any bilateral donor willing to develop its AM capacities. They include the need to: (1) strengthen the link between programme design and the delivery options available (i.e. the potential future implementers and partners), avoiding a disconnect between the intervention's design and its subsequent contracting; (2) articulate better, within programme design, how the ambition matches existing capacity and resources, aiming for realistic 'good enough' goals rather than idealistic 'best case' aims; and (3) reduce the burden of programme approval processes and of compliance requirements, and promote more flexible procurement and contracting systems.⁷

5 Overview of donors' approaches to adaptive management

The following sub-sections briefly present how different donors approach AM, providing an overview of their main guidance documents and practices, including references to relevant AM programmes and cases.

5.1 USAID – United States Agency for International Development

USAID defines AM as: 'support[ing] intentional ways to make adjustments in response to new information and context changes' and suggests that 'adaptive management is not about changing goals during implementation, it is about changing the path being used to achieve the goals in response to changes', with important implications for the design, funding and management of development interventions (USAID 2018a). Although traces of AM could be found in the organisation beforehand, only recently did USAID introduce frameworks for operationalising systems thinking and AM in the program cycle (USAID 2014a; 2014b).

⁷ See Pryor (2018) for examples of adaptive procurement from USAID.

Figure 6 USAID Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting model



Source: USAID Learning Lab (2016). [Learning Lab Privacy Policy](#)

The Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) framework includes two main dimensions (see Figure 6): (1) how to incorporate collaboration, learning and adaptation throughout the programme cycle; and (2) how to create enabling conditions for AM, including support for CLA integration, organisational culture, business processes, and resource allocation. CLA became codified as USAID ‘programme cycle operational policy’ (USAID 2018b) in December 2016, identifying four principles as ‘essential for good development’: applying analytic rigour, managing adaptively, promoting sustainability, and utilising diverse [context-appropriate] approaches for increased flexibility.

USAID has a relatively decentralised organisational structure where country offices have a greater say in how budget is allocated in comparison to its HQ in Washington. As such, levels of uptake and success of CLA often vary across countries; USAID’s Uganda and Ethiopia country offices are often mentioned as leaders in AM practice. The shift to AM in USAID’s operational policy is still quite recent, so its uptake is not necessarily widespread across all its operations. Pre-existing and embedded ways of working have been slow to give way to AM, and not everyone in the organisation is fully convinced of its merits or understands how to apply it to their work.

In an effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of AM, provide further guidance on what it looks like in practice, and thus increase uptake, USAID holds a periodic CLA case competition, which captures real-life cases of staff and implementing partners applying CLA approaches for organisational learning and better development outcomes (USAID 2015). As of May 2019, the CLA case study collection comprised more than 250 case studies. USAID also shares lessons learned, training materials, and technical notes on its CLA approach and AM more generally via its CLA website, which at the time of writing includes more than 850 resources. Recent examples of their practical tools include a framework to guide practitioners in knowing ‘when to adapt’ and guidance on how to hire adaptive employees (USAID 2019a; Baker 2019).

USAID's Office of Local Sustainability is also promoting innovative, sustainable and locally led operational approaches through a series of programmes like Local Works and the Locally Led Development Innovation initiative (USAID 2019b; 2019c), which are very much aligned with the AM agenda.

5.2 DFID – UK Department for International Development

DFID does not seem to have an institutionally supported working definition of AM or related topic. However, its involvement in the Doing Development Differently (DDD) and Thinking and Working Politically (TWP) communities of practices, and the Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) initiative, illustrate that AM is becoming increasingly recognised within the organisation. Although DFID's guiding principles and rules do not explicitly refer to AM, recognition of the need to adapt to changes in contexts is threaded throughout them. For example, they state that 'to eradicate poverty in a complex and fragile world... delivering results and addressing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict requires programmes that can adapt to and influence the local context' (DFID 2019: 4).

In 2013 DFID underwent an end-to-end review in which staff shared experiences about what they felt was working and/or hindering success. The review made several recommendations including: evolving programme management assisted by simplified rules, reducing paperwork, and streamlining processes; making DFID programmes more responsive to changing conditions on the ground; improving ability to commission and manage adaptive and flexible interventions; and changes in culture and behaviour within DFID (Wild *et al.* 2017: 11). This led to a number of reforms that included a new set of simplified and condensed corporate requirements known as 'smart rules'. They also included the creation of a new Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) role at programme level to ensure that programmes are designed to be adaptive to changing contexts based on feedback and learning, as well as ensuring that programmes comply with the smart rules throughout the programme cycle. Finally, they included investments in improving delivery, with greater emphasis added to cross-agency learning. DFID's latest 'smart rules' (version X) include 10 principles that guide DFID's work and 37 mandatory rules that govern DFID's programme cycle (DFID 2019).

There is no specific framework or guide to doing AM at DFID; instead, staff designing programmes can propose which methods or tools to use, constrained only by what is allowed in the 'smart rules' (Wild *et al.* 2017). However, the shift to a more adaptive culture and operational procedures conducive of AM has not yet become widespread, as DFID is a very large organisation with many areas and competing interests. Further, discussions about operationalising AM sit across different parts of the organisation that often have conflicting views of what counts as 'rigorous' evidence to support strategic AM.

LASER (Legal Assistance for Economic Reform) and SAVI (State Accountability and Voice Initiative, Nigeria) are two DFID-funded programmes that are often highlighted for being adaptive (Derbyshire and Donovan 2016). However, findings from these two programmes indicate that being adaptive often means 'swimming against the tide of conventional practice'. As such, AM uptake is still low across DFID programmes, but the list of programmes perceived as adaptive is now growing (Pyoe Pin in Myanmar, FOSTER in Nigeria, Centre for Inclusive Growth in Nepal, and MUVA in Mozambique, among others). Moreover, DFID's commitment to becoming a more adaptive donor is further reflected in its lead donor role in the GLAM initiative (DFID 2016; Wild and Ramalingam 2018), which was 'established to help catalyse the wider uptake of AM principles and practices' in DFID and USAID.

5.3 Irish Aid (with Christian Aid Ireland)

Irish Aid does not seem to have a working definition of AM or to have endorsed it as a mode of working. However, it is currently funding a five-year Christian Aid Ireland (CAI) programme that has garnered interest in the AM community (Booth *et al.* 2018). The programme aims to 'support [CAI's] partners to discover, by means of purposeful trial and error, how to make a difference to people's lives in challenging country contexts' while working 'exclusively through partner organisations that are tackling unjust power dynamics, the social impacts of violence and gender inequality' (*ibid.*: 7). The shift to working adaptively came after CAI's previous five-year programme – also funded by Irish Aid – came to a close and Christian Aid staff reflections indicated that detailed upfront target-setting constrained capacity to work appropriately in complex settings or on complex issues.

Subsequently, CAI decided to inform its upcoming proposal with the latest ideas in AM. Irish Aid responded by allowing CAI to transfer the burden of reporting to the donor to the core CAI team in Ireland, in order to free up partners on the ground from having to work linearly and be subjected to the traditional aid pressures (Green 2019). Instead, the core CAI team prepares reporting using information garnered through participatory outcome mapping and a strategy testing process (Earl *et al.* 2001; Ladner 2015). Irish Aid has not completely removed the need to report results in terms of pre-stipulated targets, as the insights from participatory outcome mapping and strategy testing processes are used to populate the results framework.

The programme seeks to empower local CSOs in contexts where the space for civil society is shrinking, working toward the realisation of human rights for poor and marginalised groups, with an emphasis on gender equality. Moreover, unlike most AM initiatives to date, which concentrate their work in one setting and use a single management structure, this programme works in multiple conflict- and violence-affected states, and across several complex and interacting areas (human rights, gender equality, governance, peace-building). Along with changing the nature of reporting requirements, the programme is categorised by four main innovations: (1) jointly developing revisable Theories of Change with each partner in every country, as well as at the country and programme levels; (2) testing the Theories of Change and their inherent assumptions on a six-month or one-year basis to see if they still hold, and adapting them based on learning; (3) the use of participatory outcome harvesting to monitor outcomes as they happen; and (4) an emphasis on bringing in perspectives from affected communities about what changes are occurring and what can be improved (Green 2019).

Outcome harvesting (Wilson-Grau and Britt 2012) allows partners on the ground – mainly NGOs – to retrospectively gather data associated with or important to their interventions. This method of data collection is consistent with AM because the results reported do not need to be specified in advance; in this sense, it is a goal-independent evaluation methodology. Instead, partners identify changes, accomplishments and setbacks related to their interventions as they occur, which can then be used to reflect on the strategy and provide them with the qualitative data necessary for annual reporting (Booth *et al.* 2018). Moreover, the process is useful for the partners themselves as it allows them to reflect on and document how they are reacting to unpredictable changes in complex environments and helps them show how their adaptations may have contributed to achieving impact. For donors, participatory outcome harvesting provides a richer understanding of what partners are doing and the challenges they encounter over time (Green 2019).

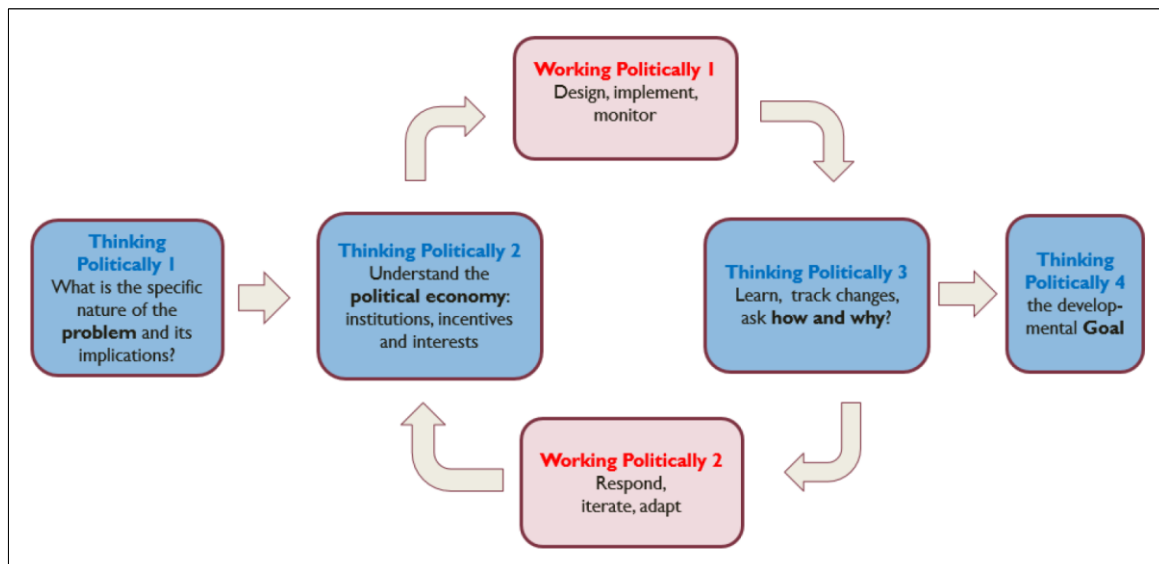
CAI only shifted to this approach in early 2017 and despite increasing interest from Irish Aid, it has not replicated the approach to other CAI projects/programmes. An early review of the programme found that the first strategy testing sessions were mainly used to assure partners that CAI was serious about the change. Meanwhile 'only a few partners so far have

embraced... the freedom they now enjoy to adapt what they are doing in the light of evidence that the mechanisms of change they have assumed are not really working', most of the adaptations observed relate more to a 'flexibility to respond to changes in context than about making corrections in the light of evidence of weak effectiveness', so 'it may take some years before the opportunity... is taken up energetically' (Booth *et al.* 2018: 21). Moreover, the hybrid arrangement in which CAI must balance the requirements of innovation at the country level and traditional reporting against targets at the programme level could be problematic in the long term.

5.4 DFAT – Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DFAT does not seem to have an internal working definition of AM but has shown signs of endorsing AM thinking through funding TWP projects over a decade. TWP is an approach with many parallels to AM, and has three core principles: 'strong political analysis, insight and understanding; detailed appreciation of, and response to, the local context; and, flexibility and adaptability in program design and implementation' (Laws and Marquette 2018).

Figure 7 TWP project framework, which resembles an adaptive management approach



Source: Teskey (2017). Reproduced with permission. © Abt Associates

In an attempt to enable flexibility and improve the effectiveness of its aid spending, DFAT is currently considering shifting some of its resources away from working in a projectised fashion towards establishing 'facilities' that seek to improve their chances at tackling complex development challenges through fewer but larger and highly integrated initiatives (Tyrrel, Teskey and de Lacy 2017). A recent external DFAT evaluation defined a facility approach as 'an aid delivery mechanism that provides flexible (adaptive and responsive) services managed in an integrated way. Objectives (or end of facility outcomes) are specified, but the pathways to deliver them are left unspecified' (Pieper 2018: 2). In other words, DFAT is seeking to tackle big complex development challenges by setting up larger and more complex multi-sector interventions that consolidate smaller projects and are managed by a single firm rather than funding many small fragmented projects. Facilities are meant to give space for collaborative and responsive partnerships with coherent cross-sector goals and outcomes, and allow grantees to experiment and adapt based on contextual changes, demand, and learning about what works and what does not. One

example is the Fiji Programme Support Facility managed by Coffey International, which works across six sectors (health, education, scholarships, civil society support, emergency preparedness and response, and governance) and supports the integration of cross-cutting issues of gender equity and social inclusion, disability inclusiveness, climate change, child protection and environment (Tyrrel *et al.* 2017).

According to de Lacy (2017), there are three main justifications for DFAT increasing its proportion of programmes designed as facilities: (1) improving efficiency by spending less on management and more on programmes; (2) freeing up time that DFAT management staff would have spent on managing small contracts so that they can focus instead on strategy, relationships and performance; and (3) increasing the impact of aid spending through increased flexibility and cohesion between projects that might otherwise have been working in isolation. The concept is not necessarily new, as DFAT has implemented facilities since the 1990s, but facilities are getting increasingly larger. Facilities nonetheless make up a small share of DFAT's portfolio, accounting for only 22 out of 900 programmes and just 6 per cent of its total aid budget between 2016 and 2017 (DFAT 2018).

There seems to be much overlap between DFAT's work on TWP and its facilities, as many of the DFAT-funded programmes that carry a TWP banner have been set up under a facility funding modality. This suggests that TWP programmes are a subset of the adaptive work done by DFAT, while facilities are an enabler. Moreover, DFAT also funds Market Systems Development (MSD) programmes (see Section 5.7 on Sida) for which AM is an inherent feature (DFAT 2017). The link between DFAT MSD projects and its facility modality are less clear but should be explored further.

5.5 Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

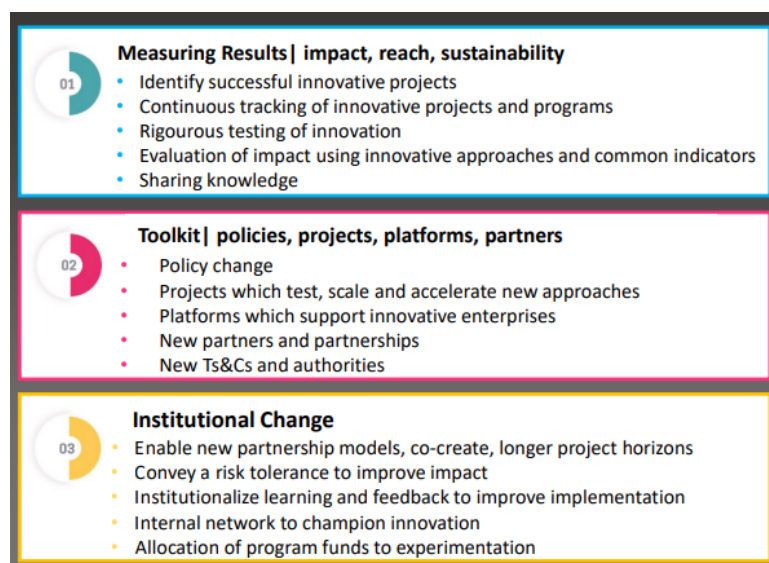
GAC does not seem to have a working definition of AM nor use it as a concept that informs its programming. Instead, adaptation at GAC seems to come out more strongly in its conceptualisation of Development Innovation. In 2015, Canada's Minister of International Development issued a mandate to make 'Canada a leader in development innovation and effectiveness' (Office of the Prime Minister 2015). For GAC, development innovation includes new or improved business models, policy practices, approaches, technologies, insights or ways of delivering products and services that benefit and empower the poorest and most vulnerable people in developing countries. As such, GAC is seeking to support initiatives capable of achieving systemic change while 'leaving no one behind' with an explicit emphasis on empowering women and girls and reducing inequalities. At the G7 2018 summit, held in Canada, GAC endorsed the Whistler Principles to Accelerate Innovation for Development Impact (G7 2018; OECD 2018), which are much aligned with AM: (a) promote inclusive innovation; (b) invest in locally driven solutions; (c) take intelligent risks by experimenting and collecting and using rigorous data; (d) use evidence, including disaggregated data, to drive decision making; (e) seize opportunities to learn quickly to iterate and ensure the impact of promising innovations; (f) facilitate collaboration and co-creation across public, private and civil society actors; (g) identify scalable solutions, including technologies; and (h) integrate proven innovations into organisations' larger programmes.

After a consultation with more than 15,000 people including Canadians, international partners, and aid recipients in more than 65 countries in 2016, GAC released a new International Assistance Policy for Canada entitled Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy the following year. The policy states that if GAC is to contribute to reducing poverty, decreasing inequalities, and empowering women and girls, GAC 'must be innovative in how [it] works – through [its] funding mechanisms and by forming new partnerships. [GAC] will make sound decisions based on evidence and closely track

progress in a manner adapted to the needs of different stakeholders in different contexts’ (GAC 2017: iii). It further states that GAC will ‘build innovation into its international assistance, encouraging greater experimentation and scaling-up of new solutions to development challenges’ (GAC 2017: 72). GAC’s new policy prioritises more integrated, responsive and accountable assistance, and greater concentration in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. To be able to respond to contextual needs in a more agile way, it plans to streamline its funding processes and risks and results-based management procedures.

GAC’s development innovation approach (see Figure 8) is underpinned by four main elements (GAC 2018): experimentation and testing; learning; scaling; and measurement and evaluation. Similar to USAID’s CLA framework, GAC’s development innovation approach includes three main areas for action: measuring results; a toolkit on policies, projects, platforms, and partners; and institutional change. GAC has created a Development Innovation Unit, which seeks to ‘promote a development innovation institutional shift across the Department’s development stream’ and provide staff with innovative capacity-building opportunities and engagement in a community of practice. Moreover, there are around 650 GAC ‘innovation ambassadors’ both in Canada and in posts abroad (GAC 2018: 7). To what degree this shift in institutional culture has happened is unclear. More guidance is likely to emerge in the near future, as GAC is currently ‘renewing its guidance for programming, including strategies, guidelines, and tools to deliver on the policy’s new commitments to innovation, partnerships and flexibility’ (OECD 2018).

Figure 8 GAC’s development innovation approach



Source: GAC (2018). <https://acgc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/April-6-Development-Innovation-at-Global-Affairs-Canada.pdf>

IDRC – a state research institute that often collaborates with GAC – has funded research on AM for over a decade (e.g. Swanson and Bhadwal 2009) and advocated for adaptive approaches like outcome mapping and developmental evaluation (Earl *et al.* 2001; Gamble 2008). In line with GAC, IDRC has recently made development innovation research a priority (OECD 2018). It recently introduced the concept of ‘scaling science’, which emphasises achieving impact with innovations at the greatest scale possible without compromising quality (Gargani and McLean 2017; McLean and Gargani 2019).

The approach is meant to help development agencies make decisions on innovations and has four main principles: (1) **moral justification**, taking into consideration the risks borne by affected people when deciding under what circumstances to scale; (2) **inclusive**

coordination, ensuring that a diverse set of stakeholders participate in decisions to scale, especially the people affected by innovation themselves; **(3) optimal scale**, understanding that bigger is not always better, development agencies must take into account trade-offs between scaling innovations and potential unintended consequences like crowding out alternative solutions, decreasing positive impacts, or amplifying negative impacts; and **(4) dynamic evaluation**, meaning evaluation must be done continuously (before, during, and after scaling) to pick up on changes in impact as contexts and circumstances change and interventions are scaled.

IDRC sees its model as especially useful in situations where no reliable solutions exist, or when contexts rapidly change or are in flux, making existing solutions less reliable. However, data on the prevalence of IDRC programmes implementing a scaling science approach seems to be unavailable.

5.6 GIZ – German Society for International Cooperation

Capacity WORKS was introduced as GIZ's sustainable development management model in 2009 and is now an integral part of its key procedures from programme design to implementation to internal evaluation and reporting (GIZ 2015). It arose following a shared journey of discovery within GIZ in which it codified implicit knowledge across the organisation's practitioner staff regarding what factors generate effective and sustainable results in projects.

The model, which is trademarked, applies a systems theory lens to development projects and management. It provides a collection of tools that practitioners can apply in cooperation programmes as part of an overarching iterative process that involves periodic learning and adaptation. Each of the tools is intended to support work on one of the five 'key success factors' for cooperation management identified by Capacity WORKS: (1) strategy (a clear and plausible strategic orientation); (2) cooperation (a clear understanding of who will be cooperating with who and how); (3) an operational steering structure; (4) processes (a clear understanding of key strategy processes); and (5) learning and innovation (measures to develop and consolidate learning capacities) (GIZ 2014). The model acknowledges that development goals are often in conflict with each other in constantly changing contexts, which means that trade-offs and compromises may be needed between economic, social justice, environmental and political participation goals. The model also emphasises the importance of managing ongoing and shifting multi-stakeholder cooperation between governments, business, and civil society so that workable compromises can be reached across local, national, and international levels. The Capacity WORKS model is meant to provide GIZ staff and partners working in complex environments with guidance and structure without constraining them.

The model involves jointly analysing and working through the complexity of issues with partners to assure that complex projects and programmes are steered with quality. Further evidence is needed, but GIZ suggests that 'Capacity WORKS has proved a great success in German international cooperation, where it has achieved an excellent track record as a model for cooperation management. This has been the case regardless of the considerable differences between the various countries, cultures and sectors in which [GIZ] work[s]' (GIZ 2015: 2). GIZ has published a book on Capacity WORKS and reflections on what makes cooperation work succeed, but the book is behind a paywall and thus not easily accessible to the general public (GIZ 2015).⁸

⁸ An online course on Capacity WORKS is nonetheless available on GIZ's website, at https://gc21.giz.de/ibt/usr/wbt/gc21/public/wbt_capacity_works_en/uk/index.htm

5.7 Sida – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Sida recognises the DDD principles (Booth, Harris and Wild 2016) and argues that its MSD approach is in line with them. Sida has funded projects that apply an MSD approach for more than 20 years. Rather than substituting AM with MSD, it considers MSD as one approach to it, understanding that AM is much broader. Sida regards MSD as ‘a way to better deliver large-scale, sustainable development impact to poor and disadvantaged people’ (Ruffer *et al.* 2018). It is meant to provide a framework for understanding the root causes of development challenges and also a method to intervene in market systems to reduce poverty sustainably. Three features make MSD different from more traditional development approaches: (1) **facilitation** (recognition that external players – and their projects and programmes – should act as facilitators that stimulate and support change rather than as external implementers); (2) **market system-centric** (emphasis on analysing and identifying how systems are failing poor people and the root causes of that failure); and (3) **adaptation** (monitoring systems are set up to provide real-time information used to test assumptions so that activities shown to work can be scaled while those that do not can be adjusted or closed accordingly). Due to the approach’s emphasis on facilitation, Sida suggests that projects should be long term (their average MSD project lasts 4.6 years when extensions are included), with the early years dedicated to piloting and experimentation. Sida also acknowledges that working in this way means that staff costs would have to take up a larger share of the budget to achieve systemic change, and recognises the need to balance legal accountability with room for adaptation in contracts and agreements.

Although Sida claims to have applied the approach for the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in projects applying the approach since 2010, in an increasing number of partner countries and sectors. As of 2018, Sida had implemented 35 MSD projects (27 of which are ongoing); 16 projects started between 2013 and 2017 and 8 started in 2017 alone. Their main areas of focus have been agriculture and finance, but an MSD approach has also been applied to fisheries, tourism, and off-grid energy. Sida suggests that although formally recognising MSD helped spark increased uptake, there was also a bottom-up drive to support the approach by a small number of individuals (or positive deviants) within the organisation early on. Although the profile of MSD is increasing at Sida, it is not yet fully institutionalised, and leadership endorsement of MSD is not strong or consistent (Ruffer *et al.* 2018). One example of an MSD project at Sida is the Livelihoods Improvement for Women and Youth (LIWAY) in Ethiopia – a joint project between Smart Development Works, TechnoServe, Mercy Corps and Save the Children, which aims to improve the employment market for women and young people in Addis Ababa.⁹

5.8 Summary of donor approaches

Table 2 provides a comparative view of these seven different donor approaches to AM. Most do not subscribe to an organisational definition or singular approach (with the exception of USAID) that mandates how AM will work. What we see instead is different donors building AM thinking and practice into their programming approaches through blending with existing frameworks and approaches. The resulting picture is one of quite a complex and nuanced view of what AM means internally, with a multiplicity of jargon that needs to be understood alongside appreciation for the history and culture of the donor agency, as well as broader shifts in the national and political context that influence how aid is funded and what is prioritised. This is a complex panorama and, as noted earlier, we contend that using AM language to look across and pull out learning, as we have done here, is a fruitful exercise that should be supported further.

⁹ Smart Development Works, www.snv.org/project/livelihoods-improvement-women-and-youth-liway

Table 2 Summary of adaptive management development approaches by selected donors

Donor	Main adaptive approach	Summary
USAID	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting	Explicit and comprehensive programme cycle guidance; AM embraced for all programmes; big promoter of AM ideas globally
DFID	TWP (Thinking and Working Politically), DDD (Doing Development Differently)	Rules for programme management simplified; AM present in many programmes; willing to learn on AM; several iconic adaptive programmes
Sida	DDD, MSD (Market Systems Development)	Organic expansion of the use of MSD approaches; combination of endorsement by leadership and bottom-up impulse of its use
DFAT	Large facilities, TWP and MSD	AM approaches promoted specially through their large facilities programmes, and programmes on governance and MSD
GAC	Development Innovation & Scaling Science	Longstanding promoter of learning-based approaches to development (outcome mapping, developmental evaluation)
GIZ	Capacity WORKS	Applied for many of their programmes; copyrighted; less rooted in cross-donor dialogues on adaptive management
Irish Aid	[mix]	Piloting in specific programmes; leveraging and testing learning from other donors

Source: Authors' own.

6 Adaptive management in SDC

This section reports on key findings from KIIs and the learning workshop, reflecting more specifically on SDC's relationship with AM and its strengths and weaknesses. It also presents a synthesis of the opportunities and challenges for SDC's AM practice, with recommendations for ways to deepen and strengthen practice.

We have structured the analysis of the KIIs and the workshop through the key AM dimensions identified in previous sections (see Table 3) to focus on how SDC's current values, its work processes and the tools it uses are enabling (or undermining) the application of AM approaches. For each of the dimensions we share general findings and summarise the strengths and weaknesses within existing practice.

Table 3 General framework for analysis

Key adaptive management dimensions	
Values and principles	Mindsets and attitudes regarding to how to tackle complexity and uncertainty
Processes and practices	Organisational and institutional arrangements for programme design and management. Adaptive delivery: daily adaptive practices at the 'front line', with staff and partners learning and taking decisions in the short term. Adaptive programming: more structured processes of management by senior staff that promote and support adaptation at longer time frames. Adaptive governance: wider programme management, including how programmes are designed, procured, funded and managed by donors over their whole life cycle.
Techniques and tools	Instruments and ways of working that facilitate adaptiveness at every level: planning, communications, context monitoring, impact assessment, knowledge and relationships management, etc.

Source: Authors' own.

We then consider opportunities and threats for SDC with regards to AM, and make recommendations on how to further advance SDC's capacity for adaptive programming and learning in the future.

6.1 Values and principles for adaptive management

Here we consider the mindsets and attitudes with regards to AM within SDC. As noted in the literature, a positive stance and understanding of complexity and uncertainty in international development is an essential condition for the successful development of AM approaches. Moreover, there is evidence that this complexity-aware mindset should be shared to a certain extent across the whole of the organisation – including HQ, country offices, thematic divisions, the supporting functions, and even the partners and organisations implementing the programmes – and include both management, and senior and junior staff.

In general, we found that the way people work within SDC seems to be aligned with AM concepts. **While AM is not a term widely used or even known within SDC, its key elements are practised using alternative framings such as 'steering of programmes'**. We observed a widespread acceptance and recognition of the value of AM approaches, which SDC staff and partners perceive as something that makes sense, as 'common-sense development', and for many interviewees as 'what we have always been doing at SDC'. They emphasised that learning should have a central role in the organisation and the need for projects and programmes to change and adapt over time. This awareness seems pervasive across the organisation, as it is shared by partners, national and international country staff and the senior management we interacted with. All of them generally considered that SDC has significant capacity and potential to enable flexibility, partly as a result of SDC's high degree of decentralisation.

Interviewees reported mixed levels of awareness of the term 'adaptive management'. Unfamiliarity with the term does not mean, however, that AM is not practised. Almost all

interviewees suggested that because of the nature of their work, the challenges SDC is seeking to address, and the volatility of the contexts they work in (fragile and conflict-afflicted settings in particular), **they are already constantly working in adaptive ways**. In most cases, being ‘adaptive’ was equated to working flexibly and changing plans and strategies whenever needed, normally as a result of changes in the country’s political context.

Several interviewees shared the critique that although SDC is a relatively flexible donor, adaptation of SDC projects and programmes is largely ‘informal, just responding to the opportunities’. One staff member suggested that where AM happens at SDC, it is largely reactionary and unplanned rather than anticipated. They further suggested that SDC does AM but not explicitly or mindfully, and that it should be more intentional. Another staff member suggested that they must build on their current practices to ‘institutionalise it more and be more proactive, by working with scenarios and including objectives that can evolve with the context’.

Interestingly, the recognition that AM is especially needed in fragile and conflict-afflicted settings seems to be accompanied by a low appreciation of the potential of AM to tackle complex development problems in more stable contexts. Several informants mentioned instances where they were only able to adapt because they were working in a fragile context or in emergency settings. It was observed that, while SDC offers significant flexibility to react to extreme contextual changes, adaptations to address less critical challenges as part of routinely sensing and responding to the triggers (for example, a gradual worsening of the conditions for the programme) are not really supported, meaning that in some cases, by the time something can be done, it may already be too late. In the case of Nicaragua, for example, the gradual worsening of the situation was perceived and new programmes were proposed that aimed to address the roots of the problem, but none of them had completed the approval cycle by the time the 2018–19 protests and crisis erupted. The analogy of being a ‘frog cooked to death in a pot that is brought to a boil slowly’ was used by some staff members in this regard.¹⁰

While SDC is generally considered an organisation that enables and, to some extent, promotes critical reflection and changing things when they do not work, several interviewees also suggested that there are **competing values, attitudes and practices within SDC that reduce the capacity to fully capitalise on learning and adaptation**. For example, some interviewees reported low tolerance for risk-taking and a tendency to deny failure and errors, which reduce the organisation’s capacity for experimenting, learning and improving.

Staff discussed examples of adaptations in which changing things within a programme may involve significant effort, and require extensive negotiations with HQ, modification of contracts, etc. This leads to cases where, even when there is evidence that something is not really working, staff prefer to leave it as it is till the end of the phase, rather than reacting to it. This tendency to avoid talking about difficulties and pretending that things are working well when they are not was thought to be prevalent among SDC’s partners, which do not openly share their worries about programmes. There were, however, declarations to the contrary, with one of the partners interviewed noting that they appreciated SDC’s openness to discussing failures, which meant they are not afraid of immediately losing funding when sharing implementation concerns and problems.

Similar to experiences we have found with other donors, interviewees stressed their impression that there are specific roles and departments of SDC (such as finance, contracting, or legal) that tend to be less enthusiastic about introducing changes and therefore do, at times, undermine AM capacity in practice. However, this was somehow

¹⁰ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boiling_frog

countered during the learning workshop, where a member of the contracting department was present and said that they are very ready to look at things on a case-by-case basis.

6.2 Processes and practices for adaptive management

This section covers aspects related to the general programme management cycle within SDC, including all organisational arrangements for programme design, implementation and management by the different stakeholders involved (including SDC staff at HQ and country office levels, implementing partners and local partners). We use Green's and Guijt's (2019) framework, which distinguishes between adaptive delivery, adaptive programming and adaptive governance (see Figure 5) to deepen our analysis.

6.2.1 Adaptive delivery

Adaptive delivery refers to the day-to-day operation of the programmes and involves staff of partner organisations implementing programmes for SDC and other donors – and, in rare cases, SDC staff directly involved in implementation – while continuously questioning whether or not the plans still work in the current situation, and what adaptations may be required.

The strong cultural bias towards working 'flexibly' within SDC is an important stimulus for adaptive delivery. As noted already, interviewees tended to view SDC as leaner, more flexible, less bureaucratic, less centralised, and closer to implementation than other donors. These characteristics further create a positive institutional environment for adaptive delivery. Partners interviewed also shared these sentiments when comparing their experience of working with SDC and with other donors, and valued especially the high level of trust, which means they can openly discuss any concerns, and change things that are not working. As noted earlier, we found that in the day-to-day delivery, especially programmes in conflict-affected areas, adaptive delivery is definitely being practised within SDC.

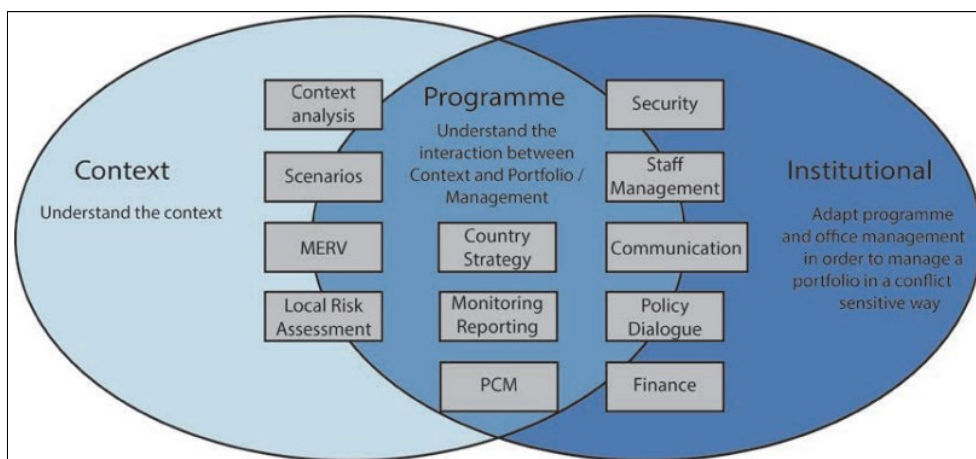
Several interviewees, however, also signalled that SDC's adaptive capacity on a day-to-day basis may be limited at times by the inability or lack of desire of some partners and implementers to take an adaptive approach. Partners may be especially resistant when adaptation means shifting the focus to areas or fields they are unfamiliar with or do not currently work in. This echoes findings from the AM field more broadly around very specialised or geographically focused NGOs being more resistant to strategic adaptations because their survival depends on working on a very narrow set of projects or places. Furthermore, the national culture of some programme countries – Mali, for example – could also create a barrier to flexible implementation, as they tend to favour more linear and predefined implementation models.

6.2.2 Adaptive programming

Adaptive programming refers, in the case of SDC, to the more conscious and structured process of mandating, implementing and accompanying the programmes from an SDC field office. This processes are usually led by the (national) programme managers and also Swiss staff, in interaction with senior staff from implementing organisations (in-country and from the implementer's HQ). It involves cycles of stepping back to reflect, and conducting more in-depth and focused analysis to set new directions for the programme.

Interviewees indicated that in general, processes are currently in place that allow SDC staff working in especially volatile environments to build adaptive programming into their programmes. For example, several interviewees mentioned their use of the Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management approach as a synonym for learning and adaptiveness (see Figure 9), which includes reflection and context monitoring activities that take place regularly, in many cases with an inclusive or participatory character.

Figure 9 SDC's Conflict-Sensitive Programme Management



Source: CHRnet (Conflict and Human Rights Network) www.shareweb.ch/site/Conflict-and-Human-Rights/startpage-tools/cspm-tool

Interviewees also seemed supportive of the use of programme reviews as critical moments for adaptation. These included end-of-phase reviews, which normally happen after four years, mid-term reviews of the programmes every 2 years, yearly reviews through the annual report process, and sometimes even mid-year reviews depending on how the country office is organised. The process of reviewing country strategies every four years (with additional mid-term strategy reviews every two years) offers further opportunities to re-evaluate how each intervention is contributing to the overall country strategy. These reviews allow staff to reflect on questions like what do we want to achieve, where are we now, what is our added value, are there missed opportunities, should we change something, both at the programme and the portfolio level. The use of steering committees at country level supports these review processes and creates an important enabling condition for reflection and learning.

Although SDC staff engage in regular meetings and reflection points, some informants indicated the need to make more intense use of data to support adaptive decision making more explicitly. They suggested that data would need to be collected more often, aiming not for perfection but for appropriateness and relevance. **The pressure to collect aggregated data for accountability purposes and to demonstrate impact currently places much emphasis on data being extensive and rigorous, rather than on its utility to aid decision making and the steering of programmes.**

SDC programmes are generally designed to last more than 10 years and are developed through a series of phases. While this long-term commitment is positive in terms of adaptive programming (as it enables the gradual adaptation of the programmes), it can also mean that at the level of portfolios, it becomes difficult to change course, even when the need has been detected: for example, in cases where the focus should move from working on rural areas to more urban contexts.

Several interviewees mentioned that adaptations to programming were easiest to make at the design phase of the programme cycle and at the start of new phases of a project, as part of the redesign of the programmes, which typically happens every four years. This implies a reduced space for adaptation during implementation, because of the difficulty to change contracts, budgets, partners, etc. It is reasonably easy to change focus among components already included in the plans, but it is very challenging to introduce new elements or partners. Some cases were presented in the interviews and the workshop where this difficulty was partially circumvented by anticipating, as part of the programme's design, the need for a certain degree of ongoing adaptation, which was also agreed with implementers in advance, making sure that partners were prepared to incorporate changes.

Several interviewees mentioned that staff embeddedness and understanding of local culture is essential for adaptive programming, but that the rotation of international staff every four years makes it difficult to achieve, and that institutional knowledge and relational capital often gets lost when staff leave. Local staff, which stay involved much longer, play a key role in maintaining institutional memory, networks of relationships and the understanding of the local contexts. But this is not free of challenges, as newcomers need to earn the trust of local staff before open conversations on difficult topics can happen, and that can take time.

6.2.3 Adaptive governance

Adaptive governance refers to the wider enabling environment provided at the higher levels of the programme cycle and is manifested mainly in the rules that guide the design and procurement of programmes, as well as the reporting and evaluation structures – all referring to processes that take place through the interaction between field offices and SDC HQ.

Several interviewees mentioned pros and cons of the two main funding modalities in use within SDC in relation to AM: mandates and contributions. These modalities create specific frameworks of rules and procedures that influence how adaptive governance plays out. Mandates are appreciated because, unlike contributions which often require collaborating with other donors on projects that may be already designed and running, mandates 'favour inventing new things' and give SDC a much higher degree of control. Since SDC is involved in their implementation, they may provide a lot of learning for SDC and so should enable adaptation. However, because mandates generally involve time-consuming tendering processes and require subcontracting the delivery of the programme to external partners, mandates are also considered to have poor adaptive capacity in terms of their operationalisation, because they are quite heavy on administration. Under this modality, any new activities require the creation of new budgets and a new contract that require HQ approval – shifting the ability to adapt to higher levels. As mentioned earlier, there are cases where more experienced cooperation office heads have tendered programmes in a way that allows for the needed flexibility and reduces the impact of administrative hurdles. SDC should collect and leverage these experiences for learning. At the same time, this illustrates the need to streamline links between adaptive governance and adaptive programming levels.

Another shortcoming associated with financial management and incentives is that budget that was meant to be spent in a year is lost if not used; it is not possible to roll over funds from one year to the next. Moreover, it is also difficult to shift budget from one programme to another, or from one geography to another. One way to overcome these limitations is a 'regional approach to funding', which 'allows to reallocate and balance excesses among different countries'. This was considered very useful to respond to changes in the context, and focus resources where they have greatest impact, thus enabling true adaptive governance.

On the other hand, contributions – either to projects initiated by international organisations and co-financed by SDC, or directly to support the core activities of selected partner organisations – were seen as enabling flexibility and as a way of getting around administrative burdens and lengthy approval times for mandates. On the flip side, contributions frequently mean that SDC does not have the ability to fully steer the projects, so deciding and then operationalising an adaptation requires extra time and effort because of the need to get other donors on board. But interviewees also mentioned cases of multi-donor initiatives where SDC was able to exert a much larger influence and steering capacity than the one corresponding to its financial contribution, because of being more closely engaged with the evolution of the initiative and its local context, and also being willing to act on this knowledge. Again, this illustrates the link between adaptive programming and delivery with higher-level governance processes.

Several interviewees suggested that a better balance between the two modalities is warranted to truly operationalise adaptive governance within SDC. However, one interviewee lamented that the balance may be currently shifting in the wrong direction. The SDC partners we interviewed, however, seemed to be much more optimistic about contributions they received from SDC than mandates.

An important finding is the sense of a closing space for AM and flexibility at SDC overall. Some of the cultural traits of SDC – such as high levels of trust, less burdensome upward accountability, and a high degree of autonomy for decision making – have earned it a reputation as a decentralised and flexible donor, which (as already noted) is a significant strength for adaptive programming. Throughout our interviews, SDC was referred to as one of the most flexible development partners, especially when compared with other bilateral and multilateral organisations. However, several informants were worried about these characteristics being eroded in recent times, with demands for more upward reporting, reduced trust and autonomy, pressure to demonstrate impact and infallibility, changes in funding modalities, and, as a result of all these changes, a diminished flexibility and learning capacity.

A key constraint to AM raised in the interviews was the high workloads of staff, especially in the field offices, and therefore their lack of time for reflection and learning. The bureaucratic procedures required by HQ in Bern were said to limit staff capacity to engage in the kind of in-depth policy dialogue and relationship-building which are essential for the good management and the continued improvement of programmes. Several interviewees shared their impression that the bureaucratic burden had actually increased over recent years, limiting the space for adaptive governance.

According to one interviewee, the increased need to report upwards and the political shifts this indicates amplifies the ‘fear of doing wrong or doing things that could be criticised’, leading to everything being done more slowly and to a higher aversion to taking risks. Interviewees reported a sense of growing political pressure to increase the number of mandates and tenders. We were also told that the share of the expenses that SDC may fund through a contribution has been reduced (SDC can fund only 50 per cent of a contribution), as well as the percentage of funds that country offices can allocate flexibly.

Moreover, one interviewee stressed that the process of integration of SDC into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has demanded a lot of effort and resulted in increased administrative and bureaucratic burden for SDC staff. Another interviewee feared that they may no longer be able to work on certain sensitive issues, such as advocating for rights and supporting civil society actors, due to the shift toward a business-centred focus in response to parliamentary interests. These high-level shifts in SDC’s political environment are concerning for adaptive governance as they push teams toward risk avoidance, and away from embracing failure as a source of learning – learning from small failures early to learn faster and avoid bigger

failures later. These perceptions, however, contrast with recent declarations from the Minister acknowledging that failures are inherent to learning and innovation.

6.3 Techniques and tools for adaptive management

This dimension considers the concrete techniques and tools used within SDC to support and bring to life the general processes of adaptive delivery, programming and governance that were described in the previous sections.

Alongside the culture of flexibility at SDC is a lack of requested or obligatory tools for AM. Interviewees suggested that there are, nonetheless, a suite of widely used and often required processes and tools that can enable SDC to adapt at various levels. Moreover, staff seemed to be well aware of the frequency at which these tools were used, which varied among offices as a result of the perceived volatility of the context.

The MERV (Monitoring Entwicklungs-Relevante Veränderungen – Monitoring of Development-Relevant Changes) was a regularly cited tool for context monitoring, which offers a space for deep reflection and capturing opportunities for change. It is especially useful at the level of the country strategies, which provide the umbrella for all programmes. While it was recognised that MERV analysis would need to happen frequently in fragile and uncertain contexts, it was also felt that the approach is quite heavy and demands significant time and effort; there were, however, reports of ‘light-touch’ versions of MERV being used more regularly. Finding ways to further involve partners and beneficiaries in MERV exercises was also mentioned as a potentially beneficial move.

Several interviewees specifically emphasised the use of planned regular informal meetings and reflection points (beyond MERV) as opportunities to review projects, programmes and strategies, and adapt. These included management and operational meetings, participation in donor coordination forums, and steering committees with different partners. However, interviewees also warned that although these meetings can be useful, there is a danger that they can easily become part of the routine or a box-ticking exercise (see previous section on adaptive programming) – which again highlights the need to have the right mindset alongside the right tools. Also, they may not be helpful if they are not linked to a monitoring and learning system that is integrated in the programme from the beginning.

Another mechanism valued by interviewees was the use of ‘back-stoppers’, both internal and external, that play the role of a critical friend and provide valuable insights, helping to identify issues that may require change. The use of scenarios (likely, worst, best, etc.), which are a mandatory tool for the establishment of country strategies, is also valued as a method for reviewing strategies and monitoring context. Other tools and mechanisms that were mentioned as supporting adaptations include: Political Economy Analysis (PEA), analyses performed by other partners, monitoring systems, and the use of Theories of Change that can be reviewed as the programme progresses. Ideally, these tools should relate to each other to effectively support the adaptation of programmes.

However, not all tools and frameworks used within SDC enable AM. Some interviewees suggested that logframes, which are widely used, are too rigid and hinder the organisation’s ability to adapt, as the focus is on going through the steps to achieve the outcomes. Some confusion regarding the use of logframes was evident, and while officially SDC does allow the flexible use of logframes as well as the use of similar tools (such as outcome mapping or Theories of Change and Theories of Action), this is not generally promoted within the organisation. As a result, making changes to the logframe requires significant effort and renegotiation with HQ and partners. Many interviewees indicated that logframes are useful for the design and management of programmes, and speak to the increasing emphasis on

delivering results and the RBM culture of SDC, but wished they could be used in less rigid ways.

In summary, there is currently a high level of ambiguity regarding requirements around use of specific tools. This is partly a result of the high degree of decentralisation, which means that each region and country office has established different criteria and processes. It poses an interesting challenge for SDC in thinking about how to deepen AM practice at all levels. Some staff suggested that it is possible to create adaptive space using existing tools and processes by anticipating the need for ongoing change in the early stages of programme design, so that changes are already expected, and thus there is less need to justify any changes subsequently.

6.4 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

Given that the three dimensions of AM practice are all interlinked and that during the learning workshop we discussed them as such, we provide here a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses across SDC in relation to AM.

Table 4 Summary of main strengths and weaknesses based on understanding of current SDC practice

Strengths in current SDC practice	Weaknesses in current SDC practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and widespread appreciation of the need for flexibility: even if there are norms and established criteria that to a certain extent limit the capacity to adapt, exceptions are always considered possible in cases where they are needed and well-documented and justified. • High levels of informal knowledge and experience around AM – most is action-oriented and not conceptual. • Decentralisation leads to a lack of structured/institutionalised approaches to AM, which supports contextualisation and embedding into natural ways of working. • Approach to programme management cycle is well-placed to support adaptive programming: thinking in the long term, programmes structured around phases with mid-term and yearly reviews offer opportunities to reflect at different timescales and integrate learning in a structured way. • Generally, there is widespread use of ‘moments for reflection’, though they could be more effective and better linked to PEA, and to the interests and capabilities of SDC’s partners and stakeholders. • Different funding modalities – mandates and contributions – offer different incentives and opportunities for the adaptive steering of programmes. • Mandates seem to offer more space for operationalising adaptation in the short term, as SDC has tighter control of its design and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM is understood mainly as ‘having flexibility to adapt when needed’ (passive/reactive AM) and so there is limited appreciation of the need for active AM at various levels of operation – from adaptive delivery of individual programmes to management of programme portfolio at country or regional level. • Processes of adaptation are not systematically documented, limiting rigour, learning and improvement of processes and tools. • There is a culture of ‘rumours’ regarding what is actually possible in terms of adaptation and of blame-shifting for not being adaptive (from partners to field office, to HQ and the department of contracts and contributions). • There is a need for guidance on what is possible and how tools ‘should’ be used. • Adaptive delivery is not always informing adaptive programming – processes of reflection and adaptation at higher levels are slow and can be cumbersome. • Contracting, legal and financial management is not necessarily conducive to AM, even though there are instances where this was possible. • Increasing upward accountability demands are creating further bureaucratisation of processes, which reduces staff capacity to engage in reflection and learning. • The disbursement culture emphasises the need to spend all allocated budgets,

<p>operation, but are hindered by bureaucracy and procurement rules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributions may demand more negotiation with co-funders and partners, but also provide extraordinary opportunities for leverage when SDC plays well its 'soft' influencing capacity within consortia. 	<p>undermining the space for open reflection and deep learning.</p>
--	---

6.5 Challenges and opportunities for intentional AM practice

In this final section, we first discuss three main challenges for moving towards more intentional AM practice in SDC through incorporating findings from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis implemented at the learning workshop (see figures 10 to 13). We then highlight the opportunities that SDC can build on to overcome the challenges and further advance and mature its AM practices.

6.5.1 Main challenges to more intentional AM practice

Political shifts closing down space for AM

Perhaps the biggest challenge for SDC at this moment in time is the shifts in the political context in Switzerland. Increased bureaucracy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could mean greater administrative burdens, and a more business-centred and output-oriented focus in response to parliamentary interests. This shift could undermine current openness to take calculated risks, to learn through experimentation, and to value reflection and learning. This more complexity-aware view of how development achieves change is fundamental to intentional AM – and is particularly pertinent for maintaining a focus on political and social inequality as a cornerstone of SDC's approach, in line with the call as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'leave no one behind'.

Decentralisation and shifting mindsets

SDC is generally a 'flexible' and decentralised organisation offering opportunities for contextualised AM practice. The extent to which this opportunity materialises at various levels within the organisation is driven largely by the mindsets of individuals. This also means that individuals with mindsets that are not open to working flexibly and do not value learning and reflection – if those individuals are in critical decision making roles – can become bottlenecks and undermine AM. The decentralisation process, in this sense, can act as a deterrent, because it enables both supportive and contradictory mindsets to co-exist. Moving from passive AM to a more active AM – which explicitly plans for constant upgrading of strategies and working practices at the delivery, programming and governance levels – requires shifting towards more enabling mindsets everywhere. For SDC's decentralised culture, this likely poses a challenge.

Lack of tool integration

There are currently many different tools and guidance that could inform AM in SDC. These could be streamlined and integrated to push through to a more explicit and impactful AM practice overall, while considering as a whole the different levels (from adaptive delivery and adaptive programming to adaptive governance and adaptive mindsets) at which AM operates. The disparate and unsystematic use of data and evidence to serve adaptive decision making was noted as another weakness.

6.5.2 Opportunities for strengthening AM practice within SDC

SDC management has the opportunity to **explicitly encourage and nurture** the existing high levels of appreciation for 'flexibility' and the naturally strong culture of learning and reflection which, as noted already, are linked to its decentralised nature. Change is easier when people want it, and there is widespread aspiration within SDC for bringing about

positive change. Institutionalisation of AM across SDC should build on this foundation, by uncovering it, articulating better core components and tools, and spreading their use throughout the organisation. Specifically, we recommend the following areas of strategic intervention:

- 1. Streamline procedures for adaptation**, while at the same time resisting the tendency to increase controls and bureaucracy. During the workshop it was suggested that staff with experience and a good track record should be trusted and given increased space for making decisions, maintaining control and accountability but reducing the burden. In this sense, management could create formal incentives for staff to showcase ways to successfully increase flexibility in programming rather than doing so under the radar, and work with key decision makers across SDC to more explicitly build their capacity to encourage adaptive procedures.
- 2. Reduce ambiguity about required processes and use of tools** by clarifying key competencies and processes and by facilitating the exchange of experiences. Many of the inflexibilities reported by country staff as constraints to their adaptive capacity could result from wrong assumptions. Good enough instruments (rather than 'perfect' ones) that can be adapted to local conditions could be useful. SDC could also showcase how specific tools can be used in a flexible manner – one example would be to showcase how to use the logframe flexibly, to make clear when indicators can be updated and what forms of data and evidence can enable such an adaptation.
- 3. Showcase and provide guidance on how the different tools fit together** in an overall cycle of adaptation. Being more intentional with AM practice requires greater integration of tools (both mandatory and discretionary) – for example, findings from a PEA could be fed into scenario planning, which provides input to a reflection meeting at a key moment in the project cycle management (PCM), which can then support shifts in budget to deepen impact through responding to opportunities to work with new partners.
- 4. Strategic planning at country (and regional) level should be seen as a key entry point** for AM, which could enable intentional AM of the portfolio of programmes, balancing them to be able to improve handling of existing risks and emerging crises, as well as to leverage opportunities and impact. This builds on current strengths at SDC, and would require focusing attention on the country and regional strategic planning processes, when building on the previous two opportunities around streamlining procedures and integrating tools to maximise the value of AM efforts.
- 5. Employ a 'positive deviance' approach** to identify and amplify the effect of innovative approaches (including tools, processes and practices) that are being effectively applied in different countries, by promoting peer-learning among and around these outlier cases. Interviewees shared several examples that could form the starting point for a positive deviance amplification strategy, initially through fully documenting and analysing the cases using the frameworks provided in this report.

Our rapid assessment suggests that most examples of adaptations referred to adaptations to changes in the context (most often significant crises that rendered programmes dysfunctional or irrelevant and therefore forced the changes). In some cases, it was the result of evaluation of effectiveness, but when the programme was not working at all. There were not many examples reported of ongoing changes as a result of monitoring of effectiveness. The most positive reported cases of AM were ones where the need to learn and adapt was recognised as one of the key elements of programmes, and where existing instruments were used to build adaptive capacity into the plans (building flexibility into budgeting, logframe, etc.). We summarise some of these cases here:

- a. Interviewees mentioned several examples of improvised adaptations in **Burundi, Cambodia and Mali** – all as responses to changes in context. These are examples of passive approaches to adaptation but could also represent cases of adaptive delivery. In Cambodia, a sectoral change was linked to the shifting political context for human rights defenders, while in Mali, an intervention linked to supporting access to school for marginalised communities had to respond to increased radicalisation and movement of people – and has resulted in new programming, including mobile schools.
- b. **Somalia** was framed as an example of a country office with experience of adapting in order to shift programmes to keep them on track. What stood out was the mindset that always finds space for adaptation within the existing and frequently limiting rules. Though removing components that do not work is normally easier, interviewees reported that adaptation in the form of building something new is challenging but still possible. In Somalia and Ethiopia, there is, for example, some experience of using budget for unforeseen activities or crises, creating a flexible fund.
- c. The **Nicaragua** case, presented in the workshop, provides an interesting case of reorganising the country programmes in response to the 2018 political crisis. In deciding to stay, and leverage Swiss diplomacy, the SDC programmes had to shift their focus on work that would no longer be directly implemented by the government, reframing programming in ways that strengthened support to CSOs in-country.
- d. During the workshop, in-depth discussion on planning a **new Mali programme** showed the great opportunity to experiment with designing new programmes through an AM lens from the outset. The central idea discussed was to create more open tendering processes for a local government programme in central Mali, with a Theory of Change process at the outset, which would provide the basis for integrating PEA, conflict, gender and social inclusion analysis in the programme, as well as some contingency funds to support future adaptations.
- e. The idea of using the **Outcome Monitoring Summary used in Bosnia and Herzegovina** to more closely link the findings from adaptive management at the programme level to the strategy level could provide interesting insights.
- f. The **Macedonia** case of a programme implemented by the National Democratic Institute shared during the workshop included anticipating and planning from the beginning where there might need to be change. There was an expectation of changes in the political context and so moments were included within the PCM to revisit outputs and indicators. The project foresees constant monitoring and learning loops and included these in the planning (and costs) of the programme.

Figure 10 SWOT weaknesses

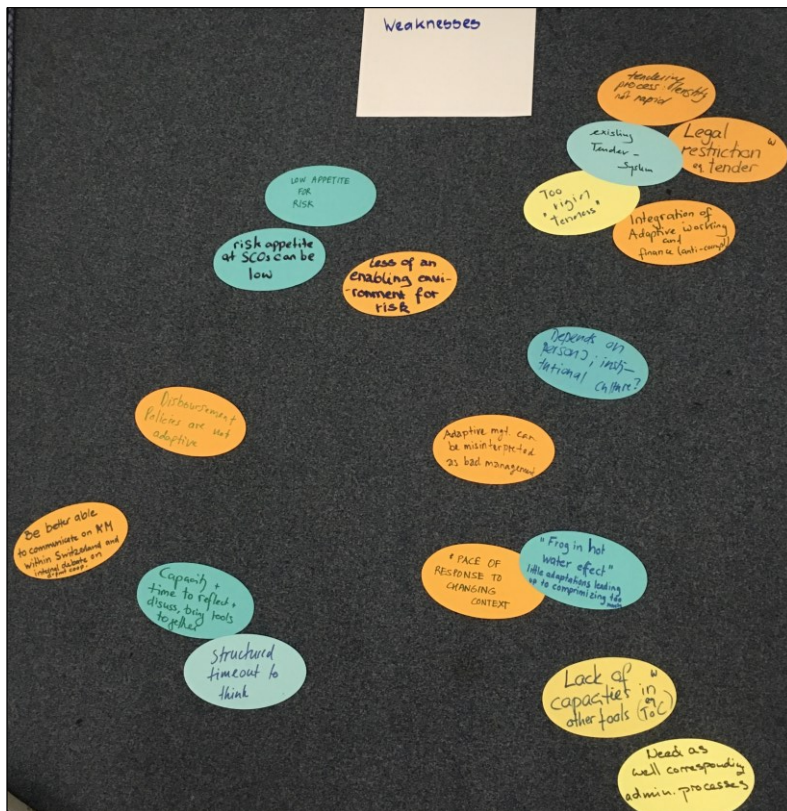


Figure 11 SWOT strengths

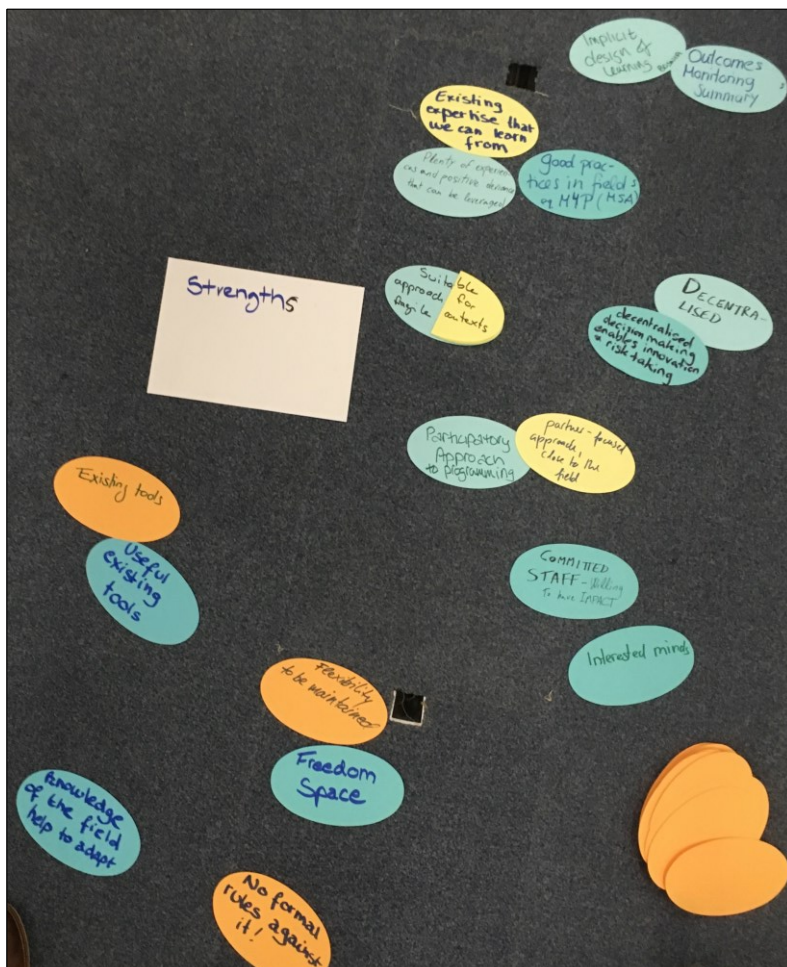


Figure 12 SWOT threats

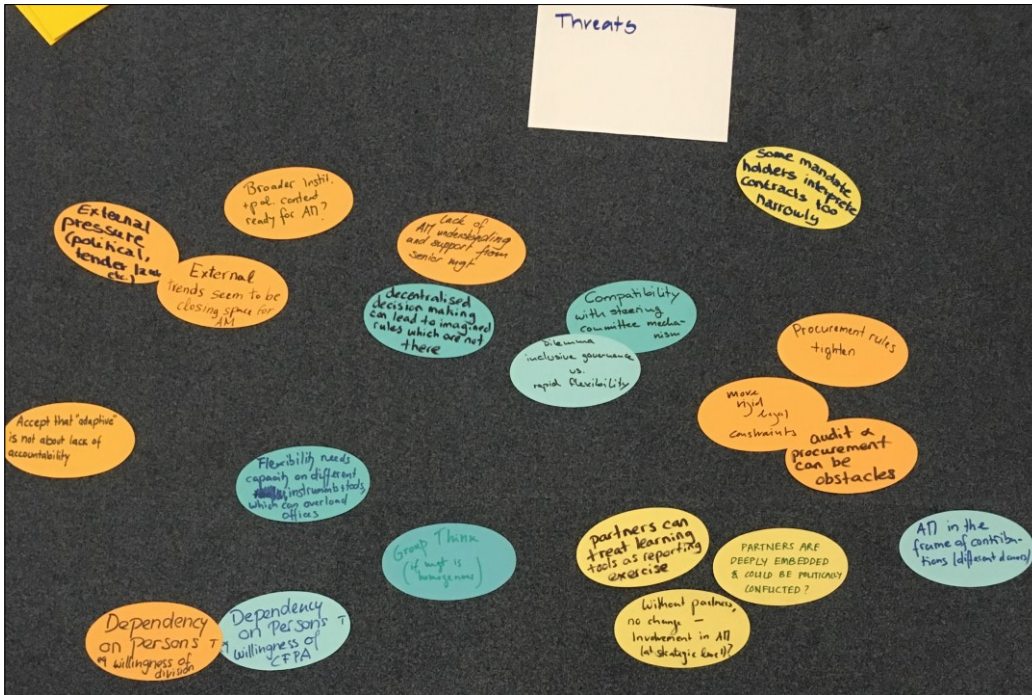
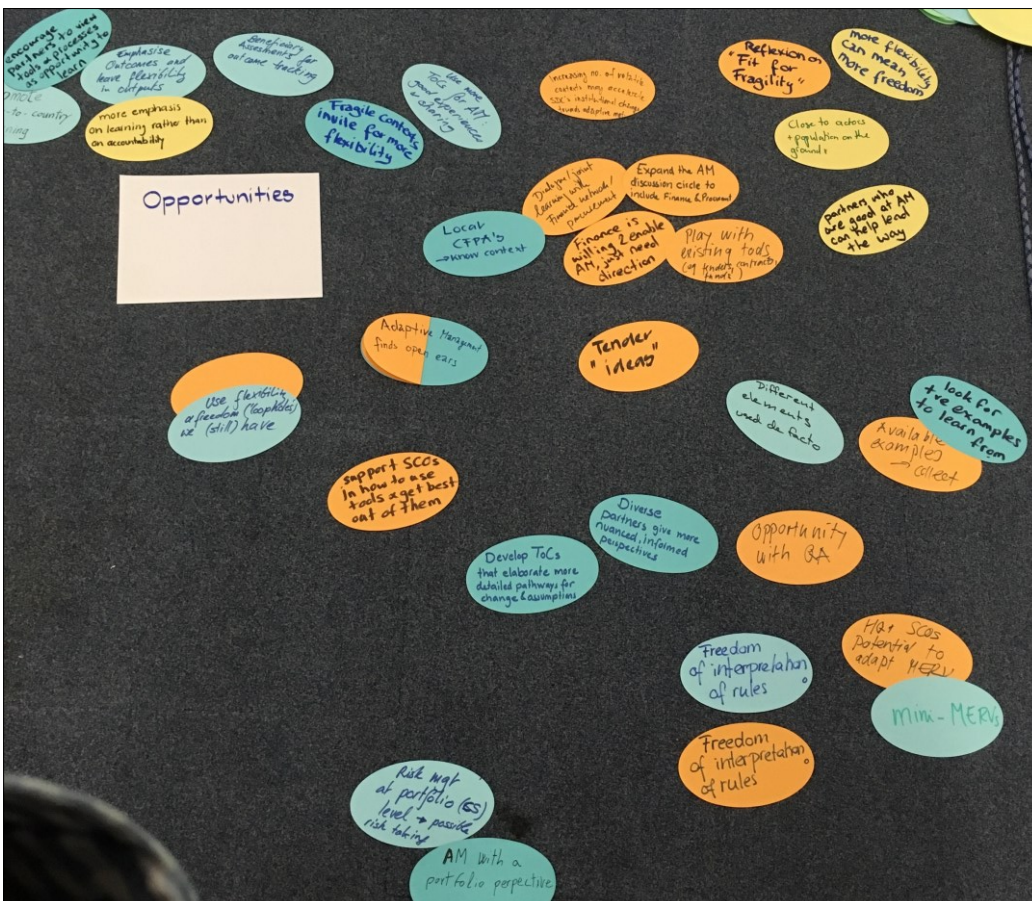


Figure 13 SWOT opportunities



7 Next steps for adaptive management work in SDC

To advance the recommendations made in the previous section, these immediate next steps should be taken:

1. **Produce short case studies of AM practice within SDC**, through building on the cases already explored in the report and the workshop, and find engaging ways to communicate these to SDC staff and partners.
2. **Create a two-pager describing key components of AM**, explaining:
 - a. What AM means for SDC.
 - b. What SDC is already doing (based on this report).
 - c. If you want to be more adaptive, what do you need to do?
 - d. Moments you can do it.
 - e. What are the SDC processes where you can integrate it?
How it's done (storyline) – have an example of AM at strategy level as well as programme level.
 - f. End with a line for harvesting ('if you have an example, please contact...')
 - g. Link it to the other guidelines and How To notes and feed it into the RBM short course.
3. **Keep ongoing discussions around use of Theory of Change** led by QA connected to current discussions on how to support AM. Theory of Change is a powerful enabler of learning and adaptation if used in a complexity-aware manner.
4. After identifying and clustering information on the key internal factors perceived to be limiting the adaptive capacity of programmes, **seek a dialogue with finance and procurement departments** to start addressing these concerns, by agreeing on ways and procedures that satisfy reporting and compliance requirements but also provide space for flexibility and adaptation.
5. **Engage actively in conversations with other donors** who are also making efforts to become more adaptive. DFID and USAID collaboration on the GLAM programme, which IDS is deeply involved in, could provide an immediate opportunity for such cross-donor dialogue.

8 References

- Agile Alliance (2015) 'Subway Map to Agile Practices', www.agilealliance.org/agile101/subway-map-to-agile-practices (accessed 10 June 2019)
- Agile Alliance (2001) 'Manifesto for Agile Software Development', Agile Alliance, <http://agilemanifesto.org> (accessed 10 June 2019)
- Algozo, D. and Hudson, A. (2016) 'Where Have we Got to on Adaptive Learning, Thinking and Working Politically, Doing Development Differently, etc? Getting Beyond the People's Front of Judea', *From Poverty to Power Blog*, 9 June, <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/where-have-we-got-to-on-adaptive-learning-thinking-and-working-politically-doing-development-differently-etc-getting-beyond-the-peoples-front-of-judea/> (accessed 9 June 2016)
- Andrews, M.; Pritchett, L.; Samji, S. and Woolcock, M. (2015) 'Building Capability by Delivering Results: Putting Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) Principles into Practice' in A. Whaites, E. Gonzalez, S. Fyson and G. Teskey (eds.), *A Governance Practitioner's Notebook: Alternative Ideas and Approaches*, OECD, www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/governance/governance-practitioners-notebook.htm (accessed 10 June 2019)
- Ang, Y.Y. (2018) 'Going Local 2.0: How to Reform Development Agencies to Make Localized Aid More Than Talk', *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/going_local_2.0_how_to_reform_development_agencies_localized_aid (accessed 26 October 2018)
- Bain, K.A.; Booth, D. and Wild, L. (2016) *Doing Development Differently at the World Bank: Updating the Plumbing to Fit the Architecture*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odi.org/publications/10555-doing-development-differently-world-bank-updating-plumbing-fit-architecture (accessed 24 March 2016)
- Baker, M. (2019) *Knowing When to Adapt – A Decision Tree*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development LEARN, <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/known-when-adapt-decision-tree> (accessed 28 March 2019)
- Booth, D.; Balfe, K.; Gallagher, R.; Kilcullen, G.; O'Boyle, S. and Tiernan, A. (2018) *Learning to Make a Difference: Christian Aid Ireland's Adaptive Programme Management in Governance, Gender, Peace Building and Human Rights*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odi.org/publications/11191-learning-make-difference-christian-aid-ireland-s-adaptive-programme-management-governance-gender (accessed 1 February 2019)
- Booth, D.; Harris, D. and Wild, L. (2016) *From Political Economy Analysis to Doing Development Differently: A Learning Experience*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odi.org/publications/10235-political-economy-analysis-doing-development-differently (accessed 10 June 2019)
- Bridges, K. and Woolcock, M. (2019) *Implementing Adaptive Approaches in Real World Scenarios: A Nigeria Case Study, with Lessons for Theory and Practice*, WPS8904,

- Washington DC: The World Bank,
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/300301560883977057/Implementing-Adaptive-Approaches-in-Real-World-Scenarios-A-Nigeria-Case-Study-with-Lessons-for-Theory-and-Practice> (accessed 5 July 2019)
- Buffardi, A.L.; Mason, P.; Hutchings, C. and Sharp, S. (2019) 'Monitoring and Learning for Country-level Portfolio Decision-making and Adaptation', Briefing Note, London: Overseas Development Institute/Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM), www.odi.org/publications/11351-monitoring-and-learning-country-level-portfolio-decision-making-and-adaptation (accessed 31 May 2019)
- Burns, D. and Worsley, S. (2015) *Navigating Complexity in International Development: Facilitating Sustainable Change at Scale*, Rugby: Practical Action Publishing
- Christie, A. and Green, D. (2018) *The Case for an Adaptive Approach to Empowerment and Accountability Programming in Fragile Settings. Synthesis Report*, Brighton: Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Programme, Itad, Oxfam and IDS, <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/14556> (accessed 2 August 2018)
- de Lacy, J. (2017) 'Facilities Deserve a Place in Development', *Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre*, 12 November, www.devpolicy.org/facilities-deserve-a-place-in-development-20171113/ (accessed 28 March 2019)
- Derbyshire, H. and Donovan, E. (2016) *Adaptive Programming in Practice: Shared Lessons from the DFID-funded LASER and SAVI programmes, Synthesis Paper 3*, DFID-LASER Programme, http://savi-nigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Laser_Savi_Report-online-version-final-120816pdf.pdf (accessed 28 November 2019)
- DFAT (2018) *Independent Review of Facilities: Review and Management Response*, Australian government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/independent-review-of-facilities-review-and-management-response.aspx> (accessed 16 May 2019)
- DFAT (2017) *Market Systems Development – Operational Guidance Note*, Australian government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/operational-guidance-note-market-systems-development.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2019)
- DFID (2019) *DFID Smart Rules: Better Programme Delivery – Version X (2019.01)*, London: Department for International Development, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779532/Smart-Rules-External-Jan19.pdf (accessed 16 May 2019)
- DFID (2016) *Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM), DFID Development Tracker*, <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-205148> (accessed 12 July 2017)
- Earl, S.; Carden, F.; Smutylo, T. and Patten, M.Q. (2001) *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs*, Ottawa: IDRC Books
- Edmondson, A.C. (2011) 'Strategies for Learning from Failure', *Harvard Business Review*, 1 April, <https://hbr.org/2011/04/strategies-for-learning-from-failure> (accessed 3 June 2019)

- G7 (2018) 'The Whistler Principles to Accelerate Innovation for Development Impact', G7 Summit 2018, <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/dev/180602-innovation.html> (accessed 4 December 2019)
- GAC (2018) *Global Affairs Canada: An Approach to Development Innovation*, Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites (accessed 19 May 2019)
- GAC (2017) *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy*, Ottawa: Global Affairs Canada, <https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/iap2-eng.pdf> (accessed 31 May 2019)
- Gamble, J.A.A. (2008) *A Developmental Evaluation Primer*, Montreal: J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, <https://mccconnellfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/A-Developmental-Evaluation-Primer-EN.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2019)
- Gargani, J. and McLean, R. (2017) 'Scaling Science', *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/scaling_science (accessed 15 February 2019)
- GIZ (ed.) (2015) *Cooperation Management for Practitioners: Managing Social Change With Capacity WORKS*, Springer Gabler
- GIZ (2014) 'Capacity Works – Online Training', GIZ, https://gc21.giz.de/ibt/usr/wbt/gc21/public/wbt_capacity_works_en/uk/index.htm (accessed 17 May 2019)
- Gray, S. and Carl, A. (2019) 'Calibrating Adaptive Programming Across Multi-Country, Multi-Partner Programs', *Adapt Peacebuilding Blog*, 8 July, <https://adaptpeacebuilding.org/blog/calibrating-adaptive-programming-across-multi-country-multi-partner-programs> (accessed 8 August 2019)
- Green, D. (2019) 'What is Different About How INGOs do Adaptive Management/Doing Development Differently?' *From Poverty to Power Blog*, 8 February, <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/some-great-new-research-on-adaptive-management-doing-development-differently-by-ingos/> (accessed 4 November 2019)
- Green, D. and Guijt, I. (2019) *Adaptive Programming in Fragile, Conflict and Violence-Affected Settings, What Works and Under What Conditions? The Case of Institutions for Inclusive Development, Tanzania*, Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Programme, Brighton: Itad, Oxfam and IDS, <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/14562> (accessed 2 August 2018)
- Hasselman, L. (2017) 'Adaptive Management Intentions with a Reality of Evaluation: Getting Science Back into Policy', *Environmental Science & Policy* 78: 9–17, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2017.08.018> (accessed 26 November 2019)
- Hirschman, A.O. (1967) *Development Projects Observed*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution
- Holling, C.S. (ed.) (1978) *Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons

- Honig, D. (2018) *Navigation by Judgment: Why and When Top-Down Management of Foreign Aid Doesn't Work*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Honig, D. and Gulrajani, N. (2018) 'Making Good on Donors' Desire to Do Development Differently', *Third World Quarterly* 39.1: 68–84, <http://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1369030> (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Kleinfeld, R. (2015) *Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation: Plan for Sailboats, Not Trains*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, www.gsdr.org/document-library/improving-development-aid-design-and-evaluation-plan-for-sailboats-not-trains (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Kurtz, C.F. and Snowden, D. (2003) 'The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-making in a Complex and Complicated World', *IBM Systems Journal* 42.3: 462–83
- Ladner, D. (2015) *Strategy Testing: An Innovative Approach to Monitoring Highly Flexible Aid Programs*, Working Politically in Practice 3, The Asia Foundation, <http://asiafoundation.org/publication/strategy-testing-an-innovative-approach-to-monitoring-highly-flexible-aid-programs/> (accessed 16 May 2019)
- Laws, E. and Marquette, H. (2018) *Thinking and Working Politically: Reviewing the Evidence on the Integration of Politics into Development Practice over the Past Decade*, London: TWP Community of Practice, <https://twpcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Thinking-and-working-politically-reviewing-the-evidence.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2019)
- Marquette, H. (2019) 'What we're Missing by Not Getting Our TWP Alphabet Straight', *From Poverty to Power Blog*, 3 July, <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-were-missing-by-not-getting-our-twp-alphabet-straight/> (accessed 16 August 2019)
- McChrystal, G.S.; Silverman, D.; Collins, T. and Fussell, C. (2015) *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*, London: Penguin
- McLean, R. and Gargani, J. (2019) *Scaling Impact: Innovation for the Public Good*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Murray, P. and Ma, S. (2015) 'The Promise of Lean Experimentation', *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 13.3, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_lean_experimentation (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Natsios, A. (2010) *The Clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development*, Washington DC: Center for Global Development, www.cgdev.org/publication/clash-counter-bureaucracy-and-development (accessed 26 November 2019)
- Nesta (2016) *Designing for Public Services*, London: Nesta/IDEO, www.designforeurope.eu/news-opinion/designing-public-services-practical-guide-nesta-ideo (accessed 3 October 2018)
- Nesta (ed.) (2014) *DIY – Development Impact and You: Practical Tools to Trigger and Support Social Innovation*, 1st ed., Nesta
- Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995) *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

- OECD (2018) *OECD Development Assistance Committee Peer Review of Canada*, OECD, www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Memorandum-of-Canada-2018.pdf (accessed 31 May 2019)
- Office of the Prime Minister (2015) 'Minister of International Development and La Francophonie Mandate Letter', 12 November, www.canwach.ca/article/sector-news/minister-international-development-and-la-francophonie-mandate-letter (accessed 18 December 2019)
- Ørnemark, C. (2016) *Learning Journeys' for Adaptive Management – Where Does It Take Us?* GPSA Note 12, Global Partnership for Social Accountability, http://gpsaknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/NOTE_march.pdf (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Pieper, L. (2018) *Review of Selected DFAT Facilities: Independent Consultant Report to DFAT, Key Findings*, Australian government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/independent-facilities-review.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2019)
- Poppendieck, T. and Kniberg, H. (2009) 'A3 template', Crisp, www.crisp.se/gratis-material-och-guider/a3-template (accessed 2 December 2019)
- Prieto Martin, P.; Hernandez, K.; Faith, B. and Ramalingam, B. (2017) *Doing Digital Development Differently: Lessons in Adaptive Management from Technology for Governance Initiatives in Kenya*, Making All Voices Count Research Report, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/13285> (accessed 4 December 2019)
- Pryor, T. (2018) 'Procuring and Managing Adaptively: 5 Case Studies of Adaptive Mechanisms', *USAID Learning Lab Blog*, 13 August, <https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/procuring-and-managing-adaptively-5-case-studies-adaptive-mechanisms> (accessed 22 August 2019)
- Punton, M. and Burge, R. (2018) *Adaptive Programming in Fragile, Conflict and Violence-Affected Settings, What Works and Under What Conditions? The Case of PERL, Nigeria*, Brighton: Action for Empowerment and Accountability Research Programme, Itad, Oxfam and IDS, <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/14148> (accessed 4 February 2019)
- Ramalingam, B. (2013) *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ramalingam, B.; Wild, L. and Buffardi, A.L. (2019) *Making Adaptive Rigour Work – Principles and Practices for Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning for Adaptive Management*, London: Overseas Development Institute/Global Learning for Adaptive Management
- Randinelli, D.A. (1983) *Development Projects as Policy Experiments: An Adaptive Approach to Development Administration*, London: Methuen
- Ruffer, T.; Bailey, H.; Dahlgren, S.; Spaven, P. and Winters, M. (2018) *Evaluation of the Market Systems Development Approach: Lessons for Expanded Use and Adaptive Management at Sida*, Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

- Salafsky, N.; Margoluis, R. and Redford, K. (2001) *Adaptive Management: A Tool for Conservation Practitioners*, Bethesda: Foundations of Success
- Samji, S.; Andrews, M.; Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, Mi. (2018) *PDIA Toolkit – A DIY Approach to Solving Complex Problems*, Center for International Development at Harvard University, <https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/PDIAtoolkit> (accessed 26 October 2018)
- Schmidt, M.; Palenberg, M. and Vähämäki, J. (2017) *Independent Evaluation of SDC's Results-Based Management System with a Focus on Poverty Reduction*, Bern: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, www.news.admin.ch/news/NSExterneStudien/855/attachment/en/3685.pdf (accessed 18 December 2019)
- Sharp, S.; Valters, C. and Whitty, B. (2019) *How DFID can Better Manage Complexity in Development Programming*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12675.pdf (accessed 15 May 2019)
- Shutt, C. (2016) *Towards an Alternative Development Management Paradigm?* Stockholm: Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA), https://eba.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Rapport2016_07_webb.pdf (accessed 2 December 2019)
- Snowden, D. and Boone, M.E. (2007) 'A Leader's Framework for Decision Making', *Harvard Business Review*, <https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making> (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Stacey, R.D. (2000) *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics: The Challenge of Complexity*, London: Pitman
- Sutherland, J. (2014) *Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time*, New York: Crown Business
- Swanson, D. and Bhadwal, S. (eds.) (2009) *Creating Adaptive Policies: A Guide for Policy-making in an Uncertain World*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre
- Teskey, G. (2018) 'Adaptive Management: Why we Find it So Hard to Operationalise', *Abt Associates - Governance Soapbox Blog*, 23 February, <https://abtassocgovernancesoapbox.wordpress.com/2018/02/23/adapative-management-why-we-find-it-so-hard-to-operationalise/> (accessed 21 June 2019)
- Teskey, G. (2017) *Thinking and Working Politically – Are We Seeing the Emergence of a Second Orthodoxy?* Governance Working Paper, Abt Associates, <https://abtassocgovernancesoapbox.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/abt-associates-working-paper-series-issue-no-1-final-010617.pdf> (accessed 21 June 2019)
- Tyrrel, L.; Teskey, G. and de Lacy, J. (2017) *Managing Facilities: A Stock-take from the First 12 Months*, Governance Working Paper 3, Abt Associates, https://abtassocgovernancesoapbox.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/abt_associates_governance_working_paper_series_final_6th_december_2017.pdf (accessed 28 November 2019)
- USAID (2019a) *Help! I'm Hiring New Staff, and I Want Them to Work Adaptively. A Tool to Help You Increase Your Chances of Selecting Staff Skilled in Adaptive Management*,

- USAID LEARN,
https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/guide_to_hiring_adaptive_employees_r.pdf (accessed 17 May 2019)
- USAID (2019b) *Broad Agency Announcement for Locally Led Development Innovation*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development, www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=316600 (accessed 4 June 2019)
- USAID (2019c) *Local Works Guidance – Round 4*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development, www.usaid.gov/partnership-opportunities/ngo/localworks/local-works-guidance-round-4 (accessed 18 December 2019)
- USAID (2018a) *Program Cycle – Discussion Note: Adaptive Management*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development, <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/discussion-note-adaptive-management> (accessed 8 March 2018)
- USAID (2018b) *USAID ADS 201 – Program Cycle Operational Policy (Update 10/29/2018)*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development, www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/201.pdf (accessed 16 May 2019)
- USAID (2016) 'Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Framework & Key Concepts', https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/keyconcepts_twopager_8.5x11_v7_20160907.pdf (accessed 2 December 2019)
- USAID (2015) 'CLA – Case Competition', <https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-case-competition> (accessed 18 February 2017)
- USAID (2014a) 'CLA for More Effective Development Programs' (video), USAID LearningLab, www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7x6XdqyZzk&feature=youtu.be (accessed 17 May 2019)
- USAID (2014b) *Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development*, Washington DC: United States Agency for International Development, www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/LocalSystemsFramework.pdf (accessed 28 November 2019)
- Vähämäki, J. and Verger, C. (2019) *Learning from Results-Based Management Evaluations and Reviews*, Development Co-operation Working Papers, OECD, www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/learning-from-results-based-management-evaluations-and-reviews_3fda0081-en (accessed 5 April 2019)
- Vowles, P. (2013) 'Adaptive Programming', *DFID Bloggers*, 21 October, <https://dfid.blog.gov.uk/2013/10/21/adaptive-programming> (accessed 4 July 2017)
- Vugteveen, P.; van Katwijk, M.M.; Rouwette, E.; Lenders, H.J.R. and Hanssen, L. (2015) 'Developing an Effective Adaptive Monitoring Network to Support Integrated Coastal Management in a Multiuser Nature Reserve', *Ecology and Society* 20.1, www.jstor.org/stable/26269760 (accessed 19 July 2019)
- Wild, L. and Ramalingam, B. (2018) *Building a Global Learning Alliance on Adaptive Management*, London: Overseas Development Institute,

www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12327.pdf (accessed 21 December 2018)

Wild, L.; Booth, D. and Valters, C. (2017) *Putting Theory into Practice: How DFID is Doing Development Differently*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odi.org/publications/10729-putting-theory-practice-how-dfid-doing-development-differently (accessed 28 November 2019)

Williams, B.K. (2011) 'Adaptive Management of Natural Resources – Framework and Issues', *Journal of Environmental Management* 92.5: 1346–53, <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2010.10.041> (accessed 26 November 2019)

Wilson-Grau, R. and Britt, H. (2012) *Outcome Harvesting*, Ford Foundation, https://usaidearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/outome_harvesting_brief_final_2012-05-2-1.pdf (accessed 22 September 2018)

World Bank (2017) *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*, Washington DC: The World Bank, www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017 (accessed 28 November 2019)

9 Annex: List of interviews

SDC staff	Role
Laura Bott	Deputy Head, Latin America and Caribbean Division
Martin Roch	Programme Officer, SDG16, Impact Monitoring & QA for Fragility and Civil Society
Rea Bonzi	Head of Local Governance and Health domains, Myanmar
S��verine Donnet-Descartes	Deputy Head, East Africa Division
Thomas Fisler	Director of Cooperation, Afghanistan
Luca Etter	Head of Governance Domain, Tanzania
Damien Callegari	Deputy Director, Burundi
Marie Gilbrin Duruz	Director of Cooperation, Gaza & West Bank
Carin Salerno	Head of Cooperation, Cambodia
Holger Tausch	Head of Cooperation, Ukraine
Ilona Postemska	National Program Manager, Ukraine
Ursula L��ubli	Head of Cooperation, Serbia
Barbara D��twyler	Head of Cooperation, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Caroline Tissot	Head of Cooperation, Moldova
Barbara B��ni	Head of Division, Eurasia Division
Richard Chenevard	Programme Manager, Central Asia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan & Uzbekistan
Elena Zakirova	National Programme Officer (Governance), Tajikistan
NON-SDC	Role
Stefan Gisler	HEKS - Head of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
Arianne Zwahlen	Terre des Hommes (TdH) - Key Account Manager, Institutional Partnership Sector
Christopher Devlin	TdH - Head of Institutional Partnership Sector
Raphael Gorgeu	MSF Switzerland - Director of Operations