

## **Climate Finance Readiness Seminar for NIEs #4**

Thursday 27 July 2017, Hotel Club Punta Leona, Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica

**Dennis Bours**, Adaptation and Resilience M&E Officer, GEF IEO

**Loreta Rufo**, Climate Change Specialist, World Bank

# **Experiences and lessons learned in the application of tools and approaches to monitoring and evaluation for adaptation projects**

## **- Part 2: CCA M&E Challenges -**

### **1. Complexity of determinants and attribution**

It may be difficult to confidently attribute desired change to a specific CCA intervention. CCA is inherently long term and multifaceted, with a complex range of influences beyond a single intervention. How then can we clearly establish the impact of the project or program? Practitioners struggle with this question of attribution, especially when impacts become more difficult to attribute further up the results chain.

There is growing consensus that good practice in M&E is to focus less on attribution and more on how an intervention contributes to an intended outcome.

### **2. Maladaptation**

Adaptation interventions can sometimes be unsuccessful, either because they do not achieve their intended aims or because of unintended negative side effects. There are instances of adaptation interventions that result in negative outcomes for either populations or the environment.

### **3. Counterfactuals**

A counterfactual is, in essence, a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. Establishing adaptation success often requires comparison against hypothetical scenarios, and a robust counterfactual scenario may be difficult to formulate.

### **4. Shifting baselines**

Shifting baselines are a challenge for evaluators since adaptation and development take place against changing hazard profiles. In a more straightforward intervention, data might be collected before and after implementation, and the change attributed to the impact of the program.

This approach assumes a certain stability about the underlying conditions that constitute the baseline. In CCA, where the underlying conditions are themselves changing in uncertain and emergent ways, the validity of comparisons to the pre-intervention baseline is compromised. Indeed, holding steady rather than improving local conditions may constitute success if the local conditions themselves are deteriorating.

### **5. Adaptation as a moving target.**

M&E experts set project targets for interventions to help guide activities and outputs. However, adaptation to climate change is in essence a moving target since exposure to climate-related hazards varies and can change throughout the course of the project. The target at the beginning of the project might not be the same as the target at the end of the project.

### **6. Variable time horizons**

The results of climate change interventions have to be measured against the backdrop of long-term climate change conditions, which means that (1) the final impact of interventions will become clear over a longer period of time, and usually beyond the intervention's scope; and (2) that there can be time lags in between activities and measurable results. Because the results of adaptation interventions can manifest across short and long time horizons, M&E systems have to consider tracking success across a time continuum, or measuring impact long after the completion of a project. This is a new area of thinking in climate adaptation. Monitoring systems that can function across long time horizons are just now being implemented.

Climate variation is not the only long-term factor at hand. Changes in adaptive capacity, vulnerability, and socioeconomic states have to be considered as they are dynamic variables that change over time. This concept is particularly important for programs and projects that target long-term transformations such as building resilience and capacities. As Adger et al. (2004, 45) comment: "indicators of adaptive capacity will represent factors that do not determine current vulnerability but that enable a society to pursue adaptation options in the future." Because of this, evaluations need to capture both a short- and long-term snapshot of vulnerability and the various capacities needed to adapt to climate change - first after the intervention, and then with continuous long-term M&E (Eriksen and Kelly 2007).

### **7. General uncertainty**

M&E systems need to be created to address the dynamism and uncertainty inherent to climate change. Uncertainty percolates into climate change programming as managers and evaluators are asked to formulate strategies in a shifting landscape. This idea is illustrated by a cascade of uncertainty. The range of uncertainty expands at each successive level of the triangle, from those related to greenhouse gas emission projections to climatic models and into types of adaptation responses.

### **8. Lack of a conceptual agreement on definitions, including what constitutes successful adaptation**

There is no uniform definition for adaptation, and - more importantly - for what successful adaptation should look like. A key debate in this regard is whether successful adaptation is an outcome, a process, or both.

Lack of consensus also characterizes adaptation terminology. These ambiguities create an uneven knowledge base from which practitioners operate.

### **9. Differing M&E focal areas**

CBA M&E involves participatory M&E approaches, encouraging the principle of local ownership, community participation, and adaptation on a community level. CBA is based on an understanding that communities are best able to define their own vulnerabilities and adaptation needs, and how these will change over time within a changing climate.

-> Focus on socioeconomic dimensions of vulnerability and adaptive capacity (with a focus on power dynamics, inequities, and behaviors) at a local scale.

*Portfolio M&E* has emerged as the most common form of M&E because of the accountability and reporting needs of adaptation donors. The M&E systems here are often centered on an input-activities-output-outcome logic model and results framework.

*Policy-driven M&E* is grounded in processes such as the UNFCCC national communications, national adaptation plans, and national adaptation programs of action. Compared to the CBA and portfolio M&E focal areas, M&E at the policy level is not considered to be as mature and developed due to a historical lack of funding. However, this situation is changing, as awareness of adaptation grows within national governments. New national adaptation programs of action and national adaptation policies have seen improved frameworks for tracking results.

### **10. Wide variety of adaptation actions**

Adaptation activities can be quite different, across a variety of focal areas and sectors.

One intervention might be constructed of a variety of actions or activities, and various activities might demand different types of M&E; financing is monitored and evaluated differently than policy activities. Capacity building activities are monitored and evaluated differently than early warning and observing systems.

---

**Which of the ten topics discussed would be the biggest challenge for monitoring and evaluation within your project(s)? Are there different challenges at the project level, compared to the portfolio or national level?**

- 1. Complexity of determinants and attribution**
- 2. Maladaptation**
- 3. Counterfactuals**
- 4. Shifting baselines**
- 5. Adaptation as a moving target.**
- 6. Variable time horizons**
- 7. General uncertainty**
- 8. Lack of a conceptual agreement on definitions, including what constitutes successful adaptation**
- 9. Differing M&E focal areas**
- 10. Wide variety of adaptation actions**

Discuss for 5 minutes in your group.