A man with a mustache, wearing a white shirt, a dark blue vest, and a light-colored cap, is sitting at a desk. He is looking towards the camera. The desk is covered with a patterned cloth and has several papers and a pen on it. The background is a cluttered room with wooden shelves filled with stacks of papers, books, and other items. A wooden chair is visible to the right of the man.

Treating Obsessive Measurement Disorder

Dave Green & Damien Sweeney

Clear Horizon



OVERVIEW

Problems

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it” culture

How top-down target-setting can undermine success

...but still remains prevalent alongside a new adaptive management orthodoxy

Solutions

Accountability for ~~results~~ rigour

Practical alternatives to ‘accountability for targets’

Obsessive Measurement Disorder

“An intellectual dysfunction rooted in the notion that **counting everything** in government programs...**will produce better policy choices and improved management.**”

“...ignores a central principle of development theory—that those development **programs that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational**, and those programs that are most transformational are the least measurable.”

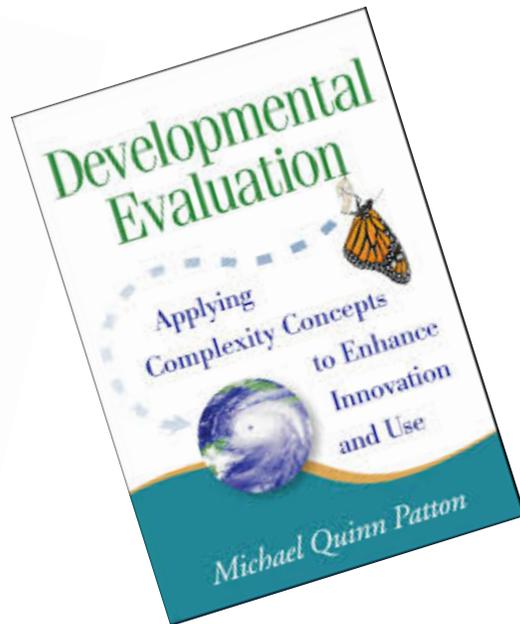
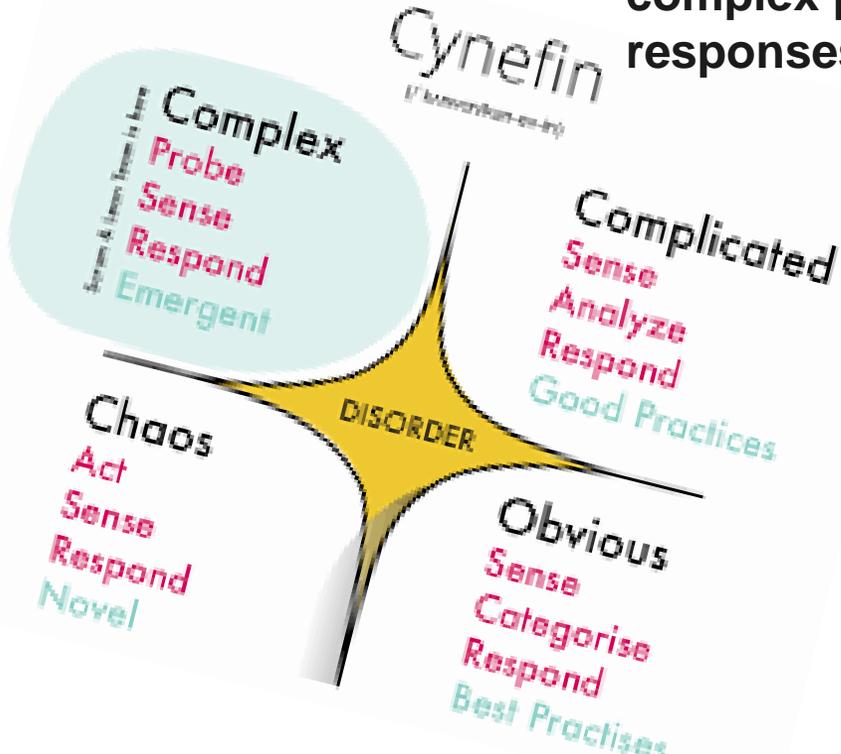
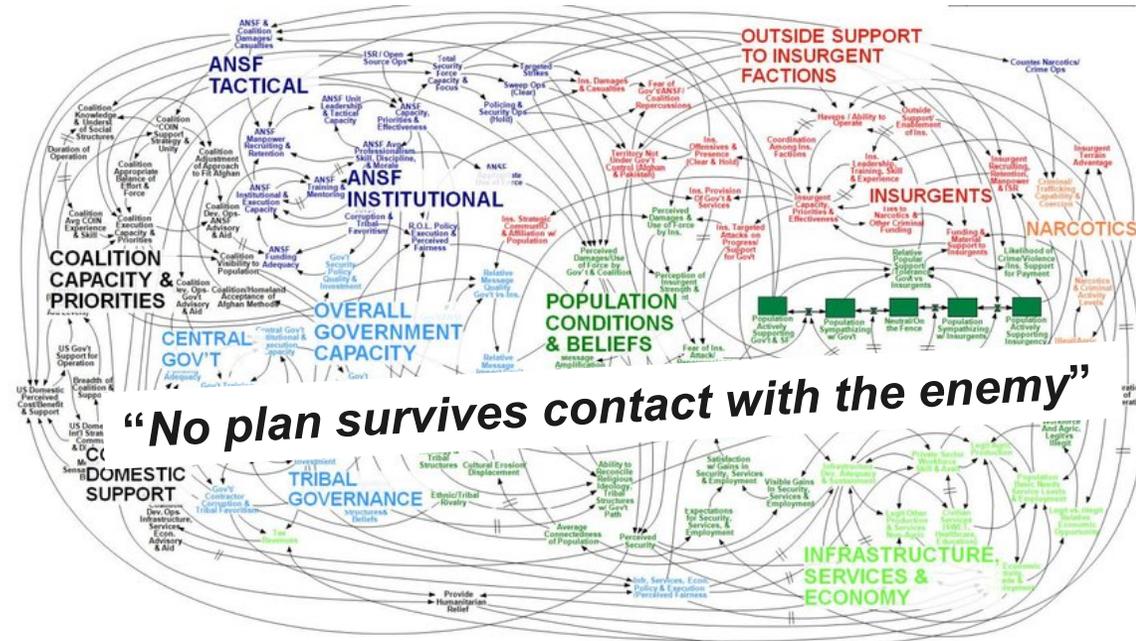
Andrew Natsios, July 2010 (former
USAID Administrator)



History has shown how ill-conceived targets can undermine performance...

...and its now well-accepted that RBM isn't a good fit for complex change...

"There are no solutions to complex problems – only responses."



(New year's resolutions!)

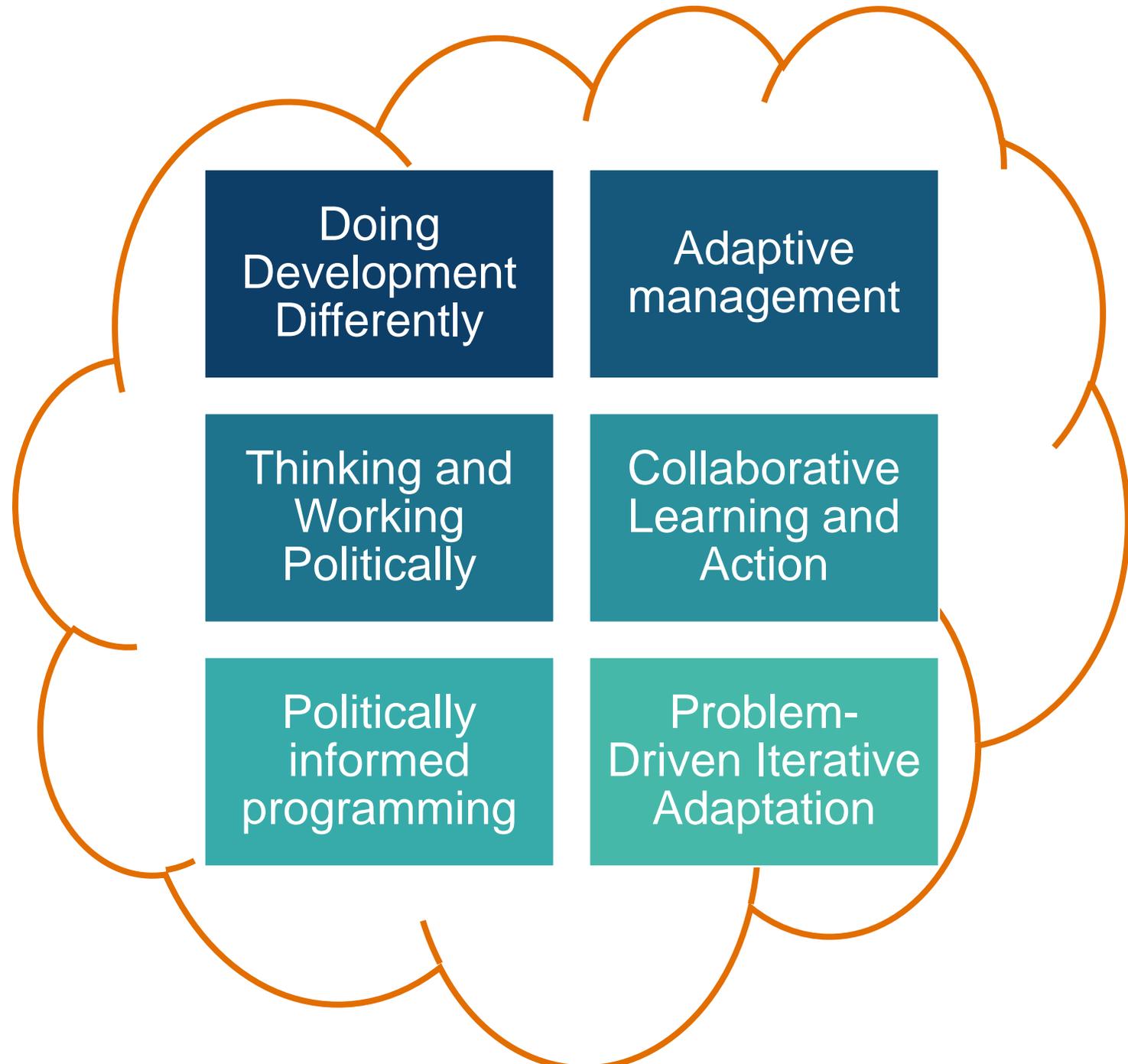
VS.

"My results had very little to do with the goals I set and nearly everything to do with the systems I followed."

**...but it's
taking a
while to
sink in.**



**A new orthodoxy of
adaptive
management is
opening space for
change**





Objective/Outcome: Strengthen the country's capacity to increase local value added to fish products

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
New quantities of target demersal fish and fish products destined for export tested at the quality control and inspection laboratory	Metric ton	0.00	1.00	1.00	976.00
		07-Mar-2011	30-Jun-2017	29-Sep-2017	29-Sep-2017

Intermediate Outcome	Intermediate Outcome Indicator	Milestone 2017-2018	Milestone 2018-2019	Milestone 2019-2020	Milestone 2020-2021
Australia's Aid Objective 1: Increased Private Sector Development					
Sub-objective: Poverty for men and women is reduced through a more inclusive and competitive private sector					
Outcome 1: Increased incomes for poor households	1.1 New formal sector jobs (FTE) created as a result of our aid program	222 jobs (by Dec 2017)	250 jobs (by Dec 2018)	300 jobs (by Dec 2019)	350 jobs (by Dec 2020)
	1.2 Additional personal income for men and women generated as a result of our aid program	USD3.3 million (by Dec 2017)	USD4.2 million (by Dec 2018)	USD5 million (by Dec 2019)	USD5.8 million (by Dec 2020)
	1.3 Country X increases its participation in the Seasonal Worker Program	190 (5 per cent female)	200 (10 per cent female)	Continued increase	Continued increase
Outcome 2: Country X's business environment is conducive to inclusive private sector-led growth	2.1 Reduced number of working days to start a business	40 days	35 days	Less than previous year	Less than previous year
	2.2 Improved performance of State-owned enterprises, as measured by the return on assets	Maintain baseline	Maintain baseline	5 per cent increase over baseline	7 per cent increase over baseline
	2.3 Improved accountability of State-owned enterprises, as measured by the proportion of SOEs that publish audited annual	10 per cent increase over baseline	20 per cent increase over baseline	40 per cent increase over baseline	50 per cent increase over baseline

Indicator	Baseline 2008	Milestone 2009	Milestone 2010	Target (end 2010)
Number of health professionals at selected Central and District Hospitals trained on revised curriculum for patient-centred clinical care	0 Doctors (0 M; 0F) 4 Nurses (0 M; 4F)	10 D (5M; 5F) 15 N (7M; 8F)	15 D (8M; 7F) 15 N (7M; 8F)	25 D (13M; 12F) 34 N (14M; 20F)
	Source			



'Minimum sufficient' Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Key Evaluation Questions:

	Desired result	Indicator	Data collection method & frequency	Risks	Who will collect and analyse the data	Baseline	Target	Use
Broader goal								
End of investment outcomes								
Intermediate outcomes								
Outputs								
Activities								
Inputs								

Elements that **must** be included in the 'minimum sufficient' M&E Framework at design stage for monitoring from start-up / inception:

Deliverables: Level, reach / coverage and quality of key deliverables produced.

Distribution: Beneficiary access to and control over benefits delivered by the program (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, ethnicity)

Expenditure: Level and rate of expenditure

But mainstream rules and tools are still catching up

- Health System Strengthening in Malaysia

- Building roads in China

Predictable environment
Success difficult to verify

Predictable environment
Success easy to verify

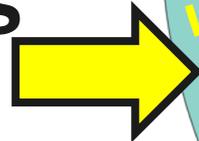
Unpredictable environment
Success difficult to verify

Unpredictable environment
Success easy to verify

- Health System Strengthening in PNG

- Building roads in Mindanao

Potential for buy-in to alternatives is greatest here



Accountability for
results **rigour**

**But if not
accountability
via top-down
targets, then
what?**

Principles

R

Recognise complexity with an adaptive theory of change

I

Identify how MEL can support adaptation and improvement

G

Guide monitoring with thoughtful questions

O

OK to use indicators (and targets!) but do so judiciously

U

Understand what's happening (and why) with methods that capture complexity

R

Reflect and adapt in an enabling organisational culture

Clear Horizon

Accountability for results **rigour**



vs.



What can we do tomorrow?

- Question targets – “*the emperor has no clothes*”
- Review our Program Logic and MEL system – does it reflect the level of complexity we are working with, and is this set up to answer the questions that really matter?
- Seek out dialogue and contestability with critical friends
- Create spaces to discuss organisational culture

I must find the explanation for this phenomenon in order to truly understand Nature...

I must get the result that fits my narrative so I can get my paper into Nature..

Thankyou!

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