



Research
& Policy in
Development

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*Understanding how to measure
hard to measure stuff:
Dimensions, measurement challenges
and responses*

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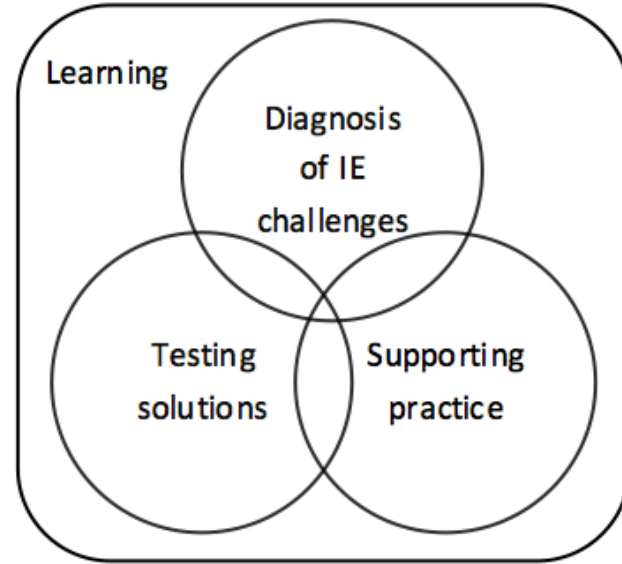
Measuring Development in Turbulent Times
29 November 2017, Bucharest



‘Hard to measure stuff’

METHODS

LAB



- Applied research & evaluation
- Development programmes: opportunity for inquiry & learning?

Characterizing complexity

- **Distributed capacities:** dispersion of skills, resources, actors
- **Goal divergence:** extent of agreement about the problem & how to address it
- **Uncertainty:** level of knowledge about the situation, change pathways



Dimensions of hard to measure stuff

1. Multi-dimensional problems & abstract concepts
2. Challenging settings
3. Multiple, uncertain pathways to multiple outcomes (equifinality, multifinality)
4. Complicated implementing structures

Technical & political challenges





5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

1. Multi-dimensional, abstract concepts (what)

- Construct validity
- Risk of measuring the wrong thing

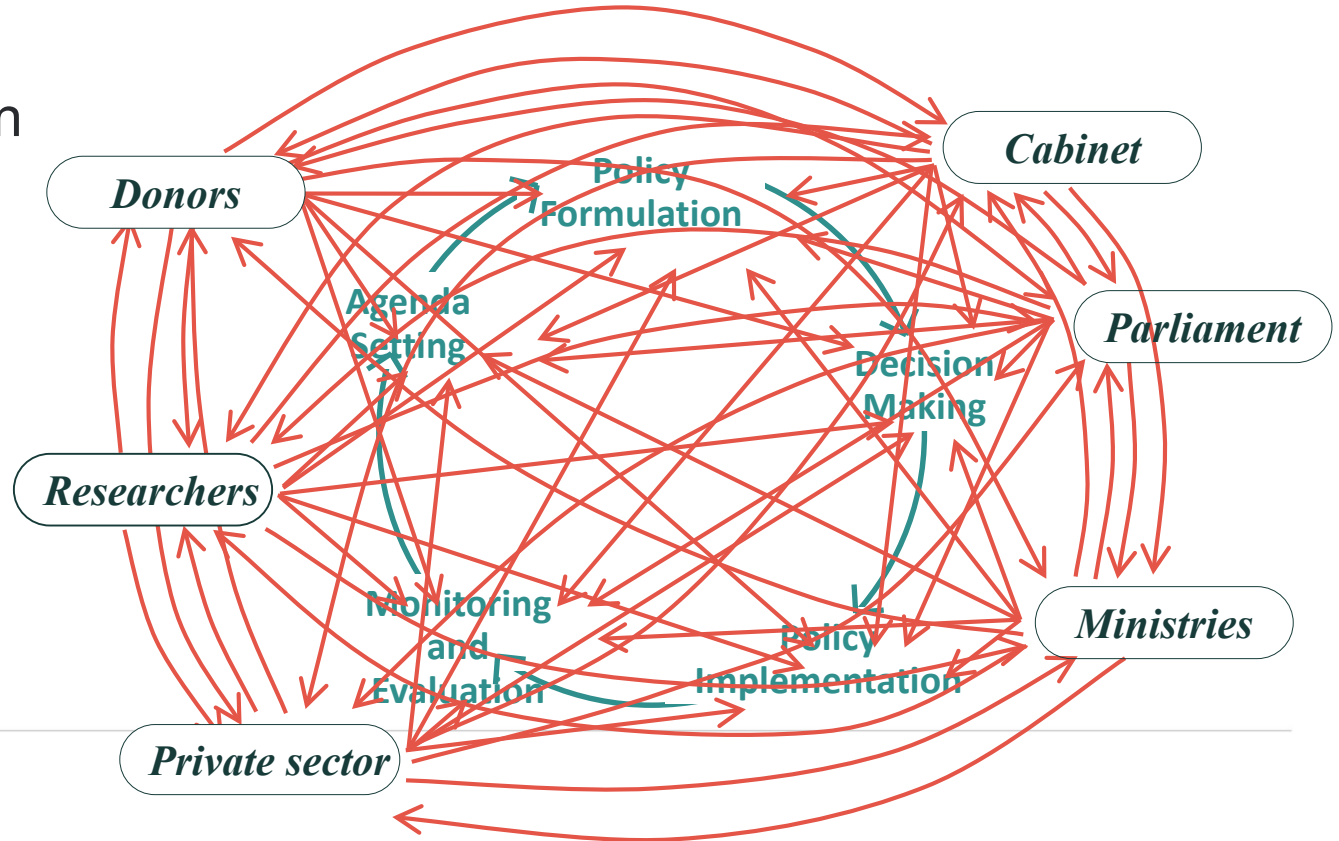
2. Challenging settings (where)

- Reliability – given unpredictable, sudden and/or frequent shifts
- Risk of measuring different things and/or in different ways
- Instrumentation, attrition, history effects, lack of data

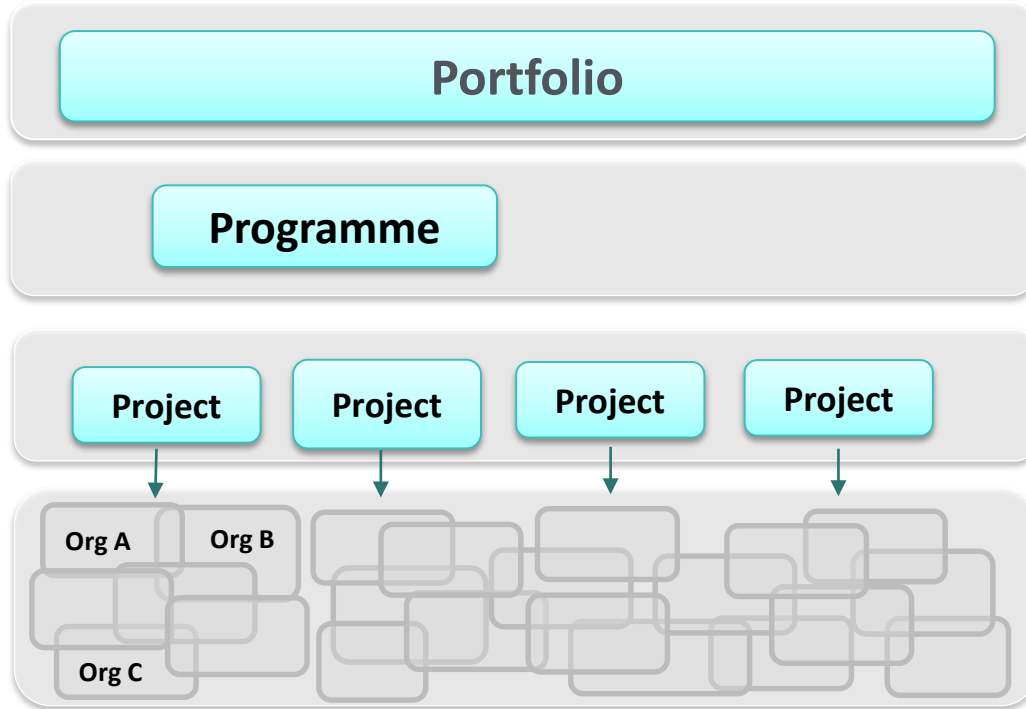


3. Multiple, uncertain pathways of change (how & why)

- Causal attribution
- Omitted variable bias
- Risk of misattribution, neglecting key variables



4. Complicated implementing structures (who)



- Unit of analysis – what should (not) be measured together? How do the parts relate?
- Risk of over-aggregation, conflating delivery mechanism with the intervention

Measurement of complicated, complex development initiatives

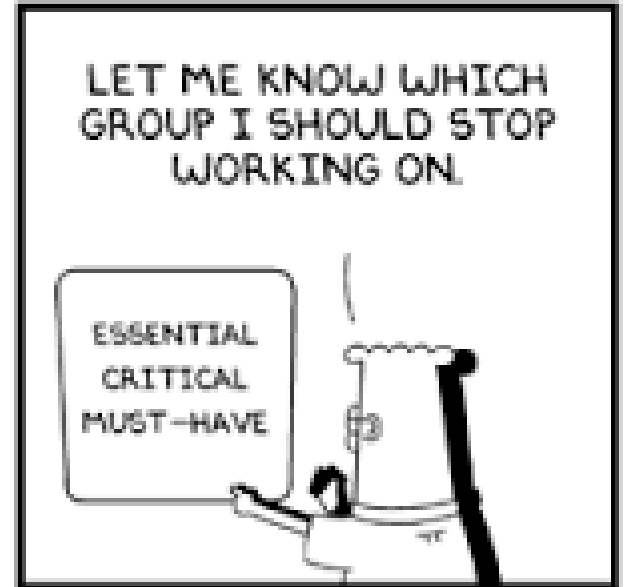
- Intersections among the dimensions
- Implications for external validity
- Reason for both optimism and vigilance
 - Assessing policy influence
 - Measuring youth economic & social transitions

Disconnect between research & reality

Development: multi-dimensional, interconnected, long-term social & economic change

Measurement: project-specific, short to medium-term, individual change

Mismatch between expectations and what is plausible & feasible to observe in a given time frame



‘Pretending to evaluate comprehensive policy interventions without telling policymakers that what they’re asking for can’t be done, but we’ll take a shot at it anyway and blame the inadequate results on complexity’

- Michael Quinn Patton 2015, p.8



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www.odi.org/rapid

www.odi.org/publications/10378-methods-lab-evaluation-toolkit