THE USE AND USABILITY OF EVALUATION

Demonstrating and improving the usefulness of evaluation

2017 ANNUAL EVALUATION CONFERENCE
10–11 MAY 2017
HOLIDAY INN REGENT'S PARK, LONDON

HOW DO YOU MEASURE CHANGE IN CHANGING INTERVENTIONS?

ADAPTIVE LEARNING: PARTNERSHIP TO ENGAGE, REFORM AND LEARN IN NIGERIA

UK Evaluation Society

Outline

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    PERL's Implementing Partners
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    Putting learning at the centre of our approach
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Introducing the
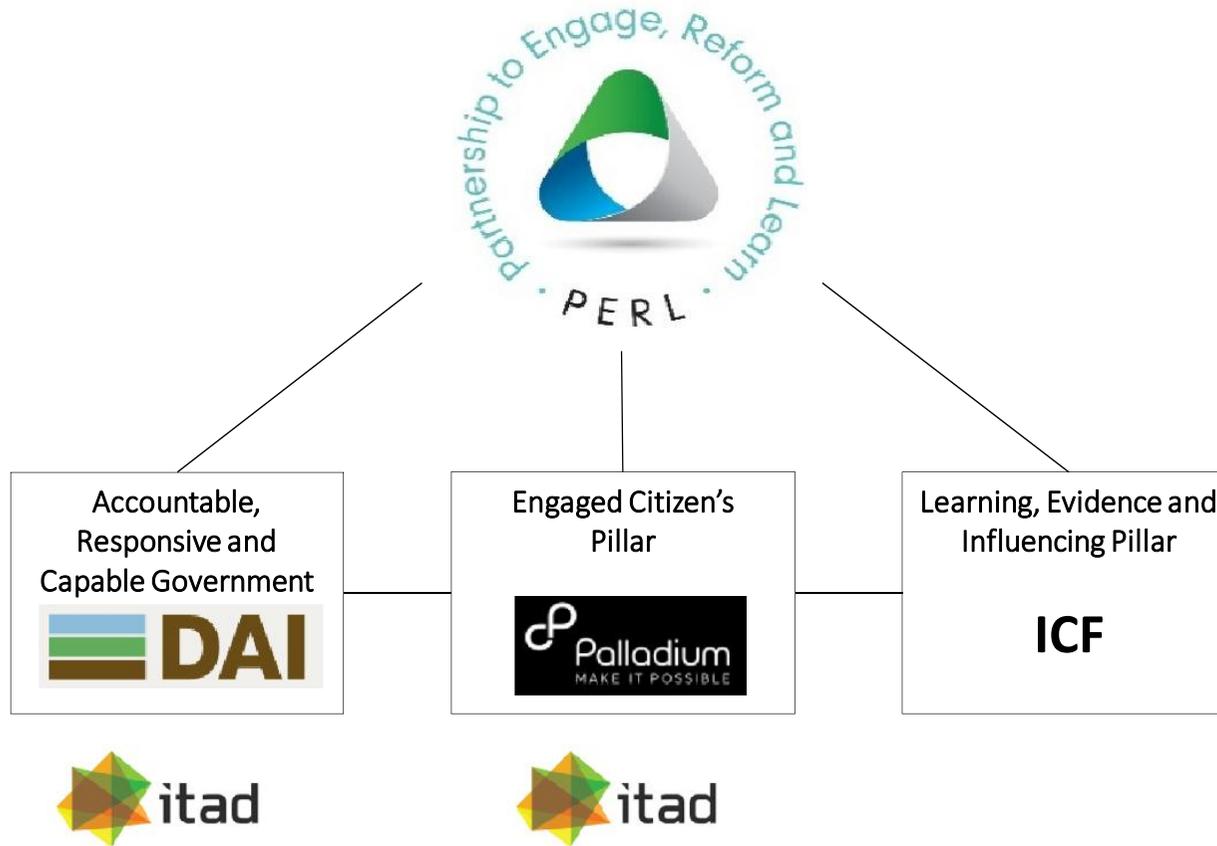# Partnership to Engage, Reform & Learn (PERL)

What is PERL?

> *Objective*
> - Reform how the Governments of Nigeria organise their core business of making, implementing, tracking and accounting for policies, plans, and budgets used in delivering public goods and services to citizens
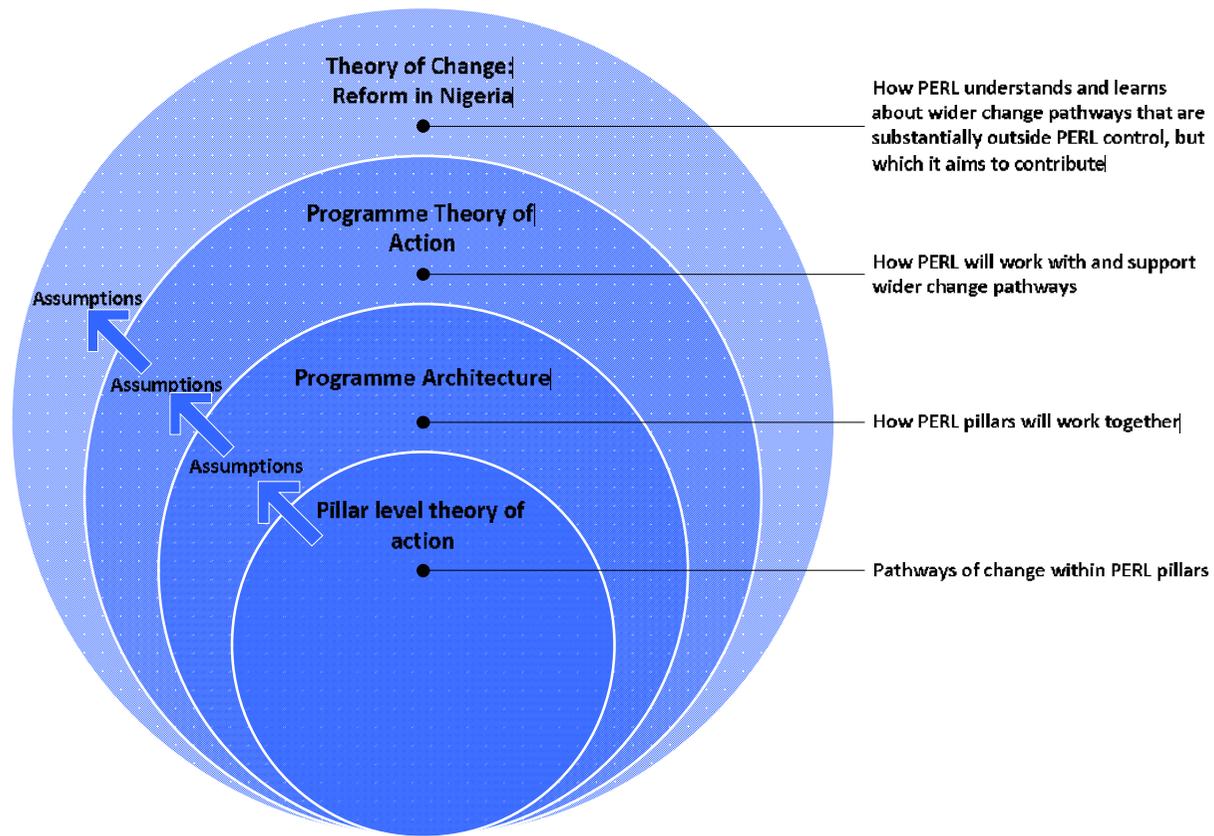> - Supports citizens themselves to engage with these processes

- 5 year governance programme (2016-21)

- Follows on, and learns lessons, from predecessor DFID Nigeria governance programmes State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) and State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI)

- Work in 7 places of 3 different types: Federal Government, State Governments and Regional Hubs

- Combines a highly innovative programme architecture and approach recognising the challenging political economy of Nigeria, and the need for a flexible, adaptive, and locally-led approach

- Delivered through three 'pillars' which plan and act together to support sustainable service delivery reform

PERL's Implementing Partners

The PERL Theory of Change

Theory of Change:
Reform in Nigeria — How PERL understands and learns about wider change pathways that are substantially outside PERL control, but which it aims to contribute

Programme Theory of Action — How PERL will work with and support wider change pathways

Assumptions

Assumptions

Programme Architecture — How PERL pillars will work together

Assumptions

Pillar level theory of action — Pathways of change within PERL pillars

Key features of PERL ToA

- Integrated approach to supporting all aspects of governance reform
- Using problem-driven adaptive approaches and engaging with multi-stakeholder constituencies
- Constructive engagement approaches
- Support provided through capacity building, partnership building, learning and evidence gathering

MEL challenges & opportunities within PERL

Doing development differently

In developing MEL systems for an adaptive and flexible programme, there are some well recognised challenges:
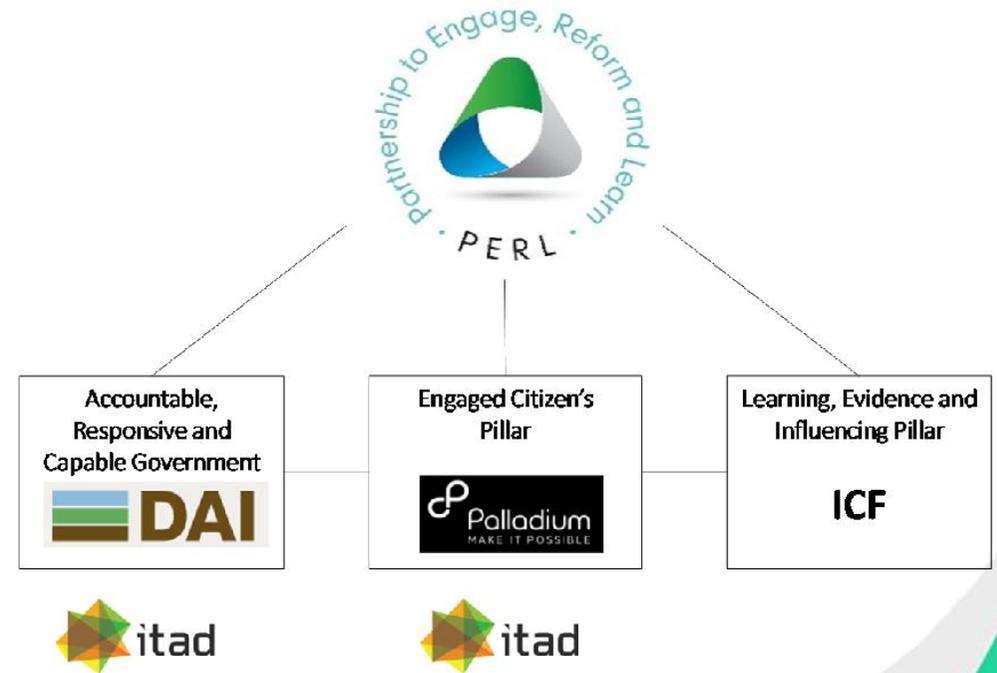
- How to set milestones and targets when problems are not predefined?
- How best to enable learning and rapid adaptive decision making based on M&E evidence?
- How best to ensure accountability without sacrificing adaptability and flexibility?

Governance and management arrangements on PERL

- Three pillars managed by three different consortia under three different contracts.

- Acting together as one programme with a single results framework = whole is greater than sum of parts.

- Harmonising MEL approaches and systems across pillars provides both benefits and significant transaction costs.

PERL's Implementing Partners

Accountable, Responsive and Capable Government	Engaged Citizen's Pillar	Learning, Evidence and Influencing Pillar
DAI	Palladium MAKE IT POSSIBLE	ICF
itad	itad	

Balancing consistency with change

- The ARC and ECP managing agents also delivered predecessor programmes (SPARC and SAVI).

- Many of the same programme staff retained, alongside maintenance of existing stakeholder relationships ➔ has enabled fast start up and translating PERL from theory to action, and delivered value for money.

- Importance of managing expectations and developing new ways of working with stakeholders ➔ PERL ≠ SPARC2+SAVI2.

- Importance of involving delivery teams in the design of MEL systems to ensure ownership and fit for purpose ➔ takes time and resources and easy to over complicate.

Embedding and mainstreaming evaluation
and learning: Selected elements of emerging
PERL MEL system

Placing learning at the centre of our approach

Learning and Adaptive Management Processes and Systems (LAMPS)

- **Planning-oriented** (as opposed to reporting-oriented) MEL is at the centre – reflect, learn and adapt.
- Links operational learning and change to **flexible and adaptive** management at higher levels.
- Emphasises **facilitating** locally contextualised processes of change in uncertain and dynamic, ever-changing circumstances requiring a nimble and flexible approach.
- Rapid cycles of **'learning by doing'** that facilitate routine adaptation of the approach and updating of plans - operational and programme management level.
- Knowledge generated has immediate use in support of interventions, and contributes to learning about **how change happens** through comparative analysis of **what works and what doesn't** in different and changing contexts.
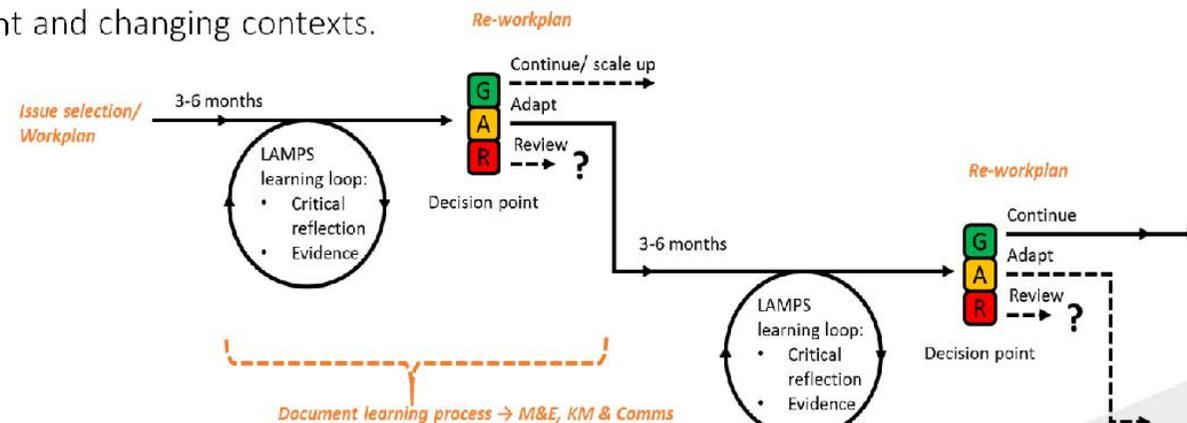
Ensuring accountability *and* enabling adaptability

Using outcome mapping and outcome harvesting to:

- To contribute to the **planning** of interventions designed in response to key issues, including defining and framing specific change pathways and milestones/markers.

- To support **learning** through **evaluating** how, why, and to what extent PERL (and where desirable and feasible the individual pillars) has (or has not) contributed to the achievement of its purposes.

- To support **accountability** and reporting to DFID. through establishing measures against relevant outcome level indicators within the PERL results framework in support of reporting to DFID.

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Ensuring accountability *and* enabling adaptability

Key features of outcome mapping and outcome harvesting within PERL

- Non-linear approach to understanding how change happens

- Focus on attitude and behavior change as basis of 'higher level results'

- Working with the concept of spheres of control, influence and interest

- Collect evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the intervention contributed to the change

Central Concepts of Control, Influence and Interest
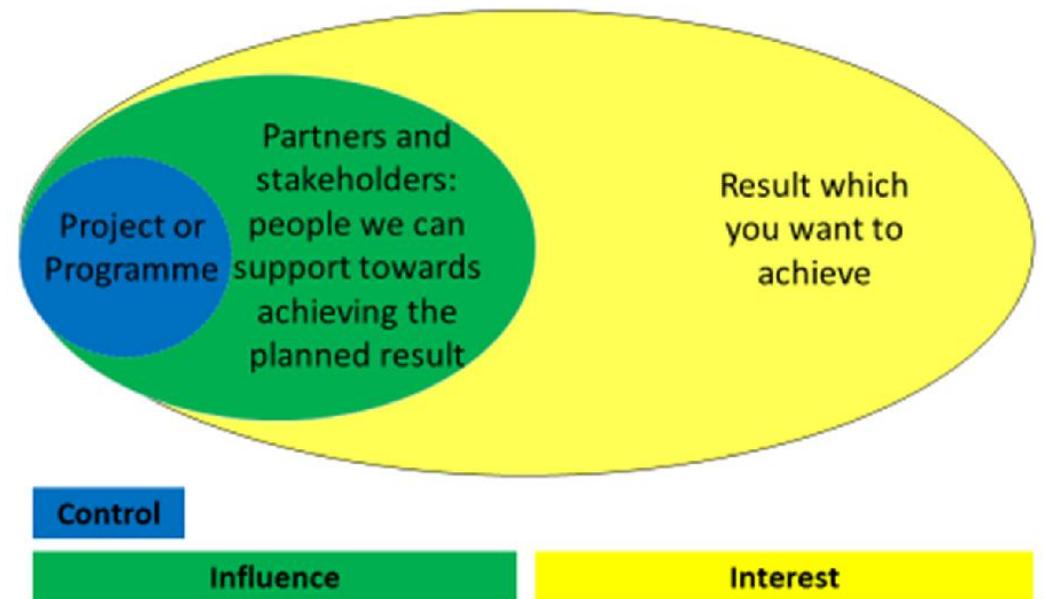
What are we learning?

Learning at the programme level

- Use of cross-pillar working groups has been helpful in developing commonly agreed MEL (and other) approaches, but this process has in some cases resulted in lengthy and too theoretical a design process.
- In other cases, there has been rapid development of preliminary tools (e.g. Outcome Harvesting) involving delivery teams which have been used to generate early results and which are not being further refined and developed.

Implement 'good-enough' designs early and be prepared to develop and iterate further in response to learning.

- The choice of indicators within PERL results frameworks has not been easy. On the one hand, there is a need to communicate planned results in an easily understandable way to an external audience. On the other, there is a need for indicators that are flexible and adaptive and not proscriptive.

Avoid putting too many demands on results frameworks and consider creating different, but linked, versions for different purposes.

Learning at the operational level

1 Critical reflection and analysis requires dedicated time and space

- Teams are under pressure to deliver activities, meet targets and demonstrate results within short time periods. **The space for reflection, learning and documenting is limited, in practice.**
- Different **levels of information emerging** - processing this information is needed to improve its utilisation and better understand its value add for planning requires time.
- Teams need to have the **dedicated time and space** to achieve the level of critical analysis required during reflections and document evidence for ongoing learning.

2 Facilitation requires preparation, guidance and objectivity

- Balanced facilitation is key to stimulate **critical analysis,** foster an **open learning environment, share ideas and plan** for moving forward.
- 'Reflections' require **advance preparation** from the facilitators to a) guide the teams in preparation and b) structure the agenda to achieve the intended purpose and information required.
- Awareness of the **'bigger picture'.**

3 Creating and maintaining the evidence base for adaptive learning requires ongoing quality assurance

- PERL's learning approach is designed on the **assumption** that critical reflection takes place and evidence documenting reflection, learning and adaptation is maintained **on a continuous basis**.
- We need to ensure the right information is captured consistently and is available as a **supporting evidence base for learning.**
- It is key to support teams and quality assure the documentation being produced and maintained on an ongoing basis **cannot be underestimated**.

5 Teams need to be incentivised to reflect, learn and adapt

- Reaching the level of critical reflection, learning, and documenting/evidencing this process is a) **time intensive for teams** and b) requires **well prepared, balanced facilitation.**
- It is important to **incentivise** teams at every level to contribute, and **see the value add** of the process.

4 Partner reflection and learning requires support and guidance

- Reflecting, learning and documenting quality information **at the partner level as an iterative process** is fundamental to PERL's learning and effectiveness.
- We need to support and resource our delivery teams undertaking ongoing partner reflections, to plan and evidence with partners, particularly **if/how partners change and adapt as activities evolve**.

Thank you for listening