Flexibility, learning and ownership: new trends in democracy assistance, results management and evaluation

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Abbreviations

BPF	Big Push Forward
CBPR	Community-based participatory research
CSO	Civil society organization
DDD	Doing Development Differently
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EPD	European Partnership for Democracy
FHI 360	Family Health International 360
KAPE	Knowledge–Application–Practice–Effect
LFA	Logical framework approach
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NPM	New public management
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PME	Planning, monitoring and evaluation
PYPA	Program for Young Politicians in Africa
RBM	Results-based management
RCN	Réseau Citoyens – Citizens' Network Justice and Democracy
RCT	Randomized control trial
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

Preface

> 'One partner in Afghanistan had to spend eight months learning how to fill out the required templates of their main donors … it really would be better to allow for more partner ownership and then use innovative methods to track what happens.'
> Workshop participant, International IDEA, 1–2 December 2015

> '[During the Deliberative Sessions] we learned many things that we were not aware of … what had been done in the past, what still needs to be done. The details from the exercises surprised us. They led to really important discussions for us. We realized we need to find our own solutions and push them through the Local Councils.'
> *Roma Elected Official from 1/10 CBPR projects, August 2016*

Everyone working in international development cooperation wants their work to have real impact on the lives of people who are poor and marginalized, as well as those who are denied their human rights. Yet there are fierce debates about what those results should be and who should decide how they are articulated and assessed.

In the last six years, a number of practitioners have come together in various spaces to push back against the controlling logic underpinning common results-based management (RBM) approaches and to seek alternatives. Key concerns include that tools used to enhance accountability reporting to taxpayers focus on quantitative metrics that are poor indicators of real progress or qualitative value. Moreover, planning tools that involve setting results targets at the beginning of programmes suggest that those engaging in development cooperation relationships share assumptions about the nature of problems and can identify and agree on best practice solutions at the start. They imply that change is far more predictable and less political than it often proves to be in practice and overinflate the importance of donor-funded initiatives in the lives of ordinary people involved in long-term struggles for social change. Tools reflecting such assumptions risk exacerbating power inequities in development cooperation relationships. They can make donors and programme managers less responsible and responsive to the experimentation and learning needs of partner organizations and citizens. These actors need space to adapt in line with their changing situations and understanding of what they can and want to achieve together. Such adaptive processes often involve heated debate among actors with different opinions concerning the best way forward.

The various groups seeking alternative approaches to assessing and managing for results have contributed useful ideas and tested practical tools that address some of the most egregious effects of RBM approaches. The Big Push Forward, for example, created space for practitioners to reflect on the politics and power that encouraged them to comply with reporting practices they felt undermined learning for transformational change. As well as identifying alternative monitoring approaches to enable learning, it also encouraged those engaged in development cooperation to take collective action to change the rules of the results measuring and reporting game. The Doing Development Differently (DDD) community is an example of successful joint action. Together

members have developed, tested and promoted tools underpinned by a complex understanding of development and social change processes. By sharing lessons, those involved in DDD have helped draw attention to the benefits of searching rather than planning. A problem-driven iterative adaptation approach enables local actors to define problems and experiment with different approaches to addressing them. In this model, outcomes and indicators of success emerge and are subject to refinement if local actors redefine their goals or assumptions as a result of reflections on their shared experiences.

A community that promotes 'thinking and working politically' has added another dimension to this iterative process. It uses power and political analysis to challenge the notion that there are linear relationships between aid inputs and outputs and outcomes. Pilot programmes in Nigeria have demonstrated that relatively small amounts of money applied in politically smart multi-stakeholder approaches can achieve considerable results in terms of shifts in state behaviour and responsiveness.

This paper reflects the considerations of another community of practice working in the complex, politically sensitive and unpredictable realm of democracy assistance who came together for a series of workshops facilitated by International IDEA. I was privileged to be involved in these workshops. Those who work in this space face particularly difficult challenges, not only because of the one step forward two step backwards nature of many of the change processes they are trying to engender, but also because democracy is in crisis in donor and partner countries alike. In such situations, measuring or assessing the impact of their work can be extremely challenging for both political and methodological reasons.

Like many other groups involved in development cooperation, democracy assistance practitioners, donors and evaluators participating in the workshops hailed from different backgrounds and held different positions in cooperation relationships. This meant we had varying experiences and assumptions about what the root causes of problems in results management are, and if and how they should best be addressed.

Despite these differences, this paper indicates that those working in democracy assistance have come up with creative ideas and approaches to managing for results in complex political programmes that enhance local ownership and learning. An example from BBC Media Action illustrates how they encourage staff to value and learn from experiential knowledge gained when implementing programmes, and how experiential learning can be privileged alongside methodologically rigorous evaluations.

The experience of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in Rwanda indicates that outcome mapping can provide an alternative learning-based management framework that also enables accountability reporting. However, initially it can prove difficult to shift the attitudes and behaviours of those who have been disciplined in more accountability focused RBM tools. Global Partners Governance shared experiences gained using an intuitively appealing tool that they developed to kill the proverbial accountability and learning birds with one stone. The tool combines quantitative and qualitative indicators through a simple process that makes it easy for partners to monitor progress and adapt their plans if and when necessary.

Accounts of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) experimenting with participatory approaches to both monitoring

and evaluating programmes provide fascinating insights into how useful locally led approaches can be. In addition, they remind us that learning-focused evaluations wishing to explore if, how and why a programme did or did not work should be driven by questions rather than the use of fixed methods to collect data on quantitative indicators or results.

The NED–NDI collaboration was one of three donor–practitioner relationships shared at the International IDEA workshops that highlighted that learning for transformation relies on trusting relationships. As in Sida's outcome mapping example in Rwanda, trust and aligned evaluation philosophies between the NED and NDI enhanced and expanded NDI's participatory approach to evaluations. Similarly, an accompaniment evaluation approach piloted by the Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA) enabled a trusting relationship between external evaluators and the implementing partners. In this instance, the implementers grew to value regular and critical feedback from the evaluation team as this allowed them to adjust their tactics, although it took some getting used to.

Without doubt, the experiences shared here provide important examples of how creative practitioners can enable learning and reflection in democracy assistance programmes. Those who have contributed to the discussions invite other policymakers and practitioners to nurture and adopt similar practices and share their lessons. However, perhaps the paper does not go far enough in discussing the politics and power relations in donor countries that make it so difficult to shift institutional norms, including those relating to the framing of democracy and the normative results expected of democracy programmes. We were reminded by one participant working in a donor country capital of the risks posed by the instrumentalization of democracy: it has become a means to results such as the Sustainable Development Goals rather than a result valued in and of itself. The implications of this need to be the focus of future conversations among those committed to enabling and sustaining democratic political and media institutions and meaningful democracy assistance programmes.

Cathy Shutt
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Facilitator of the Big Push Forward

Executive Summary

Results management approaches can play useful roles in making democracy assistance projects more effective and enhancing their impact. Robust and relevant approaches to planning, implementation and monitoring of projects, and feeding back learning, have proved useful for achieving and assessing results in democracy assistance. This is particularly true when the approaches used allow for sufficient time to document, discuss, reflect and translate individual learning to institutional learning. It can also contribute to the evaluation of programmes by documenting and reflecting on processes that helped and/or hindered outcomes and impacts.

During the last two decades however, the policy and practice of results management has leaned towards emphasizing control and upward accountability. This means that implementing partners can be driven by requirements to report on pre-set outputs and outcomes agreed with funders and creditors. In other words, this could be compared to being asked to predict the development of a football match, and the actions of 22 players and their supporters, as one practitioner so aptly put it. This practice tends to come at the expense of iterative learning, local ownership and accountability to citizens, where the process is owned by those whose lives the interventions seek to benefit. In recent years, however, a small but growing body of policymakers and practitioners in democracy assistance have initiated innovative efforts in results management, allowing for more learning and local ownership. Some of these initiatives use sense-making sessions to transform individual learning into institutional learning; most are open to adapt implementation to changing (political) contexts and place ownership firmly with partners to safeguard their space for learning.

In this Discussion Paper, the main argument is that results management and evaluation practice in democracy assistance work needs to be done differently to get at the main goal: making democracy assistance more relevant and effective and enabling larger impact.

The arguments made in this paper come from a series of conversations that took place among democracy assistance practitioners between 2014 and 2016. They reflect engagement with emerging debates and signs of shifting policies and practices in development cooperation more generally. Examples include those promoted by the Big Push Forward, Doing Development Differently and Thinking and Working Politically communities. Practitioners belonging to these groups have been advocating greater awareness of the politics of results management discourse and testing tools that enable local actors to have more input into, and control of, planning, monitoring and evaluating programmes.

Similarly, our community focusing on democracy assistance identified several lessons from applications of learning- and ownership-oriented approaches to results management. This paper aims to share them more widely to enable learning. It includes

emerging illustrative examples of learning- and ownership-centred results management approaches shared by the Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA); the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI); the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); Global Partners Governance; and BBC Media Action. These are followed by general recommendations for organizations aspiring to manage for results in ways which promote learning and local ownership, while still retaining accountability to funders. Key among these recommendations are the following:

1. *Tackle power and develop trusting relationships*. When developing results management systems, consider who gets to define what the results are and how they should be assessed. Innovate in results and evaluation approaches and tools, trust innovators while also taking care to avoid imposing well-intended innovations on partners. Whatever the case, look for means to provide sufficient support to partners, including their planning units, so that they can take advantage of virtuous cycles of: planning » implementation » learning » adaption » planning.

2. *Encourage flexibility and adaptation to contextual realities and changing assumptions*. Regardless of the tools used, any targeted output or outcome should be viewed as guidance rather than a strict rule requiring full compliance. Democracy assistance projects take place in dynamic contexts and involve complicated relationships and incremental change. Therefore, progress data should be collected for the primary purpose of learning and reflecting on the appropriateness of original targets and future adaptations, not merely for reasons of upward accountability and control.

3. *Nurture learning cultures*. Institutionalize spaces for all involved to undertake iterative reflection and learning using results data and evaluations during and after interventions to explore what is and is not working and why. Document this learning, whether through blogs, video or in print. Maintain learning conversations across the different sub-communities of democracy assistance.

4. *Push for democratic ownership*. To the extent possible, try to ensure that local actors influence or shape problem analysis, results indicators and evaluation questions, and that findings from results monitoring and evaluation are analysed by or fed back to groups that can use them in their ongoing democracy work.

1. Introduction

In 2007, International IDEA published a report, *Evaluating Democracy Support: Methods and Experiences*, which opened by stating: 'In the early 21st century we live in an age of evaluation, performance indicators, league tables and the like. This can be said almost without regard to domain or kind of activity, country, or, indeed, organization or type of organization, whether governmental or non-governmental' (Burnell 2007: 15). The report showcased various methods for evaluating democracy, and concluded that more research is required and further workshops should be arranged to challenge, widen and deepen learning.

A decade later not much has changed in terms of demands for evidence of results; they have got even greater. What has changed, however, is understandings of what causes the demands, the challenges they produce and piloting and testing of approaches to overcome them. These developments are a result of debates and conversations among practitioners such as the ones reported here. Debates about results have led to more insightful understandings of the politics driving these processes, and of the role that policymakers and practitioners have in reproducing the challenges as well as pushing back against them. There are increasing signals that donors are actually asking for more politically informed and contextualized implementation and reporting of results.

How to capture the effects of democracy support, however, remains debated. It is still unreasonable to expect policymakers, and practitioners in democracy assistance to solve problems and disputes that have rocked social sciences for decades (Burnell 2007). A supposedly simple task of setting targets for progress, for instance, can trigger deep disagreements over what is appropriate to expect in a given country at a given time, as well as over the meaning of 'democracy' and 'democratization'. A modest advance for democracy in one country could represent a giant leap in a more challenging context (Burnell 2007). This, however, does not mean that research, debates and testing of innovative practices should end; on the contrary, this is why there is a need for continued work on compiling and learning from attempts to use innovative results management and evaluation approaches in democracy assistance, whether successful or not.

As a point of clarification: while results management can generate data that contributes to summative evaluations, the management of results is not a form of evaluation. Results management data can also be used in formative evaluations (i.e. any evaluation that takes place before and during project or programme implementation with the aim of improving design and performance). Similarly, evaluations can generate learning that enhances planning processes in long-term and institutional results management contexts where learning from individual projects or programmes feeds future problem analysis and planning.

In this Discussion Paper, International IDEA returns to the topic 10 years later to contribute to debates on how results management and evaluation in democracy

assistance can be less controlling and promote flexibility, better learning and local ownership. The paper showcases some instructive examples, hence feeding into current debates and practices on how to do results management differently.

The paper is one of several outputs from a series of discussions by International IDEA about the particular challenges for democracy support programmes and how they can be overcome. Chapter 2 provides a history of debates relating to results management approaches in development cooperation and an overview of key ideas from emerging communities of practice that challenge problematic assumptions about flexibility and opportunities for local learning and ownership. Chapter 3 looks at the state of results management in democracy assistance and the specific issues participants identified as priorities. Chapter 4 explores workshop discussions concerning lessons from partner experiments. Chapter 5 lays out conclusions and recommendations from workshops as well as additional issues identified during writing and commenting on this report.

International IDEA's contribution to these debates also includes a Policy Brief which summarizes this Discussion Paper (International IDEA 2016) and a comprehensive mapping of relevant literature on results management (Sjöstedt 2016: Annex B). The literature mapping indicates that results management in democracy assistance is an under-researched field, and that the few emerging examples of learning- and ownership-centred approaches in democracy assistance are only starting to make a footprint in the literature. Finally, International IDEA produced an audio collage of interviews with key policymakers, practitioners and evaluators which documents the cases discussed here. These knowledge products build on a series of workshops hosted by International IDEA between 2014 and 2016 with a mixed audience of policymakers, practitioners and evaluators working for governments, multilateral organizations, funding agencies, professional associations, implementing partners and consultancy companies.

The first workshop, 'Democracy Assistance and Results: Debates and Constructive Reflection' was convened by International IDEA on 22–23 June 2014 (see Stjernström 2014). It was followed by 'Democracy Assistance and Results Management: From Upward Accountability and Control to Ownership and Learning', convened on 1–2 December 2015 (see Stjernström 2015). The third and final workshop, 'Democracy Assistance and Results Management: Ownership and Learning in Action' was held on 2–3 June 2016 (Sjöstedt 2016). This Discussion Paper builds on discussions and findings from the workshops to form a cohesive argument from the disparate experiences of many people representing different organizations.

Such discussions have been rare in other contexts where international organizations, including civil society organizations (CSOs), are located. In October 2016, however, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) provided space at a workshop in Brussels for implementers to start a conversation on possibilities for advancement and evolution of planning, monitoring and evaluation in democracy support programmes, with the European Union development context in particular. This meeting was partly inspired by International IDEA's workshop series. EPD is committed to organize a second workshop to continue discussions on how friction between the internal and external dimensions of the EU's engagement with democracy influences the legitimacy and credibility of EU support; how provisions for adaptive programming could be included in EU funding mechanisms; and how social media and crowdsourcing could be of use in monitoring and evaluation.

2. Past and current debates on results management in international development cooperation

Variations in definitions and terminology related to results management reflect disparity in focus, uses by different organizations and perception of its aims and approaches. This section provides a brief history of how the term has been used and debated in international development before outlining definitions used throughout this paper.

The history of debates on results management in international development cooperation

For decades, at least since the 1970s, waves of debates have appeared about how to best achieve, identify, assess and report on results (outputs, outcomes and impact) based on contributions by, or perhaps even attributed to, development cooperation. At first sight, the simple notion of tracking what happens during and after a project or programme may come across as straightforward and unambiguously positive.

Debates about actual practices, however, show disagreements and challenges that are both political and methodological in nature. There is disagreement, for example, regarding how results are defined, with those supporting a human right-based approach fearing that a focus on what can be easily measured, like the number of children enrolled in school, will crowd out space for more transformative views, such as education being a process of empowerment (Shutt 2016). This reflects deeper concerns about the logic and ideology underpinning RBM practice, some of which are elaborated below.

Although RBM ideas have been around since the 18th century, its recent spread is associated with the era of new public management (NPM) that began in the 1980s (Eyben 2013). NPM involves applying ideas from the business sector to the management of government bureaucracy to make it more efficient (Haynes 2015). Its logic is that because individual agents or staff are rational actors motivated by self-interest, principals or policymakers need to design organizational structures and performance rules to create incentives that will align staff interests with policy agendas (Eyben 2013).

Thus, RBM tools (e.g. key performance indicator targets), are believed to create incentives for frontline staff. Some basic assumptions providing a rationale for measuring results as a means to manage and enhance performance through incentivizing and rewarding success are presented in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1. The power of measuring results

If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.

If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it.

If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure.

If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it.

If you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it.

If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.

Source: Kusek and Rist (2004) adapted from Osborne and Gaebler (1992)

The thinking above, which has been central to RBM approaches introduced into the public sectors of many donor and recipient countries, began to influence donors during the 1980s (Eyben 2015), but it was not until the turn of the century that it really began to take hold. The advent of the good governance and aid effectiveness agenda that encouraged partnership approaches to building capacity to assess progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) signalled an important shift from a focus on inputs and outputs to one on outcomes and impacts (Kusek and Rist 2004).

RBM ideas gained particular prominence during the run-up to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, when results management originally centred on the adaptability and continuous learning capacities of successful managers. A standard definition of RBM (Meier 2003) adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee in 2003 stated:

> 'Results-Based Management (RBM) is a management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way organisations operate, with improving performance in terms of results as the central orientation. RBM provides the management framework with tools for strategic planning, risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation. Its primary purpose is to improve efficiency and effectiveness through *organisational learning*, and secondly to fulfil accountability obligations through *performance reporting*'.

A 2004 meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, explicitly rejected the articulation of intentions in terms of management by results. The meeting was sponsored by the multilateral development banks—the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank—in collaboration with the Development

Assistance Committee of the OECD. Participants at the meeting instead opted for a managing for development results (MfDR) version of RBM. The Sourcebook produced after the meeting stressed that no penalties would be applied for missed targets and encouraged a flexible approach to analysing reasons for failure to inform adaptation (Management for Development Results 2004).

The extent to which different donors lived up to the Paris Declaration principles has been influenced by domestic and international events (Gulrajani 2015), as well as bureaucratic norms (Vähämäki 2015: 135). In many donor countries, RBM approaches have been affected by the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. An era of austerity, shifting geopolitics, public perceptions of donors failing in relation to the MDGs and competition from private philanthropists have all influenced donor priorities (Gulrajani 2015, cited in Shutt 2016).

In the United Kingdom, a government focus on results to increase accountability to taxpayers led to a change in the use of logical frameworks. Although completing logical frameworks had long been part of the proposal negotiation processes with the British Department for International Development (DFID), suddenly indicators and targets became far more important. This reflected the fact that DFID was one of the three bilateral donors that decided to adopt a standard indicator and agency-wide results framework, which included quantitative results targets for performance management (Holzapfel 2016: 8).

Although the effects in other agencies that avoided such frameworks would not have been as great, overall, policymakers and practitioners have witnessed greater emphasis on the need to demonstrate results (accountability), with less regard for the need to change planning and learning practices (including a stronger element of progress assessment, reflection and analysis as a basis for decisions).

Further, support to partner-country planning frameworks is too rare, despite the explicit intentions of the Paris Declaration (see in particular the Statement of Resolve, point 3 and the five principles of the Declaration). On this note, a participant in the first International IDEA workshop referred to a ministry in a partner country, which had to deal with a programme matrix of 147 indicators. Everyone expected a clear and succinct report, but not one single donor or creditor was willing to support the planning or monitoring and evaluation units in the ministry.

Emerging debates and communities of practice

Within the wider field of development cooperation, there is no shortage of efforts to advocate for improved approaches to development management (Shutt 2016). There are, however, different opinions about the cause and extent of current problems. Some argue that inflexible matrices are a consequence of a disregard for the importance of learning. In their view RBM is a useful approach that embraces flexibility and changes in behaviour, targets and means as a consequence of changing contextual conditions. An ability to adapt to changing conditions would be considered a strength from a planning perspective, particularly if planning is informed by political economy analysis and undertaken by partner governments and citizens.

Others, who have experienced RBM as a technical planning process that is mainly undertaken by external actors seeking to impose 'best practice' solutions in different recipient contexts, see it as reflective of a logic that is arrogant and power blind, and which undermines development cooperation (see e.g. Booth 2012; Chambers 2010; Eyben 2013; Ramalingam 2013; Shutt 2016). Arguments made by these authors suggest that RBM places too much emphasis on development interveners' projects that often have little meaning or importance for local people involved in their own complex and long-term struggles for change. Chambers (forthcoming) argues that the power of RBM is so pervasive that even critical practitioners are often oblivious to how it affects their thinking and practice.

In the past 10 years, a number of communities of practice have evolved seeking ways to address the negative consequences of some applications of results-based thinking and practice. They include the Big Push Forward, Doing Development Differently and Thinking and Working Politically communities (see Box 2.2). Although driven by slightly different motivations they all seek to address common weaknesses in the assumptions underpinning results management tools mentioned earlier. The alternatives they propose view development cooperation change as being political rather than technical, meandering rather than predictable and non-linear in terms of relationships between inputs and outputs.

Moreover, some emerging communities of practice highlight the importance of recognizing power dynamics within development cooperation relationships (see Box 2.2). In this context, different stakeholders have varying capacities and understandings of the causes of problems to be addressed—including those relating to results management—change pathways, as well as optimal solutions. They therefore emphasize the importance of considering institutional contexts, human relationships and power in discussions about RBM, as opposed to a sole emphasis on tools (see Shutt 2016 for a review of these differences). Many others who may not identify specifically with the groups profiled in Box 2.2 have also been experimenting with doing things differently. One example is a collaborative action-research process spearheaded by 10 primarily Dutch development-oriented organizations and their partners in the Global South. Their research explored how different planning, monitoring and evaluation approaches and methods could help them in dealing with processes of complex change. Approaches used included outcome mapping, 'most significant change', sensemaker and scorecards (Ongevalle et al. 2012).

International IDEA, in contrast, focused on the specific needs and preconditions of the democracy support community, that is: parliamentary development, political parties and party system development, electoral process support, media development and civil society. Although there were some differences of opinion, participants in the workshops did not view RBM as essentially problematic, they rather took issue with the way certain tools have been used in practice. Thus, in this paper, results management is used as a positive umbrella term to incorporate all types of results-based methods and approaches used to plan, implement, and monitor and learn from results in development cooperation, in this case democracy support.

Participants in the International IDEA workshops agreed that robust and relevant results management is important for planning, implementation, and monitoring of change processes, reflecting and feeding back lessons learned to continuously adapt and improve. Unlike some who see evaluation learning contributing to better management

Box 2.2. Communities of practice in the wider field of development cooperation

The Big Push Forward: <http://bigpushforward.net/>

The Big Push Forward (BPF), initiated in 2010, created space for development practitioners to explore and debate fair and just processes for assessing transformative development processes. In 2013, this included a conference where participants were encouraged to reflect on the political and ideological assumptions underpinning results management approaches and their potential negative impacts on partners and locally led social change. They then looked at how power relations influenced the translation of these politics and the use of management tools in different organizations, seeking to identify strategies and tactics that maximized opportunities for the use of more democratic approaches to results reporting.

Thinking and Working Politically: <https://twpcommunity.org/>

The Thinking and Working Politically community of practice aims at better understanding of how to 'translate the evidence that political factors are usually more important in determining developmental impact than the scale of aid funding or the technical quality of programming into operationally relevant guidance'. Some of the tools they have developed include practical aids for quick political economy analysis that is vital for problem analysis, planning and learning.

Doing Development Differently: <http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com>

The Doing Development Differently (DDD) community, which uses ideas from complexity theory, adopted a joint manifesto to highlight that 'genuine development progress is complex: solutions are not simple or obvious, those who would benefit most lack power, those who can make a difference are disengaged and political barriers are too often overlooked. Many development initiatives fail to address this complexity, promoting irrelevant interventions that will have little impact'. The DDD community highlights the challenges posed by different stakeholders having varying understandings of problems and the importance of results management approaches which promote problem-driven iterative learning from successes and failures, as well as adaptation.

for better results within a long-term change trajectory, they viewed results management as contributing to formative and summative evaluations of programmes by creating a repository or record of data. In short, they agreed there are many ways to do results management, and the methods used will determine which types of results are identified, assessed and documented, and what they can be used for. Users have the discretion to emphasize learning over control, and local ownership over upwards accountability.

In the experience of workshop participants, much as there are signs of donors asking for and accepting more politically informed and contextualized programmes and projects, the policy and practice of results management is still dominated by control and upwards accountability. In brief, the practices of implementing partners are still mainly driven by the need to report on pre-set outputs and outcomes agreed with funders and creditors, at the expense of iterative learning, local ownership and accountability to those very people whose lives should ultimately improve as a result of the programmes or projects.

3. The state of results management and the nature of democracy assistance

Conversations hosted by International IDEA focused on the specific needs and preconditions of the democracy support community, that is: parliamentary development, political parties and party system development, electoral process support, media development and civil society.

Democracy assistance and its political environments

As participants in the International IDEA workshops attested, working in democracy assistance is inherently political and politically sensitive. The actors involved, and their motivations and ideologies are in constant flux, be it due to elections ousting some members of parliament or cultural shifts leading to different goals and aspirations. This ever-changing landscape and context means that an activity planned may end up being irrelevant even before implementation starts. Moreover, programmes are often short-term and geographically focused, making it difficult to capture the long-term, downstream effects of the work. In addition, the incentive structures and alliances of voluntary political associations, such as political parties, caucuses and coalitions, are often hidden and therefore difficult to assess. Finally, sensitive issues such as gender and ethnic inclusion are not easy to evaluate beyond establishing parity in participation.

The realities of working with democracy assistance often clash with current results management and evaluation trends. The considerations needed when working with political processes are not always taken seriously. Results management needs to occur in accordance with the nature of the activity to be implemented; practitioners need to fully consider the political nature of working with democracy assistance. While practitioners can be inspired by the significant efforts to achieve changes in results management in the wider development cooperation field democracy assistance actors need to deal with the unique challenges of working with political actors, and amid politics. Although many challenges are similar to those faced across development cooperation, important differences remain. Democracy assistance is fundamentally about supporting democratization processes: that is, long-term societal change. Such change is political, unpredictable, non-linear, and evolves at times in challenging political power dynamics. Democratization processes are also about relationships, attitudes and behaviours. What needs to be discussed, then, is which results management and evaluation approaches appear to provide practitioners with the best possible fit.

Decisions taken are bound to be influenced by power, including the sense that the increasingly dire straits faced by democracy assistance actors require them to defend the field and demonstrate results. Yet these very changes make monitoring and evaluation much harder. At the workshop hosted by International IDEA in 2014, Thomas Carothers observed that, whereas after the cold war there was generally positive support for international assistance to democracy, today's marketplace of political ideas and political influence is active and fiercely competitive.

This shift partly explains why more than 50 countries[1] have adopted restrictive legislation that targets civil society, including by blocking access to external funding; by adding burdensome requirements on registration; and through vilification and harassment of CSOs (Carothers 2013, 2014; Kiai 2016). These factors endanger democracy actors and reformers, which makes achieving and demonstrating results immensely challenging. What was once considered as standard democracy support is now seen as too intrusive by some governments, with a resultant pushback against democracy aid (Stjernström 2014).

An even broader issue concerns changes in its key premises: democracy assistance actors can no longer assume that democracy will be seen as the first-hand solution to large and hugely threatening problems facing human beings today and in the future. These include the emerging climate crisis, including global warming; an unprecedented number of refugees; and a growing number of protracted armed conflicts.

At the 2014 International IDEA workshop, Carothers also stated that perceived and real weaknesses in many Western democratic systems reduce the power of the Western democratic example, and, additionally, other systems have proven to be effective in achieving peace and development, at least in a narrow sense. Numerous countries in every part of the world, not just Western democracies, try to influence the trajectories of neighbouring countries in political flux. Some autocracies sell their systems based on their performance, while others try to sell theirs based on ideological values (e.g. Russia in claiming that being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is Western decadence). Carothers observed that it appears that actors at all levels have become consumers of political systems, and that consumer choice is based more on performance, such as decisiveness and debt management skills (China), than on ideology.

All of these factors challenge basic assumptions and theories of change underpinning many democracy assistance programmes, which adds another layer of complexity to learning-centred results management and evaluation. Single-loop learning about whether practitioners are implementing programmes right is simply not adequate. Democracy actors need to engage in double-loop learning about whether promoting, or even exporting, particular democratic models is the right thing to do.

Problematic results management assumptions

Contemporary results management and evaluation approaches build on a number of assumptions, which tend not to fit all that well with democracy assistance programmes

1 Since these discussions were held, the number of countries which have adopted restrictive measures that targets civil society has increased significantly, including 'significant attacks on fundamental civil society rights of free association, free assembly and free expression in 96 countries' (CIVICUS 2015)

facing the challenges noted above. During the workshops hosted by International IDEA, deliberations focused on issues that prevented learning and ownership. These include assumptions of rigidity (as opposed to flexibility); predictability (as opposed to theories of change/change management); measurability (as opposed to being assessable); and a technical approach that assumes humans are individual, rational actors (as opposed to acknowledging the importance of different understandings, power and informal social relationships).

The first problem is the assumption of rigid linearity: that one activity will unavoidably lead to a particular result, in a straightforward and direct way, like one billiard ball hitting another. The assumption is that the path from activity to output to outcome is straight. Of course, this is not how politics work. There are many different political variables at work at any given time. It is not one billiard ball hitting another, it is hundreds of balls crashing into each other in unpredictable ways, meaning that many activities will not lead to the outcome envisaged and that progress may be accompanied by regression. In democracy assistance programmes, financial inputs have very indirect relationship with results.

The second assumption is that of predictability. The planning process requires a significant amount of knowledge and predictive power of the future. Soon after the planning phase, the political landscape may be very different, making some activities useless, or even harmful. Planners simply cannot know that an activity will be useful in nine months, especially in the volatile political environments in which democracy assistance tend to be implemented. The assumption of predictability also ignores the need for mechanisms to reflect, learn and iteratively adapt programmes to new findings or experiences made along the way of programme implementation.

Nobody can know for certain the trajectories of a country's future political dynamics, including its forms, spaces and levels of power. Even the most qualified assumptions will not always be borne out. Combining the assumptions of predictability and linearity, democracy assistance providers are expected to act like football coaches with the magic skills of being able to 'predict … how a goal will be scored before the (football) match has started, without taking into account the opposing side, the conditions or fitness of your players' (Power 2014: 3). Recent and current debates with regards to theories of change—and more importantly, change management— are good examples of how the sector has nuanced its discussions on assumptions about change (e.g. see Valters et al. 2016; Green 2016).

The third assumption is that cause and effect are easy to prove and that outcomes can be measured using only quantitative approaches. This creates a difficult situation when implementers know that there is an activity that could be very effective in an area that is important, but the effect of that activity is hard to observe or measure. The assumption of measurability sometimes leads to situations where implementers do not prioritize relevant and important actions because their effects are challenging to prove and measure. Hence, they go for others that can be measured.

It is notoriously difficult to prove and measure the effects of advocacy work, for instance. Attribution is notoriously challenging, but so is contribution. They both require being sure that a change (which may be difficult to observe) has occurred, measuring how significant it is and then determining if a development contribution was necessary or

sufficient to explain it. If the intention is to influence a group of legislators to enable more public oversight of their activities, how do you know that the effect was solely, or even partly, due to particular actions by a development partner, or if some other factors nudged the group of legislators into action? Perhaps demands for accountability from the people had a bigger effect? Perhaps legislators are reluctant to acknowledge your influence? Or perhaps the legislators themselves simply believed in the project? Clearly, to monitor such causal effect on human behaviour and actions requires sophisticated results management and evaluation tools. Sometimes it may be simply impossible to identify and fully understand a programme's positive or negative effects.

The fourth assumption relates to what might be labelled an overly rational and boxed-in view of human interaction. One example is 'principle agent' theory which assumes that people primarily act based on rational self-interest, and which requires close adherence to plans and rules to 'tame' behaviour (a central feature of NPM practices). In the experience of workshop participants, however, a much more dynamic understanding of human relationship provides for a more realistic assumption, as inspired by behavioural science. As one participant put it, people change behaviour when they see others, whom they trust, change behaviour, rather than due to changes in plans or rules. Social norms or perceptions of norms appear to matter more than merely changing the rules, which is not to say that rules do not matter at all.

To overcome these challenges, participants agreed that they need to continue to embrace assumptions of political change as being non-linear, contextually contingent, unpredictable and often impossible to measure. A key step towards alternative ways of conducting results management is to expose and challenge existing assumptions through new practice that influences perceptions and perceived norms of what is possible.

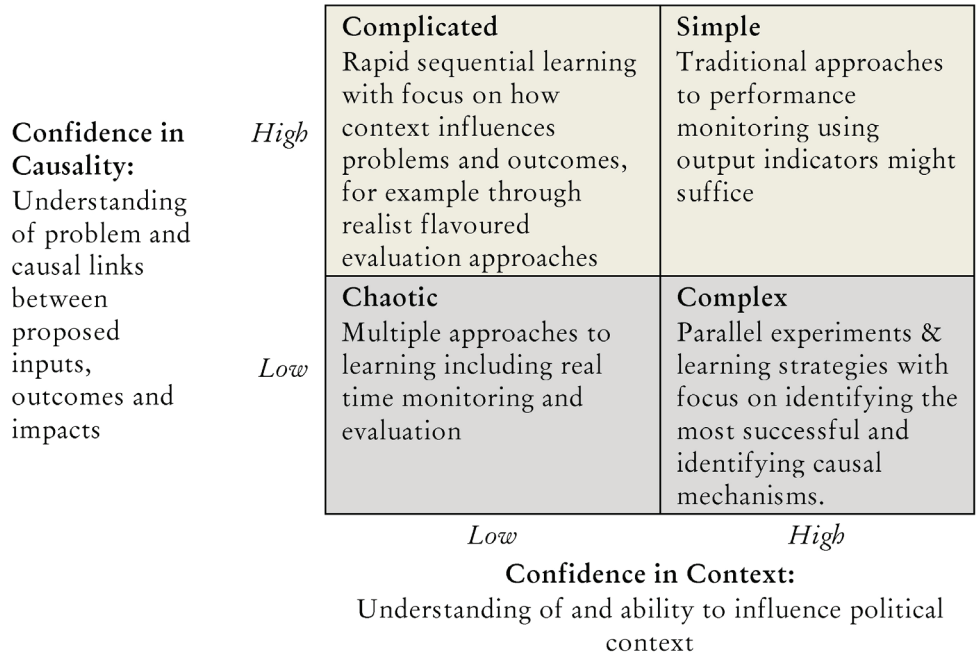
When considering how to use results management and evaluation methods to shape and improve policy and practice, policy makers and practitioners should remain cognizant of the fact that these methods can have many functions. While all have the same goals—to make democracy assistance programmes more effective and, by extension, create a stronger impact—the methods for results management and evaluation may differ. Various communities of practice have developed tools to help practitioners decide on the optimal combination of results management and evaluation approaches to respond to some of the challenges discussed above.

Figure 3.1 shows that choices are influenced by how well programme managers and implementers understand the problem and the anticipated causal links between proposed inputs, outputs and outcomes (i.e. their confidence in causality) and, on the other axis, how confident they can be in their understanding of and the project's ability to influence political context (i.e. their confidence in context) (Shutt 2016).

If context and assumed causalities are simple and well understood—for example, as would be the case for a vaccination programme—then change is predictable and there is no need for additional learning. Standard RBM approaches will give a good enough account of a programme's achievement. If, however, as is often the case in democracy programmes, the causal links or contexts are more complicated or complex, other approaches are required to enable the kind of learning during implementation that encourages better understanding of how a context interacts with a programme, and/or of causal links. Such learning can provide the basis for adaptation to increase impact.

The next chapter discusses a number of examples that demonstrate how this approach can work in contexts that are more complicated.

Figure 3.1. Learning to adapt: exploring knowledge, information and data for adaptive programming and policies



Sources: adapted from proceedings of a workshop organized by USAID's Innovation Lab, the Institute for Development Studies, MStar and FHI 360, and held at Nesta London in October 2015 (Learning to Adapt: Exploring Knowledge, Information and Data for Adaptive Programmes and Policies, 2015) as well as subsequent work by DFID and ODI on guidance for adaptive programming (Shutt 2016).

4. Emerging innovative practices in results management and evaluation of democracy assistance

The examples featured in this chapter build on conversations that took place between democracy assistance policymakers and practitioners at three International IDEA-hosted workshops in 2014–16. Participants identified several lessons from applications of flexible, learning- and ownership-oriented approaches to results management. The chapter includes illustrative examples shared by the PYPA; NED and NDI; BBC Media Action; Sida (with additional input from a consultant for Lucid Collaborative); and Global Partners Governance. Three main focus areas dominated discussions: flexibility, learning and ownership.

Flexibility

The dynamic and ever-changing political contexts in which democracy assistance is implemented demand flexibility throughout the cycle of a programme. In reality, results management tools such as the logical framework approach (LFA) tend to be used in ways that more often than not rule out such flexibility. Challenges are related to tensions around whether log frames should be seen and used as tentative hypotheses and general guidance for use in reporting and communication rather than strict rules requiring full compliance by which performance will be measured. When seen as a strict rule to be complied with, log frames clearly build on assumptions of predetermined progress, of politics staying static for the duration of a project, of project designers being omniscient, and on the assumption that the initial analysis based on a scoping mission could be expected to be sufficient for the full project lifecycle.

During the third workshop, examples were shared which promote flexibility, yet are sufficiently robust in terms of enabling reporting to logical framework results targets that are accepted by donors. In other words, implementers and donors could negotiate a compromise that enabled accountability reporting, but in ways that reduced donor control and an over specification of inputs and output level results. The cases were KAPE® (Power 2016) used in Iraq and outcome mapping used by Sida and partners in Rwanda. An additional example of a flexible, continuous learning evaluation is included in the next section on learning.

KAPE: A politically adaptive and flexible approach to result management

The Knowledge–Application–Practice–Effect (KAPE®) approach is a politically adaptive and flexible way of conducting results management developed by Global Partners Governance (GPG) for use in difficult political environments. KAPE provides a logic that underpins project design, delivery and results measurement and management. It was designed based on four assumptions:

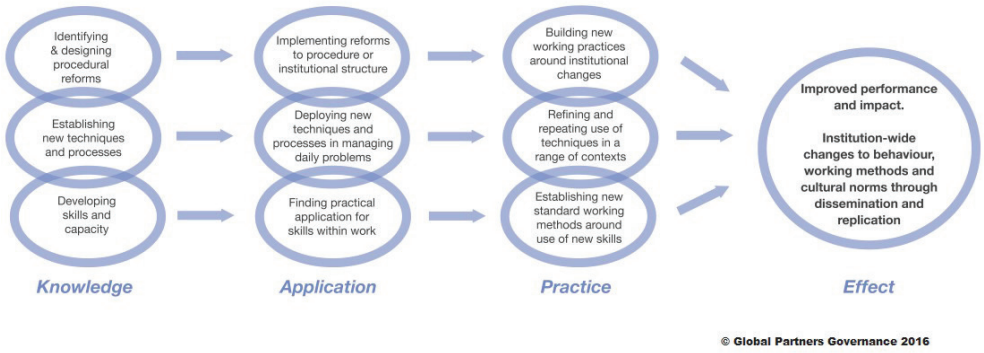
1. Lasting change depends on changing behaviour as much as structure. Unless people adapt to new structures, they will keep doing the same things, just in different surroundings.

2. Projects must therefore support people to absorb new ways of working and help them with that process of adapting to 'create the new normal'.

3. Institutional change tends to happen incrementally, so start by getting the small things right and creating pockets of good practice.

4. The task is then to get a ripple effect across the institution to have a bigger effect. Ultimately, projects are not the main unit of analysis as they should be seeking change that lasts longer than a project, and has an effect beyond the immediate entry-points.

According to Greg Power, Director of GPG, KAPE was developed to overcome weaknesses in the way log frames are commonly used in development assistance, which routinely fail to capture the most relevant political factors in GPG's work in places like Iraq, Jordan or Libya. They therefore had to come up with something additional which captured outcomes as much as processes, performance as much as institutional structure, and enabled flexible delivery and adaptation in volatile political environments. As a trusted implementer, GPG was able to work with its funders to adapt the log frame and utilize the other forms of measurement in KAPE.



KAPE assesses two types of progress: first, along the knowledge–application–practice–effect chain, which provides evidence of sustainable behavioural and institutional change. Second, the approach looks for evidence of improved performance. This involves a different set of metrics, measuring several aspects of institutional activity such as reports, questions, legislation and changes to policy, against a baseline developed at the start of the project.

Box 4.1. The four stages of KAPE as applied in the Iraqi parliament

The KAPE approach has been used in the Iraqi parliament since 2008. GPG collaborated mainly with parliamentary committees and the Speaker's Office to achieve a common understanding of what the parliamentary rules entailed and what needed to be done to improve the parliament's practices. The four phases were as follows:

Knowledge
The first phase involved understanding what project interlocutors wanted to achieve, helping to understand the nature of the problem, and collectively identifying solutions. For the parliamentary committees, it started with basic advice on process, practice and procedure, ranging from job descriptions for staff, to planning committee enquiries to implementing an annual strategy.

Application
The next phase involved finding ways of implementing these new skills and techniques to manage daily problems or change existing practices. It means being able to utilize opportunities as they arise to find practical applications for new skills and processes. The project thus worked with the committees to improve internal organization, deliver enquiries and question ministers.

Practice
The third phase in the KAPE process is where GPG seeks to entrench new ways of working for the long-term by repeating and refining the reforms, processes and techniques so that they become standard practices. With parliamentary committees in Iraq, this involved reflecting with members of parliament and staff, developing core guidance and repeating the processes, so that the committee established a standard way of working, as well as accepted norms.

Effect
The final phase seeks wider effects, and looks at whether these effects are sustainable and 'sticky'. Although the KAPE model often relies on targeted support to individual offices or committees, the intention is to ensure a ripple effect across the institution to have a much wider impact on practice and performance. This 'replication' is achieved in many ways, but in Iraq it involved working directly with the Speaker and Parliamentary Directorate to establish central guidance and institution-wide standards for all committees, which were based on GPG's work with specific committees.

The change management strategy of KAPE can be summarized as follows: the approach provides a logic of change, drawing on practice from the business world, behavioural economics and political science. It is built around the belief that most sustainable institutional change (a) starts within the institution rather than by being implemented from the outside; (b) starts small, and occurs in incremental fashion, rather than being the result of a 'big bang'; and (c) is always haphazard, messy and unpredictable. The change management strategy is about creating small 'pockets of good practice' within an institution and then aiming for a 'ripple effect' in other parts of the organization (Power 2016).

The KAPE approach is carried out in four steps, and results are assessed throughout (see Figure 4.1). The first step, where knowledge is collected and distributed to politicians,

is evaluated simultaneously by quantitative and qualitative measures, and the same goes for all steps in the KAPE chain. KAPE has enabled GPG to tailor activities according to the context, without losing sight of the longer-term strategic goals. Assessing every step along the way can build a significant level of understanding, which can then be fed into and improve subsequent steps. The KAPE approach has been used in a number of difficult political contexts. Box 4.1. illustrates one example of how it works in practice, in this case in the Iraqi parliament.

Several parliamentary committees turned into pockets of good practice. GPG also worked with the Speaker's Office and key parliamentary directorates to ensure that these lessons were disseminated and emulated across the parliament. While the Iraqi parliament continues to face enormous challenges and will need continued support in its efforts to manage them, the institution is better prepared to withstand such an onslaught of problems. Although the differences might look small to the casual observer, by 2016 the parliament was better organized, more influential, and far more resilient than that which existed in 2008. During a period when 'many parliaments in the region have fallen apart, the Iraqi parliament has faced arguably more significant problems and, despite stumbles, remained the most important political forum for the management of political differences in Iraq', due to the efforts of the people inside the parliament (Power, 2016: 6). In practice, according to Power (2016: 6):

> while working with individual committees in the Iraqi parliament, [GPG] also supported the parliamentary authorities to disseminate examples of good practice across the institution. Initially, with the Parliamentary Directorate [GPG] helped to establish a template for an end of term report by all committees. However, as word of our [GBP] work spread throughout the institution [GPG] were also asked by the Speaker's Office to help them develop a system for co-ordinating all committee activity, and to establish a set of core tasks and benchmarks which all committees should meet.
>
> The process meant that [GPG] helped to set institution-wide standards for committee activity and performance through the Speaker's Office, while at the same time supporting committees across the parliament to improve their impact and meet those centrally-set standards. In other words, by working bottom-up and top-down simultaneously [GPG] were able to promote new techniques, create new behavioural norms and strengthen the parliamentary culture around routinized ways of working.
>
> This logic of institutional change is the diametric opposite of many traditional programmes. Rather than trying to change structures first, it starts by helping people to do their jobs better. This might involve changes to rules and structure, but these are less important than how people see their role, use the tools at their disposal and respond to the behavioural norms inside the institution. By engaging directly with the incentives of the people inside the institution it aims to create new ways of working, which over time become part of the institutional culture. At that point, once these patterns and logic are accepted, it is much easier to formalise the process of change, by changing the rules to reflect the new reality.

Outcome mapping enables flexibility and learning

Sida's use of outcome mapping in a civil society programme on democracy, human rights and peacebuilding support in Rwanda is an instructive example of how staff can create space for flexible, learning-based approaches to results assessment and reporting in democracy and human rights programmes while managing for results (see Box 4.2).

Outcome mapping builds on the assumption that change processes are complex and non-linear. The process begins by considering what change of behaviour/relationship

Box 4.2. Outcome mapping in action

During 2012–15 the Embassy of Sweden in Rwanda introduced outcome mapping to its civil society partners as an alternative to logical frameworks within the areas of democracy and human rights and peacebuilding. Over this peirod, four civil society partners switched to outcome mapping: Norwegian People's Aid, Aegis Trust, Interpeace and Réseau Citoyens – Citizens' Network Justice and Democracy (RCN Justice).

These international organizations cooperated with more than 25 local civil society groups that also adopted outcome mapping. Using outcome mapping constituted a paradigm shift away from traditional end-of-term reporting of quantitative results, and towards a learning-based management approach that aimed for transformative change over time.

It involved all staff, not just the planning, monitoring and evaluation specialists. The method encouraged programme implementers and decision makers to reflect on what worked and what did not, and to adapt programme implementation accordingly.

So-called reflective sessions were held on a regular basis, which brought in not only the implementers but community members as well, to discuss and reflect on whether activities were having expected effects, thus promoting learning. This also had the effect that community members could see that implementers were working for them and not for the donors. It allowed for a better understanding of the effects of outputs rather than focusing on the outputs themselves.

one wishes to achieve. Progress markers are then designed based on the objectives set up. An outcome is defined as a change in behaviour or relationships. It forces focus on tangible outcomes, rather than grand-scheme impact or simply measuring what is quantifiable, such as the number of participants at a workshop or the number of publications disseminated. Outcome mapping is used to monitor results described in terms of qualitative changes in behaviour and relationships rather than more standard quantitative metrics that tend to focus on activities.

Outcome mapping is very flexible: objectives, progress markers and activities can be changed at any time, either due to changes in the contexts or understandings of change processes by implementers.

Adopting a flexible approach to outcome mapping in programmes involving actors operating within institutions accustomed to more rigid approaches focused on assessing progress towards quantitative targets requires confidence and patience. Sida succeeded because its staff and consultants recognized an opportunity to enable a flexible learning-based management approach that would also fit with Sida's results reporting and performance management requirements. However, they still had to be sensitive to local partners who needed time to learn and experiment with the new approach. Moreover, they also had to be able to report the results in a traditional logical framework required by a co-funder. As in the KAPE example, it is important to note that the logical framework was used as a reporting tool for capturing outcome level change rather than as a top-down management tool with rigid output level targets.

Flexibility: lessons and reflections

Two issues are raised by these examples: first, the merits of flexibility in results management and evaluation; and, conversely, how the choice of results management and evaluation approaches can be either empowering or disempowering for the communities who should ultimately benefit from programmes and projects.

Examples like KAPE and Sida's programme in Rwanda illustrate that it is possible for funders, creditors, practitioners and implementing partners to adopt the kind of flexibility required to address the challenges faced by democracy assistance discussed in Chapter 3 of this paper. Within the context of trusting relationships, innovative implementers can develop approaches for results management that encompass flexible indicators. Such approaches can stand alone or else be used to feed information into a logical framework.

Adapting project implementation due to feedback from communities involved may promote empowerment of these groups. For one, if communities notice that projects will be improved thanks to a particular results management or evaluation approach, this can lead to a different relationship between the beneficiaries and evaluators, such as described in the PYPA case in the following section. Evaluation fatigue can wither away, and people may become more committed to participate. A stronger relationship also creates trust; no one fears that funding will diminish if they report problems.

In essence, the act of improving a project continuously due to feedback demonstrates that results management is conducted for the benefit of parliamentarians or communities rather than (only) for donors. Despite these advantages, Sida's experience in Rwanda indicates that partners can take time to adapt to new approaches. They may initially find a switch from the discipline of a traditional results management method with clear rules to a more flexible approach somewhat unsettling. Finally, the cases suggest that while rigidly following plans undermines learning, flexibility encourages it.

Learning

An undervalued function of results management and evaluation is learning at the level of the implementer and the community. Encouraging such learning requires addressing some of the methodological considerations discussed in Chapter 3, and a lot of thought and action relating to power relationships. Figuring out what works and what does not work is difficult. Figuring out why something does not work in the context of development cooperation is even more difficult as it may involve losing funding and challenging deeply held assumptions and beliefs.

Current applications of results management tend to make learning difficult not only because of the problematic assumptions mentioned earlier but also because of the politics of accountability. Challenges in this context relate to tensions around managing evidence for accountability versus managing evidence for learning. Too often, managing evidence for accountability wins out because 'incentives and investment tend to be greater for the creation and reporting of evidence for accountability to meet donor reporting requirements and retain funding, compared with the incentives for creating and reporting evidence for learning' (BBC Media Action 2014).

During the workshops, several examples of programmes were presented in which funders and partners have tried to navigate the politics of accountability to improve prospects for learning. In addition to KAPE and Sida's experiences in Rwanda, two other examples show how practitioners generate and capture learning during implementation, rather than merely afterwards, thus allowing for continuous fine-tuning of programmes.

Young African politicians link learning to action

The Program for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA) is a multiparty, transnational African capacity-development programme aiming to contribute to more democratic, representative, and non-discriminatory political systems. It supports young people in 10 programme countries characterized by neo-patrimonial and elitist political cultures that make meaningful participation in politics difficult. The programme has the specific objective to address this issue and increase the participation and influence of young people in politics. PYPA is implemented by four Swedish political party affiliated organizations—the Christian Democratic International Center, the Centre Party International Foundation, the Green Forum and the Olof Palme International Center—together with two partner organizations, and is fully funded by Sida.

Instead of waiting for an end-of-programme evaluation for donors that may not benefit participants, PYPA external evaluators are involved throughout the whole processes; they play a participatory role in identifying and encouraging learning based on the experiences of participants and implementers but do not present ready-made solutions. A joint understanding of the programme has emerged which fosters a relationship between evaluators and practitioners that is open and honest, including in relation to shortcomings. The evaluators become sounding boards and provide continuous input, critical questions, advice and recommendations based on empirical findings and relevant theories. The evaluators co-create knowledge and build reliable support for decisions taken in the process by continuously returning the findings and observations to the programme.

Evaluation methods used include conventional research methods, such as annual questionnaires and semi-structured in depth interviews with women and men participants. Participants' perspectives are compared with those of facilitators, implementers and senior representatives from the participants' political parties, as well as with observations made during training sessions. The evaluators work inductively and exploratory, departing from findings, tendencies and changes, forming suppositions, and connecting those to a multidisciplinary framework incorporating sociology, political science, human ecology, social geography and economics. The purpose, however, is not to merely generate theories but rather to capture experiences and promote learning by encouraging participants to reflect on what results and other data mean in relation to their own assumptions. This empowers participants' own understanding and practical use of the programme.

It should be noted that the donor (in this case, Sida) does not formally require log frames; further, the focal point at Sida was very understanding and allowed for experimentation with ongoing and learning evaluations. The programme includes a results matrix with programme and specific objectives, which resembles a log frame but with open-ended indicators developed by the party affiliated organizations involved. In 2013, a theory of change was developed to complement the results matrix. The theory of change is based

on earlier research on empowerment and power in theory and practice. It is used by the political party affiliated organizations, the implementers and the evaluators as a tool for a mutual interpretation and understanding of the theoretical cornerstones of the programme as they are transformed into action and the participants' learning processes related to the expected results.

The target group owns the right to define and present what they have learned and how they will use their knowledge and experiences in their own socio-political context. For instance, programme participants are asked to give their own interpretation of core concepts such as 'equality', rather than the theoretical notion being 'taught' by implementers or facilitators. Furthermore, in regards to gender inequality, it is interesting to note that a more traditional evaluation would have found that the female participants experienced greater discrimination after the programme than beforehand, whereas the ongoing and learning evaluation concluded that the programme had empowered women to identify discrimination to a much higher extent.

Learning evaluations are not only about adapting ongoing programmes but also about adaptation at a more fundamental level. Participants' understanding of core concepts can change throughout the programme. For instance, the understanding of what gender equality entails can go through many iterations, from an understanding wherein equality is conceived of as merely more women in parliament, to a more substantial understanding where what matters more is women's actual influence on political priorities and decisions in parliament. Allowing interpretation of concepts to change with participants creates ownership in a way that a static, pre-determined concept or indicator never can. Participants are allowed to grow and the programme is allowed to grow with them.

This flexibility also implies an openness to considering anticipated as well as unanticipated results. Traditional evaluation methods tend not to allow for reporting on unexpected consequences. Progress will then remain invisible in reporting if indicators chosen at the outset of the project do not provide for measuring of unexpected but welcome changes.

In the PYPA programme, implementers have become more observant of behavioural changes in participants, and knowledge and reflections are shared with the evaluators as 'findings', so that they can be included in the evaluation process.

Although it cost under 3 per cent of the budget and is not expensive in financial terms, the evaluation processes are time-consuming for the political party affiliated organizations and implementers. Furthermore, participants sometimes find the time investment required for the evaluation quite burdensome, which raises interesting questions concerning how to value and assess the cost effectiveness of learning processes. In order for the process to work, the people involved need to trust that something better will in time come out of using this type of evaluation, which makes the cost in time and funds acceptable. Hence, participants working on PYPA emphasized that it is important that all involved have a common understanding of what learning evaluation is, what methods are used, and how it can be used as a tool to achieve long-term sustainable empowerment and learning processes.

According to PYPA participants attending the workshop, this approach has enabled greater flexibility and learning than their previous experience, placing much of the ownership with the young politicians who joined the programme.

BBC Media Action: capturing learning from doing

Another example presented during the workshop series relates to the BBC's international development charity, BBC Media Action, which focuses on using media and communication to support development. Over the past 10 years, it has developed a strong focus on embedding research and evaluation into delivery, and now has a global network of researchers working alongside its project teams. Their research informs and evaluates BBC Media Action's work—guiding and improving projects as they are implemented—and aims to contribute to the evidence base on the role of media and communication in development using research briefings, peer review journal articles, films, conferences, blogs and a data portal. Research also underpins BBC Media Action's policy analysis (see Box 4.3).

Box 4.3. Audience research and evaluation at BBC Media Action

Audience research and evaluation is embedded into project lifecycles at BBC Media Action. This is guided by the BBC value that 'audiences are at the heart of everything we do'. Evaluations are question-led, mixed method (including experimental, quasi-experimental and qualitative research) and guided by theories of change which are tested and refined through evaluation and learning. Evaluations not only measure impact, but also improve future programmes. BBC Media Action also uses research partnerships to support its evaluative work, bringing important peer review, technical and theoretical expertise and publication support.

Despite these efforts, it became increasingly clear that a great deal of experiential and implementation learning was sitting untapped within the organization. The ongoing iterative 'experiential' learning was getting lost amid the day-to-day pressures of project delivery which leave limited time for reflection or documenting reflections, as well as with staff turnover and the inevitability of history being rewritten as projects move through different stages. BBC Media Action staff asked themselves: can we capture, share and dignify experiential learning alongside our impact evidence? How could that process be implemented? They wanted to evidence implementation questions alongside evaluation and effectiveness questions (e.g. data on the outcomes of the intervention). This is why they created 'practice briefings' which aim to be reflections of and learnings from practice examining and distilling what works in using media and communication to deliver development outcomes. The intention was to inform organizational practice as well as policymakers and funders needing to make decisions about how to invest in media effectively.

BBC Media Action has found the external impetus useful in terms of taking the documentation of learning more seriously. Produced by programme, advisory and research staff working together, practice briefings draw on interviews, documentation reviews, organizational 'knowledge-sharing sessions' and reviews with local partners. This is a clever way of getting the most out of an untapped resource.

BBC Media Action has so far produced three practice briefings. One is in the form of a video about using 'design thinking' to prevent bonded labour in India (BBC Media Action 2016a). The second is a written report focusing on what BBC Media Action learned in delivering and supporting health communication in response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa in 2014–15, a highly complex social and political emergency as

well as a health epidemic (BBC Media Action 2016b). The third, also a written briefing, focuses on media, communication and gender (BBC Media Action 2016c).

BBC Media Action acknowledged that these briefings are extremely worthwhile, but not without challenges. These include getting the tone right; framing the arguments and insights for internal and external audiences simultaneously; reaching agreement on the narrative; ensuring they are participatory (particularly when it comes to engaging local partners); helping people feel confident in talking about what has not worked; and securing the time and space necessary to properly reflect and document learnings. The briefings are also currently retroactive, which is something BBC Media Action plans to address in future projects. Nonetheless, this is a great example of turning the experiences of a team into a resource for people outside the organization.

Learning: lessons and reflections

These examples and related workshop discussions illustrate progress when it comes to using learning-centred approaches. They show the advantages of learning as you go along versus learning from evaluations at the end of programmes. They also highlight the risks of structural silos preventing the sharing of learning within and across organizations. In addition, they demonstrate the virtues of so-called sense-making sessions, and create debate over whether we learn more from successes or from failures. Finally, they emphasize the importance of sharing learning within and across democracy assistance communities.

Traditional mid- or end-term evaluations do not necessarily facilitate learning and programme improvement during implementation. Continuous or learning evaluations, like that undertaken by PYPA not only inform future programme cycles but also allow staff to improve projects as they are implemented. They allow for joint learning through exchange of empirical findings and reflections with and among all actors involved. It goes without saying, however, that genuine joint learning can only occur in the context of trusting relationships and environments conducive to open and frank deliberations,

One challenge many organizations experience is sharing learning across programmes. The kind of experiential learning generated by ongoing monitoring or evaluation is often contained within silos (e.g. within one department). Similarly, ideas and learning from one partner in the chain of implementation may not reach other actors. A lesson may even remain in the head of a single person unless the group they work with takes the time to reflect.

The outcome-mapping example seemed to bridge that gap, through regular reflective sessions. Several International IDEA workshop participants proposed that organizations should create or improve their strategies for translating individual learning to institutional learning. Staff capacities could be further developed by institutionalizing and making proper time for reflection sessions, preferably including people with different roles at different stages of the implementation cycle. Capturing and sharing the tacit implementation knowledge makes it more widely available, as shown by the BBC Media Action practice briefings.

A few organizations have started institutionalizing structured reflection sessions for the purposes described above. They specifically aim to help staff make sense of monitoring

data and tacit knowledge to get to the root of why some projects work while others do not. An example mentioned at one of the workshops relates to the Asia Foundation, which utilizes strategy testing. This approach requires programme teams to take periodic, structured breaks from day-to-day implementation to reflect collectively on what they have learned, and to ask whether the assumptions underpinning their strategies are still valid in light of new information, insights, and shifts in local context. Teams then adjust their programmes as needed (Ladner 2015).

If people involved in planning, implementation and follow-up do not get a chance to reflect on the various steps that may have led to results achieved (or not achieved), a lot of potential learning will be wasted. What they have experienced is likely to remain largely undigested, unless discussed, reflected on and transformed into learning. A crucial feature of such sense-making reflection is that it needs to be documented, and preferably cumulatively. All examples shared (BBC Media Action, Sida on outcome mapping and PYPA) included a strong emphasis on cumulative documentation.

Participants at the workshops debated the pros and cons of learning from failure and the barriers to transforming learning, whether from instructive failures or successes, into institutionalized good practice. There were fears that open and frank reporting on unsuccessful projects could lead to funding cuts if results were used solely as evidence for accountability, rather than as evidence for learning. Ideally, however, if a report presents instructive failures, rather than just noting failures, it is possible to determine if or how such failure might be avoided in the future or if the resources would be better spent elsewhere. The fact that a failed project could very well be a project from which interesting lessons could be learned, should inspire organizations to be more daring in taking controlled risks. This is for two reasons. First, innovation is indeed risky, but daring to test new ground is a precondition to learning, development and progress. Second, few organizations stand or fall on the basis of a single programme or evaluation.

Participants at the workshops agreed that learning should also be inter-organizational. More could be done to reach across and beyond the respective circles of parliamentary or media development assistance, whether via joint reflection sessions, additional workshops, blog posts, informal lunches, professional networks or a list serve. It would also be beneficial if more information on what various organizations have learned was available in the public domain, such as is the case with the BBC Media Action's practice briefings or the recent evaluation on PYPA (Karlsson, Ekström and Johansson 2016).

Evaluation ownership

In many cases evaluations remain something done by and for donors, democracy practitioners or implementing organizations, on their own terms. These kinds of summative evaluations serve to maintain control rather than promoting partners' learning and ownership. The effectiveness of democracy support which is solely owned by external actors should be questioned. Democracy support funders and practitioners cannot impose democracy, because it simply cannot be exported. Democracy support funders and practitioners must keep in mind that their role is merely supportive. As Power observes:

> The point is that political and institutional reform is a process that is messy, unpredictable and haphazard—and change takes time. This is the nature of politics

> itself. Politics cannot simply be bent to the will of outside donor agencies, no matter how much money they throw at it. Programmes that get lasting change are more likely to start small, and aim at incremental progress. … Lasting reform must be initiated from within the institution, rather than being implemented from the outside: The role of assistance must be to enable and support the process of change, rather than seek to implement it (2016: 10).

Truly local ownership of evaluations

Ideally, donors and democracy practitioners should be accountable to the people most affected by their programmes. However, when upward accountability is prioritized in evaluation, there is little space for local ownership, learning and empowerment of other stakeholders. One example of a donor promoting local ownership of evaluations comes from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a Washington, DC-based grant-making organization. NED prioritizes ownership and learning in its grants through self-evaluations carried out by local democratic partners overseas, as well as by the institute's four core partners in Washington, DC. These are the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute, which represent public American institutions that work abroad in sectors that are critical to democracy. Using a cumulative assessment approach in which grantees strategically self-assess change over time, NED has put its values for evaluation into practice (see Box 4.4). NED was pleased to fund NDI's various participatory evaluation initiatives and, more recently, support NDI in compiling and codifying their experience with participatory evaluation in a manual.

NED and NDI collaborate in participatory evaluation

One approach to promoting local ownership is through participatory evaluations. Traditionally, summative evaluations are evaluator-driven where the power lies with an external evaluator to determine the evaluation questions and design; sampling strategies; data collection and analysis methods; interpretation of the results; and the final recommendations. However, when beneficiaries of a project participate in and shape a summative evaluation, this power dynamic can be shifted to promote downward accountability and local ownership of the evaluation to democratic partners who are the closest to the issue under evaluation.

It should be noted that partner participation can be instrumental or transformative. The former seeks to improve the quality of a programme or evaluation, while the latter intentionally builds local partner capacity and empowerment. Therefore, 'participation' in evaluations happens across a spectrum in which an evaluator can use discrete participatory methods to enhance evaluation findings (instrumental) to fully participatory evaluations in which local partners are involved in the design, implementation and utilization of the evaluation findings (transformative).

On the instrumental end of the spectrum, NDI used a discrete participatory method as part of a mixed-methods randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Cambodia. Funded by USAID, the RCT aimed to determine the impacts of large town-hall meetings with parliamentarians on rural citizens' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. NDI also wanted to evaluate if there would be a differential impact on citizens who also had the opportunity to deliberate on their problems and solutions before the meetings. Therefore,

Box 4.4. The National Endowment for Democracy and its values in evaluation

The National Endowment for Democracy's values in evaluation are aligned with the values of democracy.

Evaluative learning

Accountability and learning do not always go hand in hand. NED values and nurtures evaluative thinking with an aim of maximizing learning. Partner organizations know that NED prizes honesty in their reporting and is interested in their organizational growth and development. NED partners understand that they are not at risk of losing their grant if they report on an aspect of the project that did not go as planned.

Bottom-up evaluation

NED relies heavily on partner self-evaluation. Prior to making a grant, NED asks the partner organization for a self-evaluation plan that meets their needs begins the process by asking the partner organization how they wish to evaluate. They do not ask for log frames but rather, they prefer that the organization makes an evaluation plan based on their needs. When the partner organization has decided what a success looks like and how to evaluate it, NED's role is that of technical assistance. Therefore, it is a truly bottom-up process.

Innovation flexibility

They are willing to risk failure to create learning. Innovation is always risky, but necessary.

the NDI evaluation team randomized the use of a matrix ranking tool with small groups of citizens the day before the town hall meeting. Adapted from International Institute for Environment and Development's (IIED) Participatory Learning and Action toolbox, the matrix ranking tool facilitated small group deliberation and ranking of priority problems and solutions at the local level (Maxwell and Bart 1995). The qualitative data from the participatory method documented issues of corruption, land seizure and intimidation at the local level. As such, the participatory findings were instrumental in explaining why NDI's town hall intervention had had an impact on citizens' understanding of democracy, but not on their confidence in their emerging democracy.

On the other end of the participatory spectrum, NDI used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) model to engage local Roma activists as partners in the design, implementation and interpretation of the evaluation findings. NDI had worked with Roma political activists in Central and Eastern Europe for over 10 years, and piloted the CBPR model with its programme in Slovakia. With funding from the NED, NDI wanted to implement a retrospective evaluation that was not only accountable to its donor, but also to its Roma partners.

The CBPR model fully engaged local Roma partners in the analysis of NDI's 10-year programme by involving them in each step of the evaluation. This includes working closely with a Roma Advisory Committee and Roma Research Assistants to develop the evaluation questions, identify the relevant communities, co-design the evaluation

Box 4.5. Transect walk

As part of the community based participatory research (CBPR) in 10 Roma communities in Slovakia, NDI used a transect walk to document the public works that had or had not been completed by the municipal government on behalf of its Roma citizens. During the Transect Walk, two Roma research assistants walked along a pre-determined line or transect with a community guide, photographing the community site and interviewing community members along the way. Community members were then invited to take part in a participatory matrix ranking exercise and a timeline designed to analyse, from the Roma community perspective, how increases in Roma political voice and engagement in political space over the last 10 years had affected public accountability in their communities.

methods and collect and analyse community data, using several participatory methods (see Box 4.5). The Roma Advisory Committee and research assistants interpreted some of the CBPR data with the Roma representatives from the 10 communities, identifying ways to use the findings for advocacy. The 18-month Roma CBPR initiative was transformative, in that it empowered Roma partners as joint owners in the evaluation, promoting 'downward accountability' between NDI and its Roma partners.

These two examples demonstrate how participation can translate into ownership in many ways. While it is not always feasible from a narrow resource perspective to carry out highly participatory evaluations like CBPR, even limited participation can make a significant difference to evaluation findings. These examples also show the value of well-considered creativity when implementing evaluations.

Evaluation ownership: lessons and reflections

During workshop discussions, participants recognized that increased local ownership need not affect donor accountability. Donors—and, by extension, taxpayers or voluntary contributors—have legitimate reasons for requesting access to information and analyses on how resources were used and to what ends. However, results management and evaluations should not be done in ways that would undermine at least some degree of local ownership though capacity or time constraints may sometimes prevent this. Results achieved and observed through alternative approaches to results management and evaluations are not incompatible with upward accountability to funders, nor are they impossible to communicate to taxpayers. As increasing citizen learning and ownership of evaluation processes is in itself an indicator of more democratic political processes, the approaches and outcomes can be communicated to taxpayers as examples of democracy improvements.

As mentioned earlier, there is a need for honesty and trust between donors, implementers and local partners: donors need to trust that implementers and local partners can do two things at the same time. If provided with the space and trust to innovate they can report upwards on how funds were spent and on what (the control function), while protecting the integrity of partners on the ground to learn and own their own development, which could be reported on in different ways. In addition, implementers need to be honest about what types of progress in democratization processes can realistically be planned

for and reported on, and which ones cannot (even if they are inherently good ideas worth supporting).

Overarching reflections on challenges and opportunities in results management

Many organizations rely almost solely on quantitative data for performance and results management and learning. However, this hides certain aspects of reality, as some activities simply cannot be valued only in quantitative ways; this means that a decision to only measure using quantitative methods limits which type of progress matters. Often, organizations simply choose to measure what seems to be measurable because they have been pushed into thinking that is all donors are interested in. Examples shared here indicate this is not necessarily the case. Donors are interested in increasing flexibility and learning; if they trust partners, they will relinquish control. Human relationships and trust seem to go a long way, as seen in the examples presented during the workshops, and such seemingly unimportant factors appear to play a very significant role. Hence, there are opportunities to negotiate space for learning-centred approaches to results management and evaluation. In these instances, organizations should develop learning questions and ask themselves what the best method of answering a question at hand is, and move on from there by choosing the most appropriate methods. The PYPA programme is an example of working with different methods including interviews, questionnaires and focus groups.

Quantitative and qualitative data can provide context to each other, and fill the gaps left by the other. The KAPE approach uses both in every stage of its execution. The first step of the KAPE process is the gathering and supplying of knowledge. The progress of the first step is measured by asking whether knowledge was supplied and applied. These two things can easily be measured quantitatively. However, if this data is supplemented by also answering the questions 'was it useful?' and 'were the stakeholders satisfied?', a much clearer picture would emerge as to what was actually achieved. The KAPE programme utilizes a mixture of methods in each step and perfectly highlights how quantitative and qualitative measures complement each other.

One organization that embodies the value of letting the questions guide the evaluation design is NDI. We have showcased several different methods in this paper already. Let us consider why different methods were chosen. When NDI worked with Roma political activists in Slovakia, its aim was for the evaluation process to be transformative, empowering Roma partners as joint owners in the evaluation and promoting 'downward accountability' between NDI and its Roma partners. In contrast, the Cambodia evaluation used participatory methods that had an instrumental rather than a transformative value, to improve the quality of the evaluation itself but not necessarily aimed at empowering local partners in the evaluation. Different approaches to evaluation design and implementation will create different types of results, which is something to consider when planning a project evaluation.

In addition, workshop participants emphasized that results management and evaluation of democracy programmes need to be context-sensitive. For example, in piloting evaluation methods with Roma political activists, NDI had to re-imagine several

methods to better suit the cultural and political contexts. Similarly, NDI's evaluation of its programme in Guatemala posed challenges in evaluating the downstream impacts of programmes in isolated indigenous communities. To address this challenge, NDI developed a method for participatory story analysis to capture the voice of indigenous local council women and engage them more fully in the evaluation of their programmes.

The programme under evaluation was a 'training of trainers' approach for civic activists, who would return to their communities to mobilize other women around issues of interest. However, the isolation of these communities as well as low levels of literacy made it difficult to assess the downstream effects of these projects. Therefore, at the beginning of the evaluations, the NDI evaluation team trained participants in visual storytelling and provided them with disposable cameras to return to their communities to document the context, the problems, the actions they took and the solutions they created for their communities. Towards the end of the evaluation, the women returned from their communities to tell their stories to each other through photographs. The women then analysed their narratives, identifying common and divergent themes in their stories.

This illustrates that every context comes with its challenges and opportunities but also that, even in challenging contexts, participatory methods are possible to implement.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Participants at the International IDEA workshops agreed there is an urgent need to conduct results management and evaluations better, and differently, in democracy assistance programmes. Those seeking to give local communities and implementers greater influence over the processes used to plan for, monitor, assess, learn from and report democracy assistance results face challenges. Approaches used must satisfy the performance management, accountability and learning needs of different donors and the capacities and contexts of different projects. There are no magic solutions but, as the examples in this paper indicate, it is possible to find methods to enhance flexibility, learning and local ownership.

The examples discussed in this paper also indicate the need to question the assumption that donors prioritize upward accountability and control. Practitioners can contribute to replicating approaches mentioned here that acknowledge and manage the non-linear and unpredictable nature of political change in ways which foster learning and ownership. The choice of approaches to results management and evaluation design should be based on the needs and the parameters of the local context; all approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Experiences showcased in this paper might or might not fit in a particular context but could, at minimum, serve as food for thought and a source of inspiration: doing results management and evaluations differently in democracy assistance is indeed possible. The values of learning and ownership can be combined with robust reporting and evaluations.

This paper includes key findings based on the examples featured. One of these findings is that when implementers and local partners have the space and capacities to learn and to continuously adjust project implementation accordingly, and when ownership of plans, implementation and results is placed squarely with communities, this can contribute to the empowering of, rather than disempowering, democratic actors, which is the ultimate goal of democracy assistance. Supporting such empowerment should be prioritized, not only for the sake of the quality of the projects or the political sustainability of democracy assistance itself, but for the future of democracy, which certainly will need large numbers of individuals and communities with capacities and space to own their own development.

Another conclusion relates to research. The literature on results management and democracy assistance is limited and mostly academic in nature, and includes publications such as 'Evaluating Democracy Assistance' (Kumar 2013) and more practice-oriented publications (e.g. Power 2014, 2015 and 2016; Abraham-Dowsing, Godfrey, and Khor 2016). More research is clearly needed, in particular practitioner- and policy-focused literature, documenting good practices. Having more widely available knowledge would be immensely useful for the field as a whole, and, ultimately, its legitimacy in the future.

It would be prudent to end with a note of caution. Irrespective of how advanced a particular results management approach is, the way in which findings are interpreted—and most importantly, the political uses to which they are put (or ignored)—make all the difference. However, good policymaking and subsequent implementation is extremely difficult in a reality of 'messy' politics and less-than-perfect evidence. Incrementalism, or a 'muddling through' (Lindblom 1959, 1979) approach to changing policies and practices, would be advisable.

Looking at innovations shared in this paper, the process through which they actually happened seem to be better informed by views of organizations as unpredictable entities, as opposed to rigid and monolithic bureaucracies (Gulrajani and Honig 2016 in Shutt 2016) run by a principal agent, as presumed in NPM-inspired practices of public administration. Individual practitioners have agency, but the room for manoeuvre each policy maker and practitioner has to select and use flexible and democratic approaches to results management and evaluation will be constrained by her or his capacity and power; it may not be possible to aspire to more than small wins.

Based on the above, the recommendations below should be seen as mere indications of what could be tested to promote learning and ownership in democracy assistance, as derived from the workshop series arranged by International IDEA in 2014–16. On this note, International IDEA hands over the baton in the relay race towards more learning- and ownership-centred approaches to results management and evaluation to those democracy assistance actors who would be interested in continuing these debates, and ultimately producing shifts in policies and practices.

Policy and practice recommendations

Policymakers, practitioners and evaluators working on democracy assistance programmes who want to increase flexibility, learning and ownership are advised to:

1. Tackle power and develop trusting relationships

When developing results management systems, consider who gets to define what the results are and how they should be assessed: the donor, the implementing partner or the target groups? Trust innovators like GPG, while also taking care to avoid imposing well-intended innovations on partners and target groups. Whatever the case, look for means to provide sufficient support to partners' planning units, so that they can take advantage of virtuous cycles of planning » implementation » learning » adaption » planning. Support further innovations, reflection and documentation of new approaches as this would be helpful in shifting policy and practice in more learning and ownership friendly directions.

2. Fund good quality and value for money evaluation

Fund and support where possible robust evaluations which generate high-quality evidence about how and why approaches work or not in different political contexts. However, ensure they are utility focused and cost effective.

3. Encourage flexibility and adaptation to contextual realities and changing assumptions

Regardless of the tools used, any targeted outcome should be viewed as for guidance rather than a strict rule demanding compliance. Democracy assistance projects take place in dynamic contexts and involve complicated relationships and incremental change. Those involved may want to fine tune projects as a result of political context analysis and as they learn more about each other's perspectives and capacities. Therefore, collect progress data for the primary purpose of learning and reflecting on the appropriateness of original targets and future adaptations rather than merely for reasons of upward accountability and control.

4. Adopt hybrids

Consider integrating traditional results management tools, such as log frames, for communication and reporting of key results with other more flexible and learning-focused approaches such as outcome mapping, KAPE or participatory evaluation. These enable a more flexible, adaptive and learning centred approach to management that is informed by monitoring and analysing a broader and more informative range of democratically selected results indicators.

5. Nurture learning cultures

Institutionalize spaces for all involved to undertake iterative reflection and learning using results data and evaluations during and after interventions to explore what is and is not working and why. Document this learning, whether through blogs, video or in print.

6. Push for democratic ownership

To the extent possible, try to emulate NED's approach and ensure problem analysis, results indicators and evaluation questions are influenced or shaped by local actors and that findings from results monitoring and evaluation are analysed by or fed back to groups that can use them in their ongoing democracy work.

7. Innovate with communication

All actors need to work together to find innovative, nuanced and contextualised means to communicate the relative significance of results achieved, including those relating to improvements from more flexible and democratic approaches to results management.

8. Maintain learning conversations across the different sub-communities of democracy assistance

Political party assistance providers need to continue to meet media development and parliamentary development experts and vice versa. Face-to-face learning from instructive examples is important.

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The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA's mission is to support sustainable democratic change by providing comparative knowledge, assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.

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In the fields of elections, constitution-building, political parties, gender in democracy and women's political empowerment, democracy self-assessments, and democracy and development, the Institute undertakes its work in three activity areas:

1. providing comparative knowledge derived from practical experience on democracy-building processes from diverse contexts around the world;

2. assisting political actors in reforming democratic institutions and processes, and engaging in political processes when invited to do so; and

3. influencing democracy-building policies through the provision of its comparative knowledge resources and assistance to political actors.

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