

PDIA and ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING

PDIA - Adaptive programming

What is PDIA?

- **An acronym that stands for:** Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation.
- PDIA is anchored on transformation of institutions with a focus on “what is actually done” to ensure sustained performance improvement, rather than focusing on policy change or how organisations look like (structure).
- “Many reform initiatives fail to achieve sustained improvements in performance because organizations use mimicry to camouflage the absence of real change. That is, they pretend to reform by changing what policies and organizational structures look like rather than what they actually do.” *Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock, 2012.*

PDIA – Adaptive programming

Where does the PDIA idea and practice originate?

- When PDIA was introduced it was focusing on building and changing state institutions through focusing on their capabilities.
- Now 7 years later the PDIA approach and thinking is used in a much broader development practitioners' context.
- As the DGF has both state and non-state partners the DGF uses the PDIA approach in that wider context.

PDIA - Adaptive programming

Adaptive programming suggests, at a minimum, that development actors react and respond to changes in the political and socio-economic operating environment. **It emphasises learning and the development practitioner is encouraged to adjust their actions to find workable solutions to problems that development practitioners and or communities experience.**

PDIA - Adaptive programming

- Adaptive programming **implications are** that activities and outputs will change over the life of the programme / project.
- In governance programmes where results are often long-term, it is often hard to predict what will result from improvements in governance processes. This also means **M&E frameworks will go through many versions.**

PDIA – Adaptive programming

- PDIA and adaptive programming will start a process where state and non-state actors stop pretending to reform by changing what policies or organizations look like and instead rather focus on what they actually do.
- In the “old ways” of thinking and doing things there has been too many development resources and legitimacy without demonstrated improvements in performance and often undermining the impetus for effective action. This is called a governance capability trap!

PDIA – Adaptive programming

- These ‘capability traps’ appear in which governance capability stagnates, or even deteriorates, over long periods of time - despite state and other institutions remaining engaged in **developmental rhetoric and continuing to receive development resources.**
- Uganda has similarities of the above tendencies

PDIA – Adaptive programming

Some development initiatives are more difficult than others:

- The “easy ones” often focus on establishing physical and social infrastructure - projects engaged in building physical structures; schools; hospitals; buildings that house government ministries, courts and agencies.
- But some development initiatives are more complex as they involve building the capabilities of human systems. These include governance programmes – the DGF.

PDIA - Why has building governance capability been so hard?

- Past approaches argued that development interventions focused on adoption of 'best practices' in laws, policies and organizational practices which often looked impressive (because they appear to comply with professional standards or have been endorsed by international experts) but they are often unlikely to fit into a particular developing country context.
- Now the development community is therefore increasing recognising the PDIA approach as the way forward – in particular for governance programmes such as the DGF. However, it is very much a new approach yet with unknown potential.

PDIA - What is it?

According to the Harvard professor Matt Andrews and his colleagues, for real changes to happen in governments, reforms should:

- Facilitate problem-driven learning;
- Involve interventions that allow processes of purposive action-based learning; and
- Engage broad sets of agents/actors providing different functional contributions that ensure reforms are viable and relevant.

PDIA – what is it?

PDIA is based on four core principles, each of which stands in sharp contrast with the standard approaches.

1. PDIA focuses on **solving locally nominated and defined problems in performance** (*as opposed to transplanting pre-conceived and packaged ‘best practice’ solutions*);

2. It seeks to **create an ‘authorizing environment’ for decision-making** that encourages ‘positive deviance’ and experimentation (*as opposed to designing projects and programmes and then requiring agents to implement them exactly as designed*);

PDIA – What is it?

3. It embeds this experimentation in **tight feedback loops that facilitate rapid experiential learning** (*as opposed to enduring long lag times in learning from ex post ‘evaluation’*); and

4. It actively **engages broad sets of agents or actors** to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, relevant and supportable (*as opposed to a narrow set of external experts promoting the ‘top down’ diffusion of innovation*).

What is the starting point of PDIA?

- In order to find solutions and new practices resulting in improved governance capability, reforms/change should start with a **concrete and measurable problem**.
- In PDIA, **problems are the entry points** to finding solutions.
- The likelihood of implementing reforms successfully increases when they are ***problem driven***.

How is PDIA different?

- PDIA differs from other development approaches in that it moves from critique to response. It is primarily concerned with building governance *capability* to deliver on complex and potentially contested reforms in areas like governance and justice.
- PDIA is about facilitating processes of finding and fitting locally relevant solutions to locally felt problems.

How is PDIA different?

- PDIA differentiates from other methods concerned with reforms implementation also in *its higher focus on the **enabling background conditions that make it possible for systems to be functional***. The idea of adaptation which puts under question the notion of doing reforms by adopting external rules – best practices – is also unique to the approach.

What does PDIA Require?

- PDIA requires political and organizational authorization to do things innovatively and differently. This is called **authorization of positive deviation**.
- Once we understand who the change agents are, what follows in PDIA is ***iteration and adaptation***. By way of experimental learning, we incrementally work our way towards what we believe is going to solve the problem, without fixed plans or roadmaps.
- The remaining PDIA's principle pertains to practices. Practices get adopted when people believe that they are the superior ways of achieving institutional goals. Thus, **positive practices scale through diffusion**.

PDIA – some DGF imitations

<p>Figure 4 PDIA Principle</p>	<p>How adaptive is the DGF?</p>
<p>Flexible and adaptive programming: DGF needs to go through constant adjustment which reflects the changes in the political landscape and the adjustments undertaken by development partners. Adaptation and flexibility are key. Adaptive programming means working in problem-driven ways, being opportunistic when doors open. We will look at how the DGF set up and structure has been able to adapt to change</p>	<p>The DGF has demonstrated it is assessing changes in the political context – for example the study on electoral violence and local council courts – and that it can make adjustments to respond. But the system of ‘calls for proposals’ is not necessarily conducive to taking advantage of windows of opportunity as they arise.</p>
<p>Local solutions for local problems: We will be examining how the DGF has facilitated national and local (district, sub-county) communities in driving the identification of problems and their solutions thereby building capability.</p>	<p>The DGF is clearly focused on supporting and funding local solutions which come directly from partners who identify the problems and their solutions – and not introducing ‘best practice’ from outside.</p>
<p>Creating an authorising environment: We will be considering how the DGF has reflected on the political context and has (or has not) enabled problem-driven ‘positive deviance’ which allows partners to take risks as part of the learning process and the route to positive change.</p>	<p>The DGF has not actively encouraged partners to take risks and experiment and learn from this. The DGF is considered a high (fiduciary and political) risk initiative.</p>
<p>Try, learn, iterate and adapt: We will be assessing how the DGF has encouraged the space for active experiential (and experimental) learning with evidence-driven feedback and tight feedback loops built into regular management that allows for real-time adaptation.</p>	<p>This varies across the DGF in that there isn’t a clear learning strategy which encourages experimental learning and evidence-driven feedback which informs ongoing management and adaptation There are some examples where the DGF facilitates partners coming together to learn and – possibly – adapt (as expressed at the Kampala partner workshop e.g. media partners).</p>
<p>Engaging a broad set of actors: Scale through diffusion. We will be exploring how the DGF has engaged ‘champions’ across components and organisations who ensure reforms are viable, legitimate and relevant; and engaging a broad set of actors (state and non-state) to build synergies and connections, and build on momentum.</p>	<p>The DGF is primarily supporting civil society – and there is evidence that civil society is coming together on specific initiatives (survey and workshop). At the local level there is also evidence of collective action with state and non-state actors coming together (e.g. local government scorecards, legal aid, budget monitoring). But at the national level?</p>

PDIA - Risks and Challenges

- PDIA has emerged from academic thinking around government reform and state capability gaps – it is a further leap to apply to demand-led governance initiatives.
- It requires a higher level of investment in analysis, M&E and Learning.
- Results can only be defined at the higher level (impact and outcomes) and are less well defined at the lower levels (outputs and even intermediate outcomes).

PDIA - Risks and Challenges – contd.

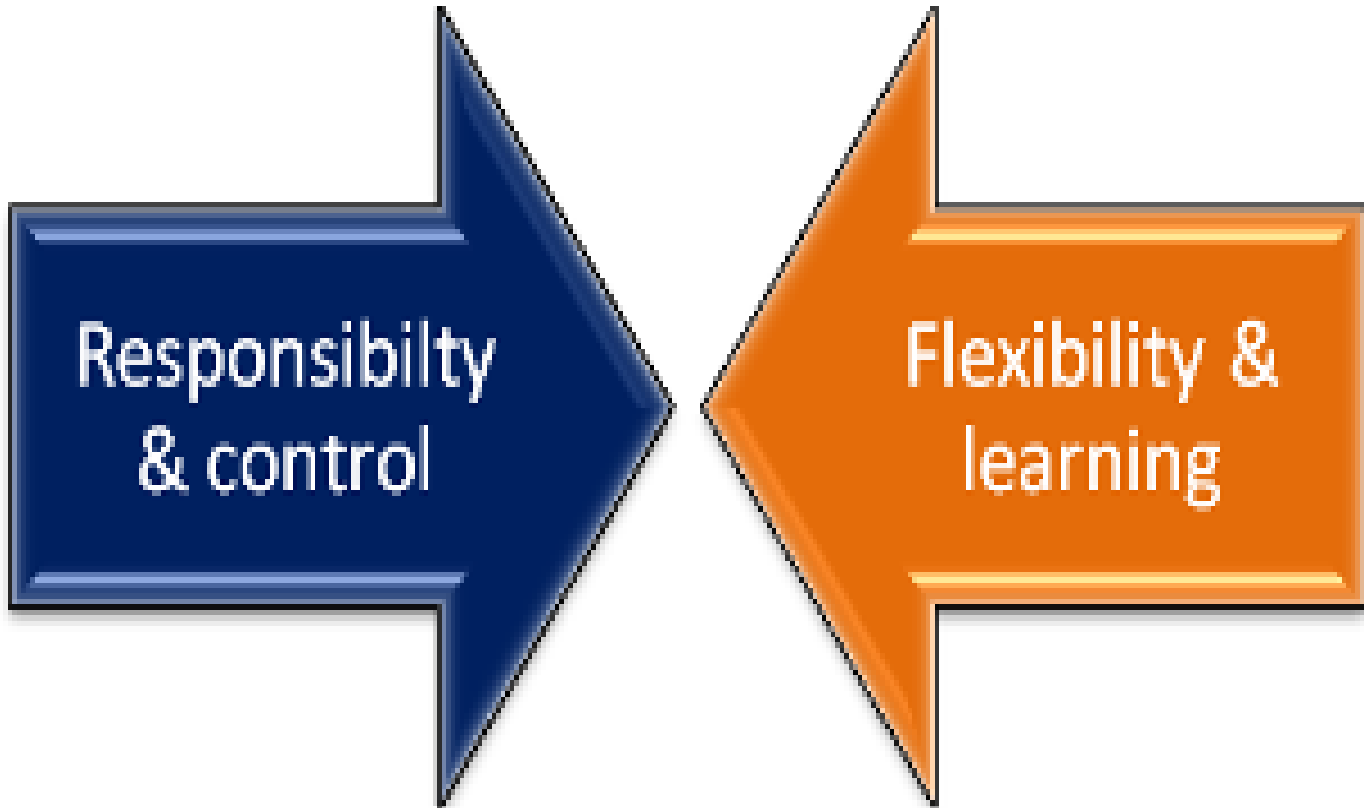
- It requires a shift or change in mindsets, attitudes and behaviours both at the programme and donor levels.
- PDIA programmes have not been widely evaluated – and the evidence base for success is based on a limited group of PDIA programmes (highlighted below).
- It requires **real-time M&E**, feedback loops and learning to inform timely decision-making on programme management and direction.
- It requires a sufficient appetite for risk, experimentation and failure.

Why PDIA Now?

- DGFII is designed to explore the potential for supporting partners to implement a Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) approach in their projects.
- This will be in such a way that will ensure a balance between control and Flexibility which is a key requirement in supporting projects applying the PDIA approach in implementing activities.
- However not all projects will need PDIA.

Control vs flexibility

- DGF II pays attention to having funds used responsibly, to achieve set goal and avoid fraud. Therefore key controls are in place to ensure this.
- However, DGFII also aims at supporting effective local responses and help organisations grow. Thus **encouraging flexibility and learning through well-coordinated and documented approaches.**
- Therefore getting the correct balance between control and flexibility in DGF II is critical, as well as ensuring duty of care to all implementing partners.



Responsibility
& control

Flexibility &
learning

What is required for a successful adaptive programme

- **Building flexibility into programme design** - Initial results frameworks should set the direction of the programme and level of ambition, whilst building flexibility into the definition of results, activities and spending;
- **Promoting adaption through procurement processes** - Donors need to look for adaptive approaches rather than solutions at the procurement stage, and managers (or suppliers) need to demonstrate their ability to work in adaptive ways.

What is required for a successful adaptive programme – contd,

- **Integrating technical leadership and administrative management** - Need to demonstrate technical leadership as well as administrative management competencies, ensuring that administrative management (of finances, human resources and milestones) supports, rather than drives, technical considerations.
- **Staffing an adaptive programme** - Ensure that programme staff are equipped to have competencies, attitudes and behaviour appropriate to adaptive planning and programming.
- **Building in reflection and learning** - Room for reflection and learning should be programmed in at the initial design stage.

Moving forward with PDIA under DGF

How will learning and adaptive programming be done under DGFII. We need:

- A strategy for learning and adaptive programming
- A flexible M &E strategy
- Information management – (MIS);
- Knowledge management; Mutual communication;
- Mutual understanding; Mutual trust and respect; etc
- However the DGF II Learning and PDIA strategy will only start with a few IPs to learn along the way.

Thank you

Questions and Answers