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Faulkner, Lucy

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Meaningful Measurement for Community-Based Adaptation

Lucy Faulkner, Jessica Ayers, Saleemul Huq

Abstract

Evidence indicates ongoing tensions over effective climate change adaptation measurement. Focusing on community-based adaptation (CBA), we stress that some of these tensions stem from a lack of transparency around the knowledge and learning needs of different stakeholders engaged in CBA investments. Drawing on a participatory assessment of stakeholder information needs and appropriate scales required for effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for CBA, this article presents a new M&E for CBA framework. The framework identifies four levels at which M&E is to be undertaken by CBA practitioners and associated project stakeholders: participatory M&E at community level; M&E at individual project level and comparison across multiple project sites; M&E of capacity of institutions implementing CBA; and M&E of community of practice. The proposed framework tailors its M&E approaches according to these levels. By moving beyond the existing dominant donor-driven M&E perspective, we argue that this more nuanced approach enhances the usefulness of M&E by ensuring that the accountability of stakeholders engaged in CBA landscapes is legitimate across multiple scales. The framework is applicable for M&E of general development practice, as well as the climate change adaptation and resilience remit. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc., and the American Evaluation Association.

Increasingly complex and uncertain climatic risk landscapes mean it is not possible for people to possess complete knowledge of the kind of changes to anticipate or prepare for (Magis, 2010). It has therefore become critical for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of climate change adaptation interventions to fulfill its potential in providing credible information that facilitates learning on climate change adaptation effectiveness (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], 2013; Villanueva, 2011); what works, what does not work, where, why, and, importantly, *for whom*—in addition to simply being a mechanism for measuring and reporting results (Bours, McGinn, & Pringle, 2014a).

This perspective is key to the climate change adaptation (CCA) arena known as community-based adaptation (CBA). CBA emerged in response to top-down approaches to adaptation planning and action that were criticized for failing to integrate adaptation and development in ways that address the diversity and complexity of local vulnerability contexts (Ayers & Huq, 2013). Accordingly, CBA follows an action research approach that operates at the community level. It identifies, assists, and implements community-based development activities that strengthen the capacity of the poorest and most marginalized people to adapt to climate change impacts (Ayers & Huq, 2013; Huq & Reid, 2007).

The rationale driving M&E for CBA should aim to reflect the central design principles upon which CBA is framed. Adaptation is understood as a process of change that builds on cultural norms facilitated from within (Ensor & Berger, 2009). It should therefore be undertaken by and not for communities (Huq, 2011). Consequently, M&E processes are to be participatory and empowering for engaged community stakeholders. This means that M&E processes should ask whether the definition of what successful CBA looks like from the community perspective is being assessed in legitimate ways that enhance learning and downward accountability (Chambers, 1997).

Yet a critical review of the current M&E for CBA discourse reveals barriers to achieving the intended deliberative institutional design of CBA. We recognize that much progress has been made in advancing both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of CBA (Ensor, 2014). This includes the identification of characteristics to measure local adaptive capacity (e.g., Jones, Ludi, & Levine, 2010). Similarly, progression has been shown in the development of participatory M&E (PM&E) tools and approaches to use at project level (e.g., Ayers, Anderson, Pradhan, & Rossing, 2012). However, we argue that there remains a lack of attention to and transparency around the knowledge and learning needs of different stakeholders engaged in CBA investments. These stakeholders operate from local to national and international level across horizontal and vertical scales. They are linked to a community through a CBA project and fundamentally influence M&E outcomes on the ground (Ensor, 2011, 2014). If M&E for CBA is to

provide critical support to the process of identifying what works, the question of who M&E works for demands greater consideration.

We propose that two distinct but related critiques surrounding M&E, CBA, and participatory approaches are relevant: (a) the assumption that local is always the appropriate scale for M&E for CBA (Dodman & Mitlin, 2011; Yates, 2014); and (b) the potential for powerful actors to define success, and by doing so shifting M&E for CBA away from the perspective of those most marginalized (Ensor, 2014).

In this article, we present a new M&E for CBA framework that responds to these critiques. The framework does not duplicate existing PM&E tools or methods for enabling CBA at the project level. Indeed some methods will fit the purpose of how to measure relevant tracks, or different stakeholder scales within the framework, as discussed below. Rather, the framework provides a multitrack approach that reframes M&E for CBA design. It provides a more comprehensive approach by addressing the diverse cross-scale information needs of CBA stakeholders and enables multidirectional knowledge and learning flows on effective adaptation. This is to ensure that accountability toward different stakeholders engaged in CBA investments is legitimate in multiple directions. The framework recommends indicators for assessing CBA effectiveness, and appropriate methodologies for undertaking M&E of climate change adaptation and resilience projects and programs.

The remainder of this article is divided into six sections. Section 2 discusses the above critiques in further detail. In response, section 3 presents the new M&E for CBA framework. Insights into early stages of framework operationalization follow in section 4. Framework challenges are presented in section 5, with conclusions and recommended next steps in sections 6 and 7 respectively.

Reframing M&E for CBA Design

As stated above, we identify the need to account better for different stakeholder information demands across scales when considering M&E for CBA practice. We recommend therefore that the community scale cannot be viewed in isolation (Ensor, 2014). Consequently, we propose that M&E for CBA must be seen within, and engage with, the wider political economy context.

We recognize that the notion of *community* is considered problematic (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008). We therefore advocate moving beyond normative assumptions that view the community as a fixed location, to a node in a network of multiscalar flows of relations, resources, and knowledge required to generate learning on adaptation (Yates, 2014, p. 18). This viewpoint provides a useful lens to rethink perceptions of appropriate stakeholders and scales to be acknowledged in M&E for CBA theory and practice.

However, the need to account better for multiple scales highlights the existing lack of consensus around *who* should define an intervention's "success." The vast literature on participation shows that facilitating PM&E in a truly meaningful way is rarely achieved because the tensions between the knowledge and learning needs of different stakeholders engaged in local CBA landscapes are not often effectively acknowledged (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Estrella & Gaventa, 1998; Few, Brown, & Tompkins, 2007; Guijt, 1999, 2007).

This perspective is pertinent in light of the dominant donor-driven M&E approach in many developing-country contexts where CBA projects and programs operate (UNFCCC, 2013). Such an approach focuses on demonstrating value for money and results of CBA interventions for upward accountability purposes, in line with the information needs of funding agencies. In this remit, "successful" CBA is often defined by top-down institutional M&E processes.

Although the donor-driven M&E model will always be required, we conclude that it is not the only approach. We propose that a more enabling M&E agenda is needed for CBA that readdresses the balance of the existing "accountability gap" (Holland & Ruedin, 2012). This means an M&E agenda that promotes legitimate knowledge and learning flows on adaptation in multiple directions across scales to support more effective practice and empowerment at community level. This requires us as M&E practitioners to reconsider the purpose of M&E. We need to move beyond asking "Are we doing what we said we would do?" to "Does it work?", which begs the question of "Who does it work for?" Consequently, we assert that asking the question of "Who is this information for?" is critical as a first step in designing an approach to M&E for CBA, and M&E approaches for resilience and development at large. By asking this question, we stress that greater clarity can be brought to the subsequent key questions of "What are we measuring?" and "How do we do it?"

Conceptual Framework: M&E for CBA

Taking the above questions into consideration is central to the design of an emerging M&E framework designed for CBA, known as "ARCAB M&E for CBA." This framework was initially developed for a long-term action research program based in Bangladesh, with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), that aimed to generate longitudinal evidence on CBA effectiveness: Action Research for Community Adaptation in Bangladesh (ARCAB). The ARCAB program is a consortium of 11 international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and local, national and international research partners.

The ARCAB M&E for CBA framework aims to serve two purposes. First, M&E of CBA: generating rigorous scientific evidence on whether CBA improves the capacity of the poorest and most marginalized people

to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Second, M&E for CBA: that is, using M&E as a mechanism for facilitating learning on how to respond to changing climate and vulnerability contexts. Both purposes also support a further objective: building a critical mass of best CBA practice that can be scaled up (i.e., integrated into subnational and national climate and development planning), and scaled out (i.e., targeted to reach a wider number of vulnerable people) in line with shifting CBA programming and funding architecture (Ayers & Abeysinghe, 2013; Huq & Faulkner, 2013; Rossing, Otzelberger, & Girot, 2014).

Framework design was undertaken in two stages in Bangladesh. First, the M&E information needs and accountability requirements of stakeholders engaged in CBA projects were identified by means of an iterative process consisting of four steps:

Step 1: Literature review, with a focus on existing M&E tools and approaches
Step 2: Stakeholder analysis, including different "layers" of communities, community-based organizations, NGOs, and local and national government and donors
Step 3: Field visits to explore the use of M&E tools and approaches in practice
Step 4: Stakeholder interviews, to elicit their M&E information needs and accountability requirements.

Research was undertaken in CBA projects operationalized by INGOs engaged in the ARCAB consortium. The results of this process are presented in Table 6.1.

Second, a hypothesis (Sidebar 1) was devised to articulate what effective CBA looks like based on the above stakeholder information needs. It provides a conceptual outline for what to measure to assess CBA effectiveness that guides indicator development across the framework. Correspondingly, this approach consists of two key outcome indicator areas. First, measuring the adaptive capacity and action of community stakeholders at project level in light of climate and other risks (known as downstream indicators). Second, measuring the capacity of relevant institutions to deliver adaptation support to community stakeholders and integrate local adaptation concerns into institutional processes from planning to implementation (known as upstream indicators). Further details on indicators are provided in Table 6.2 below.

Based on the above, the following multitrack framework for M&E for CBA is proposed (Figure 6.1).

Track 1: Participatory M&E (PM&E) at Community Level

The purpose of this track is for communities to drive PM&E processes through community monitoring groups actively. This aims to support the

Table 6.1. M&E Information Needs and Accountability Requirements of Stakeholders Engaged in CBA Projects and Programs

Stakeholders engaged in CBA project/ program landscapes (Identification of exact stakeholders in each group is intervention and context dependent)	*Stakeholder information needs and accountability requirements (according to their own perspectives)*
The poorest and most marginalized people vulnerable to climate change impacts. These stakeholders are the ultimate beneficiaries for whom CBA projects and programs are trying to affect change.	How well are CBA activities and interventions meeting our needs? How are institutions performing that claim to represent and support us? What are the effects of changes to climate and other risks that might influence our livelihoods and decision-making? What are our options for adaptation? How effective are proposed CBA strategies in light of climate change and other risks?
Local institutions. This includes both formal and informal institutions identified as relevant for enabling adaptation by vulnerable groups. This may include community-based organizations (CBOs), local NGOs, local government service delivery providers, and the private sector.	How are our activities supporting CBA? Are we promoting effective CBA processes and outcomes? How will climate change impacts affect what we are aiming to achieve?
INGOs/other institutions implementing CBA interventions. This includes organizations who support capacity building for those people most vulnerable to climate change impacts, and local institutions at project level.	How effective are we at delivering adaptation support? Are we translating our capacity into effective CBA on the ground? How can we draw information from our projects to measure change? How can we conduct a robust evaluation of results and impacts? How do we know if we are making a difference? How do we know if our CBA strategies are promoting "business as usual" rather than approaches that are considered more "transformative"? How can we improve our activities in the future?
The wider community of practice at national and international scales. This includes donors, researchers, and policy makers.	What is the value and effectiveness of CBA compared to other strategies? Why should we invest in CBA? What are the results of CBA investments? What really works for CBA and why? Which CBA approaches have the strongest impact in which contexts?

development of sustainable knowledge generation systems that empower communities and build adaptive capacity. In line with the information needs specified in Table 6.1, this track provides communities with a platform for multiple purposes—for example, assessing the progress of community adaptation plans and assessing the performance of organizations and service providers supporting CBA. Operationalizing this track can be guided by current PM&E approaches for CBA (e.g., Ayers et al., 2012).

SIDEBAR 1
ARCAB M&E for CBA hypothesis

Supporting effective CBA for the poorest and most marginalized people vulnerable to climate change impacts requires strengthening their knowledge and capacity to improve their long-term adaptive capacity in light of changes in climatic and other risks. It also simultaneously requires these stakeholders to have access to an enabling environment facilitating their ability to adapt. This requires local institutions to have the knowledge, capacity, and incentives to provide adaptation services and benefits to them. Together, therefore, these two components should result in evidence that people and institutions are actually adapting to climate change impacts through changing practice as a result of improved adaptive capacity and access to adaptation services.

Note: Adapted from Ayers and Faulkner (2012, p. 19).

Track 2: M&E of CBA at and Across Project Sites

This track assesses the progress of interventions in supporting effective CBA. To operationalize this track, longitudinal studies underpinned by a theory-of-change (ToC) approach are recommended to draw lessons from and across project sites. Information on why ToC is a stronger fit for M&E for CBA compared to a logical framework approach is provided in Bours, McGinn, and Pringle (2014b), and Faulkner (2013). As part of ToC design, indicators are to be identified based on the hypothesis in Sidebar 1. Context-specific indicators are then to be developed under each outcome indicator area as required for the project or program (Table 6.2). If a ToC approach is not currently used by an organization, the indicator areas presented here can be applied to fit existing M&E methodologies.

Track 3: M&E of Capacity of INGOs/Other Institutions Implementing CBA

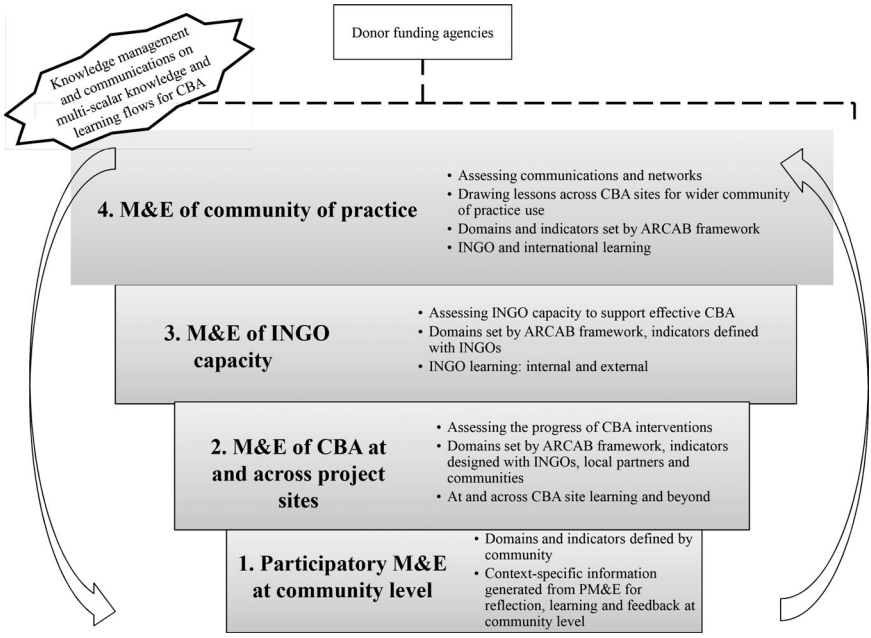
This track assesses the capacity of INGOs and other organizations to deliver effective CBA interventions. It looks to answer the questions, "Where are we now to support effective CBA?" and "What do we need to do to improve our performance?" Using a ToC approach is recommended to provide a clear

Table 6.2. ARCAB M&E for CBA Indicators for Assessing CBA Effectiveness

Downstream indicators (assessing community stakeholders at project level)	*Upstream indicators (assessing relevant institutions)*
Indicators around adaptive capacity are challenging to define given the uncertainty surrounding the concept. However, it is widely agreed that good development coupled with access to and ability to use information related to climate risks, are prerequisites for CBA. Progress against context-specific development indicators in light of climate and other risks therefore provides one set of indicators for adaptive capacity. This includes indicators on poverty, asset bases and livelihoods, food security, health, and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Indicators of awareness and the ability to use climate information in adaptive decision-making is another. Indicators showing evidence of adaptive behaviors are also necessary in order to assess if people are actually adapting over time. This requires indicators, for example, around the shifting of livelihood strategies that promote adaptation rather than coping.	For effective CBA that is sustainable over time, community groups require access to (local) institutions that support an enabling environment for adaptation. This means context-specific indicators assessing institutional capacity and mainstreaming are required (Mainstreaming means integrating information and processes that aim to address climate change adaptation into ongoing institutional development planning and programming). Indicators therefore need to assess: Institutional and service accessibility and inclusiveness. Knowledge and capacity of (local) institutions to integrate climate risk management into existing planning and provision. Knowledge of climatic variability and climate change, including how these climatic risks manifest at the local scale and how it is likely to affect those most vulnerable to its impacts. The delivery of institutional adaptation support to most vulnerable groups.
Example indicators	*Example indicators*
Evidence of changes in value of assets/improved livelihood outcomes (in light of climate and other risks). Evidence of increased skills and resources to undertake new and improved practices. Number of vulnerable people using climate information in decision-making processes. Evidence of changing attitudes to risk taking and longer-term planning.	% of vulnerable groups (disaggregated by gender) actively participating in local institutional planning and budgeting meetings. % of annual institutional budget allocated to vulnerable group adaptation strategies. Level of knowledge of climate variability/potential climate change impacts. Evidence of ability to discuss, generate, and adapt existing practices to changing circumstances if required.

Note: Based on Ayers and Faulkner (2012, pp. 14, 20–23).

Figure 6.1. The ARCAB M&E for CBA framework



Note: Adapted from "Figure 12: A Multi-track Strategy for ARCAB M&E for CBA" from Ayers and Faulkner (2012, p. 18).

roadmap of how this is to be achieved. Appropriate indicators guided by the ARCAB methodology are then to be defined with the relevant stakeholders of the institution in question. It is useful to assess results using the ARCAB CBA Resilience Scale (Table 6.3).

The ARCAB CBA Resilience Scale moves horizontally from development to adaptation to climate variability, including disaster risk reduction, to adaptation to climate change. Vertically, the scale moves from business as usual approaches to development, to those considered transformative (i.e., using methods and approaches that promote change for sustainable CBA outcomes rather than those that maintain the status quo). Moving toward transformative approaches in all domains is recommended. Examples are provided in Table 6.3. For detailed information and practical examples of use, see Ayers and Faulkner (2012), Faulkner and Ali (2012), Reid, Faulkner, and Weiser (2013), and Huq and Faulkner (2013).

Track 4: M&E of Community of Practice

This track is yet to be developed. However, it aims to translate what is happening across scales into useful evidence that is responsive to the information needs of relevant stakeholders in Table 6.1.

Table 6.3. The ARCAB CBA Resilience Scale Used to Assess the Capacity of INGOs/Other Institutions Implementing CBA

	Development	*Adaptation to climate variability*	*Adaptation to climate change*
Business as usual	Projectized development Inflexible linear planning Poor participation Short-term focus	Use of scientific information on climate variability and disaster Largely disaster response than preparedness	Climate impacts focused Prioritizes climate impact information over local knowledge Top down approach rolled out rather than scaled out Mainly technological interventions implemented
Transformative	Empowerment of vulnerable households Community-driven Bottom up accountability Flexible responsive planning Strong institutional processes Good participatory approaches	Strong community knowledge of climate variability/ disaster impacts Use of scientific information on climate variability/disasters Development needs addressed as first step towards adaptation	New climate knowledge: blending climate change science with meaningful local knowledge Climate change adaptation mainstreamed across all operational project levels Scaling out driven by knowledge changes in stakeholder groups Long-term focus

Note: Adapted from "Figure 15: ARCAB's CBA Transformation Scale to Assess Action Partner Capacity" from Ayers and Faulkner (2012, p. 24).

ARCAB M&E for CBA Framework Application

Although the utilization of the ARCAB M&E for CBA framework is at an early stage, it has gained rapid attention, recognition, and uptake by the international community (e.g., Baldwin, Faulkner, Hawrylyshyn, Phelan, & Stone, 2014; Faulkner, 2013; Faulkner & Ali, 2012). To date, certain tracks of the framework have been operationalized in response to institutional demands requesting three key M&E objectives: (a) preintervention M&E design, (b) end-of-intervention evaluation, and (c) an assessment of CBA effectiveness to showcase how to scale up what works. As presented below, the framework has shown to be universal in application and use for stakeholders engaged in different livelihood zones and adaptation contexts.

Similarly, evidence shows that it translates to non-CCA–specific investments (e.g., Reid et al., 2013), plus those targeting CCA and resilience goals (e.g. Faulkner, 2012; Huq & Faulkner, 2013).

(1) Preintervention M&E Design

The framework has aided M&E strategy design for INGO CCA and resilience projects in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Somaliland (Baldwin et al., 2014; Faulkner, 2012, 2013). This has included the development of a collaborative ToC linking cross-scale stakeholders to support longer-term programming approaches (Faulkner, 2012).

Evidence shows that the framework is effective in designing M&E systems to ensure that M&E is front-loaded for learning on CCA/resilience and reporting purposes (Baldwin et al., 2014); in enhancing existing M&E approaches already in place; and in guiding ongoing and future intervention design (Faulkner, 2012, 2013).

(2) End-of-Intervention Evaluation

Two components of the framework have been used to assess CBA (Faulkner & Ali, 2012), and participatory natural resource management interventions (Reid & Faulkner, 2015; Reid et al., 2013) for INGOs in Bangladesh and Ethiopia. First, indicators were identified to evaluate what role initiatives had in delivering adaptation support for project stakeholders. Second, findings were analyzed by adapting the ARCAB CBA Resilience Scale in track 3 to assess intervention results and INGO capacity. Institutional feedback on framework use specified its utility in generating useful reflections on community-based change processes and adaptation support that informed upgrading of interventions.

(3) Assessment of CBA Effectiveness to Scale Up What Works

The framework has proven beneficial in illustrating how effective CBA can be scaled up and out (Huq and Faulkner, 2013). Here, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP) funded CBA project in Namibia, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was evaluated. Based on assessment results, context-specific ToCs were developed showcasing how effective outcomes could be taken to scale. Recommendations were also presented on shifts in existing institutional thinking processes and funding mechanisms to enhance adaptation strategy and impact further.

Framework Challenges

The framework calls for a reassessment of existing M&E for CBA practice. Consequently, an enabling institutional environment to support its

operationalization may require changes in individual practitioner and wider institutional mindsets across scales. This includes the knowledge and use of ToC in the CBA remit. Capacity building of INGO practitioners in this domain remains in its early stages with not all organizations familiar with the approach. It is therefore likely to take time for ToC, and for this framework which utilizes it, to be adopted widely. Similarly, navigating considerations of the time and availability of resources to facilitate ToC and PM&E approaches in already time and resource-limited environments needs to be acknowledged. This refers to both implementing institutions and within communities themselves.

Moreover, digging deeper into the management of contested multistakeholder knowledge boundaries and power symmetries is required. The framework acknowledges these issues, yet they warrant greater attention as framework operationalization develops. This includes the call for genuine participation (Few et al., 2007). Also, given the framework's multiscalar makeup, due attention to its use is required to limit any potential trade-offs between M&E quality and scale (Rossing, Otzelberger, & Girot, 2014). This holds relevance for the design of the fourth track of the framework: M&E of community of practice. Challenges will include how to draw local lessons from across CBA sites effectively and translate them into generalizable insights for policy makers (Larsen, Swartling, Powell, Simonsson, & Osbeck, 2011).

Moreover, existing tensions surrounding the notion of community are relevant to the framework. We assert that questioning assumptions that presume cohesion and trust within communities is useful to support more effective practice (Cannon, 2008; Walker, Devine-Wright, Hunter, High, & Evans, 2010). Similarly, we highlight that greater awareness in defining who forms the community is valuable, given that it is often interchangeable (Jupp, 2013). Likewise, measurement challenges surrounding the unit of a community from the outset requires notice (Ayers, 2011).

Conclusion

We argue that M&E practitioners should consider the knowledge and learning needs of stakeholders engaged in CBA investments across scales for M&E to be effective. Correspondingly, this chapter presents a new multitrack framework that reframes M&E for CBA design. In doing so, it enhances the usefulness of M&E by ensuring that accountability to all stakeholders is legitimate in multiple directions. It is transparent about the diverse cross-scale information needs of different audiences, and hence tailors its M&E approaches accordingly. Consequently, we assert that this approach is relevant for both CCA/resilience specialists and nonspecialists alike.

Current framework applications address key M&E objectives: preintervention M&E design, end-of-intervention evaluation, and showcasing how to scale up what works. Evidence highlights framework applicability

in diverse livelihood and adaptation contexts. Also, it is transferable to sustainable development investments, plus those targeting more specific CCA and resilience goals.

Framework challenges include potential changes in practitioner and institutional mindsets given a needed reassessment of M&E for CBA practice. This includes CBA practitioner capacity building in the knowledge and use of ToC. Similarly, M&E and CBA practitioners will be required to pay greater attention to managing contested multistakeholder knowledge boundaries and power symmetries across scales as framework development progresses. Likewise, it is recommended that they consider tensions surrounding the notion of community to enhance more effective practice. In addition, how framework users can effectively draw and translate local lessons from across different CBA sites into generalizable insights for policy makers is of concern.

Next Steps

The M&E for CBA framework presented in this chapter is to be considered a work in progress. We aim for it to be refined through practice by different users across relevant scales. Further user feedback on this approach to inform framework enhancement is expected to be shared at the Ninth International Conference on Community-based Adaptation in Kenya, in April 2015, with the theme of "Measuring and Enhancing the Effectiveness of Adaptation."

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LUCY FAULKNER is an independent consultant and researcher who was engaged in the design of the ARCAB M&E for CBA framework and has led its operationalization. In doing so, she has collaborated with the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Bangladesh.

JESSICA AYERS is a senior policy adviser at the UK Department for Energy and Climate Change. At the time of writing, she worked as a researcher for the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), United Kingdom, on pro-poor climate change planning, evaluation and finance in South Asia and Africa.

SALEEMUL HUQ is the director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).