

# Patrick WARD

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## Learning and Adapting in Development Practice

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019

12:45 – 14:00 GMT

Room LG24 – Keppel Street

A 50 minute lecture followed by a 25 minute Q&A session

If you are following online and have questions

please email [cedil@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:cedil@lshtm.ac.uk)

or tweet us on [@CEDILProgramme](https://twitter.com/CEDILProgramme)



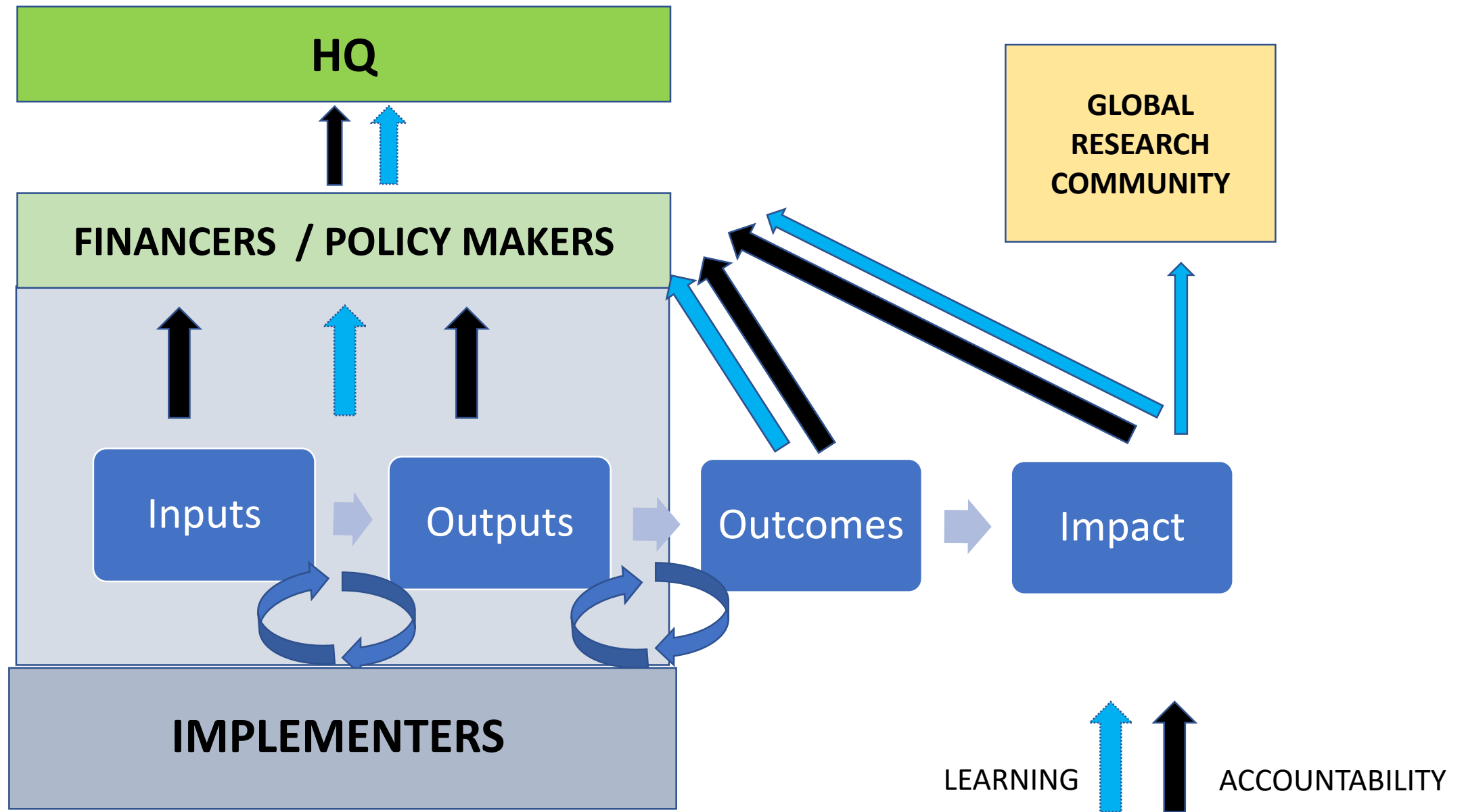
# Overview

**We need more systematic learning and adapting by development programmes. MEL should be a key part of doing it better.**

1. Operations research and impact evaluation of a large nutrition programme in Nigeria (ORIE)
2. Adaptive management and MEL: lessons from MUVA and GLAM
3. Reflections on ORIE and conclusions

# Framing the discussion

- Two purposes to evaluation and monitoring: learning and accountability
- Adaptation requires the space to experiment, fail and learn
- Accountability mechanisms can sometimes curtail that space





# WINNN and ORIE



Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counseling session, taking place at a Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) site in Yelwandimai, Birnin-Kudu, Jigawa state. The WINNN programme works at integrating IYCF into CMAM across the 5 supported states. Photo credit J. Ucheh, Flint Productions/WINNN ©2016



# Working to Improve Nutrition in Northern Nigeria (WINNN)

- A £52 million, six-year DfID funded programme to improve maternal, newborn and child nutrition in Northern Nigeria.

## Key interventions:

- Micronutrient supplementation (MNCHW)
- Community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM)
- Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling
- Advocacy for and support to govt. financing & management of services.

**Implementing partners:** Save the Children, Action Against Hunger and UNICEF

# Operations research and impact evaluation (ORIE)

Consortium led by OPM, including LSHTM & others, commissioned by DFID

- Quantitative evaluation of trends and impact on service use, behaviour and anthropometric status
- Costing and economic analysis
- Qualitative evaluation of contribution to govt. finance and systems
- Operations research to inform ongoing implementation

<https://www.heart-resources.org/orie/>

# ORIE workstreams and outputs

Workstream	Main activities/reports
Operations research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MNCHW, CMAM, IYCF, ANC</li></ul>
Impact evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quantitative IE baseline and endline reports</li><li>• Qualitative IE baseline, midline and endline reports</li></ul>
Economic evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health facility study (CMAM)</li><li>• WINNN costing report</li><li>• WINNN cost-effectiveness (CMAM and IYCF)</li></ul>
Gender analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender synthesis across ORIE reports</li></ul>
Research capacity-building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research reports from 4 grantee universities</li></ul>
Research uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective dissemination of ORIE findings</li></ul>



# ORIE summary outputs

Report	Content and purpose
Final integrated report	<p>High-level integration of findings across all ORIE studies; recommendations to DFID/DPs, GoN, future nutrition programmes</p> <p><b>Focus: accountability</b></p>
Thematic briefs (mn supplementation, CMAM, IYCF, governance, gender)	<p>Transferable lessons from WINNN implementation: what worked well, what more needs to be done</p> <p><b>Focus: Learning</b></p>

WINNN increased the proportion of mothers who knew that:



For more information on ORIE and to read the reports, visit <https://www.heart-resources.org/orie/>

# ORIE: operational research findings

Study	Recommendations
<b>What are the barriers to attendance to the MNCHW and how can these be reduced?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training for town announcers</li><li>• Increase number of outposts for MNCHW</li><li>• Review/revise the national MNCHW guidelines for social mobilisation</li></ul>
<b>How to strengthen CMAM and reduce defaulting?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop and implement plans for capacity and systems strengthening at LGA level inc. forecasting.</li><li>• Approaches to increase CV motivation &amp; reach into remote areas</li><li>• Promote LGA monthly funding for CMAM, perhaps based on the basket-fund model developed in Zamfara State</li></ul>
<b>How to strengthen the IYCF intervention: implementation and client barriers?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review strategies for CV training &amp; strengthen supportive supervision, and monitoring the community component of IYCF</li><li>• Translate counselling cards into local languages and use pictures</li><li>• Prioritise a small number of do-able actions in IYCF counselling</li></ul>
<b>Exclusive breastfeeding and early initiation: target groups and influential messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Targeted messages and support groups for fathers</li><li>• Targeted messages for grandmothers</li><li>• Further research on how to engage religious leaders in IYCF</li><li>• Use of the findings for development of the national IYCF behavioural change strategy</li></ul>
<b>How to motivate practice of the IYCF recommendations in northern Nigeria?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop locally appropriate ways of communicating food groups</li><li>• Support and strengthen the provision of food demonstrations</li></ul>

# ORIE: key evaluation conclusions

- Increased coverage of key services through public facilities, but overall coverage remained low
- Impact at population-level on only a small number of indicators:
  - Impact on some breastfeeding indicators (knowledge, early initiation)
  - No impact found on child anthropometric status
- CMAM and IYCF both 'very cost effective'
- Contribution made to strengthening political commitment & planning & financing of services
- Very large public financing and HR gaps remained

# ORIE: contributions to changes in policy and practice

- Revision of national guidelines on nutrition outreach services to improve access
- Improved guidelines and practices for community education on best practices in breast-feeding and weaning children
- Supporting and recognising the volunteers who play a key role in delivering services in the community

# ORIE: Engagement with implementers & government

Most engagement from implementers and govt on learning focused elements

- OR findings, thematic briefs (co-produced, service focused), baseline findings for advocacy

Less engagement on final impact results and costing studies:

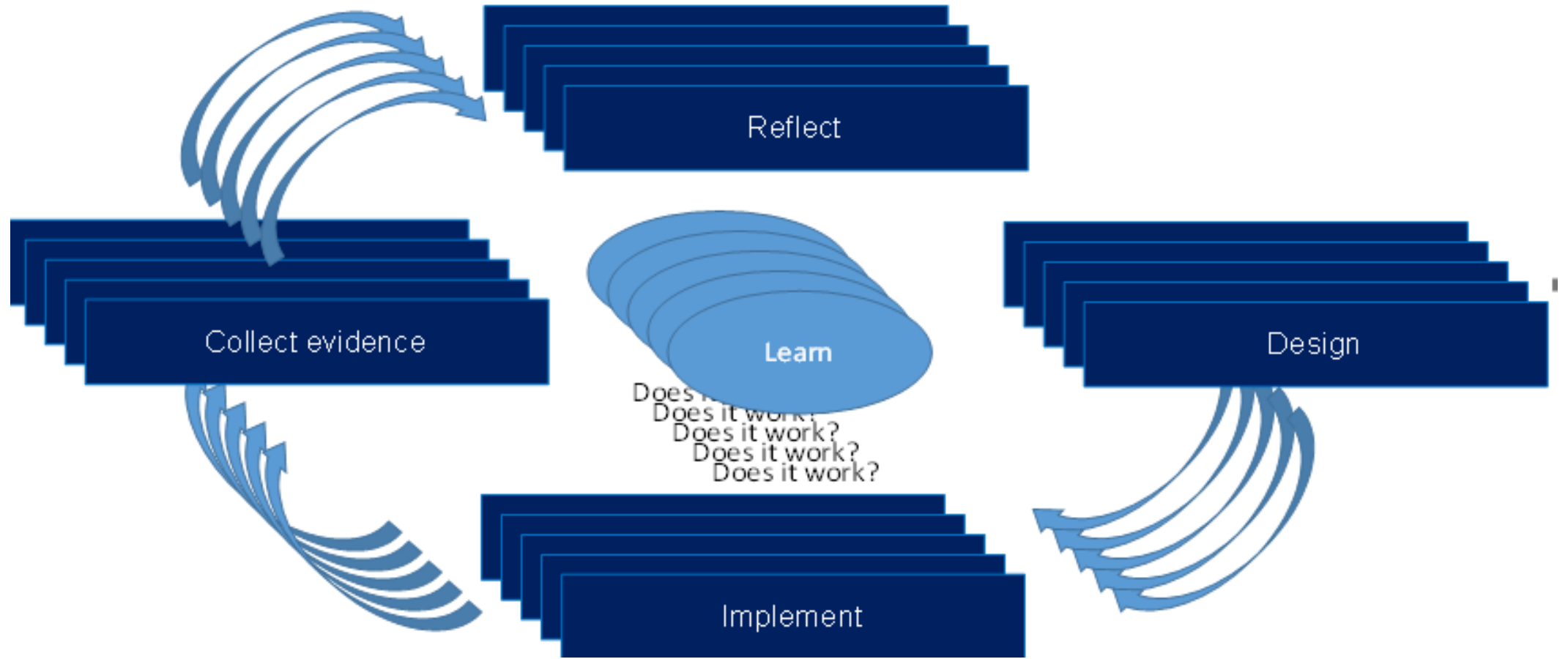
- more complex, more negative, more contested, more difficult to act on



# ORIE: challenges

- **Uncertainty and changes in WINNN design**
  - Changes/development of design and coverage ambitions, details not always clear
  - Major complications for design and analysis of QIE
  - Debate around TOC / expected changes in anthrop. indicators
- **Problems with routine data**
  - Wide discrepancies between routine monitoring data & surveys
  - Difficulties in obtaining cost data
- **Variable engagement with implementers & govt**
  - Multiple stakeholders with different agendas
  - Interest & desire for more operational learning
  - Concerns & some defensiveness around QIE

# Programme adaptation and learning



# Adaptive management & learning

- Adaptive management - various definitions but key elements:
  - appreciation of context
  - Recognition of complexity and lack of certainty
  - structured flexibility
  - iterative learning and improvement process
- Continuum rather than a binary division

# Rationale

- Complexity and uncertainty (design, implementation)
- Challenges of implementation often underestimated
- Get delivery right first
- Implementer-led innovation, alignment of interests around better delivery (cf 'external IE')
- Rapid experimentation as an evolutionary / developmental approach

# Experience of MEL4AM: MUVA

- Programme for female economic empowerment, works with disadvantaged young urban women in Mozambique
  - supports transition from school, access to labour market, improving informal sector incomes
- Multiple small-scale interventions developed and tested

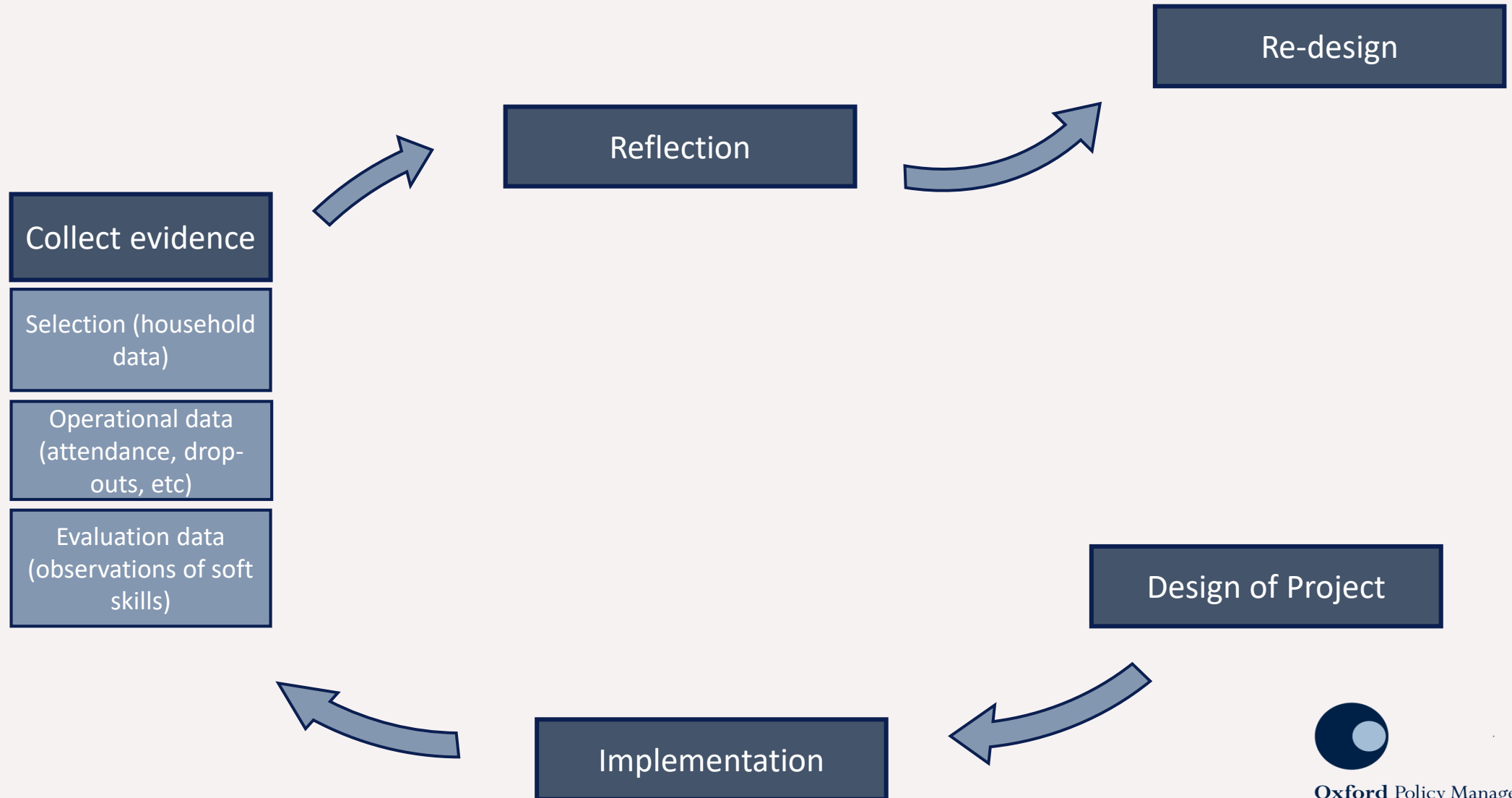
For more information on MUVA visit <http://muvamoz.co.mz/?lang=en>



# Experience of MEL4AM: MUVA MEL

- ‘Test, learn, adapt’ built into design, recognizing uncertainty
- Focused on information needs of implementers
- Regular, facilitated reflection cycles (6-monthly)
  - Joint review and interpretation
  - Action focused
  - Evidence driven, various types of (timely) data & methods
- Example from ‘soft skills’ & vocational training project

# MUVA'titude learning and adaptation cycle



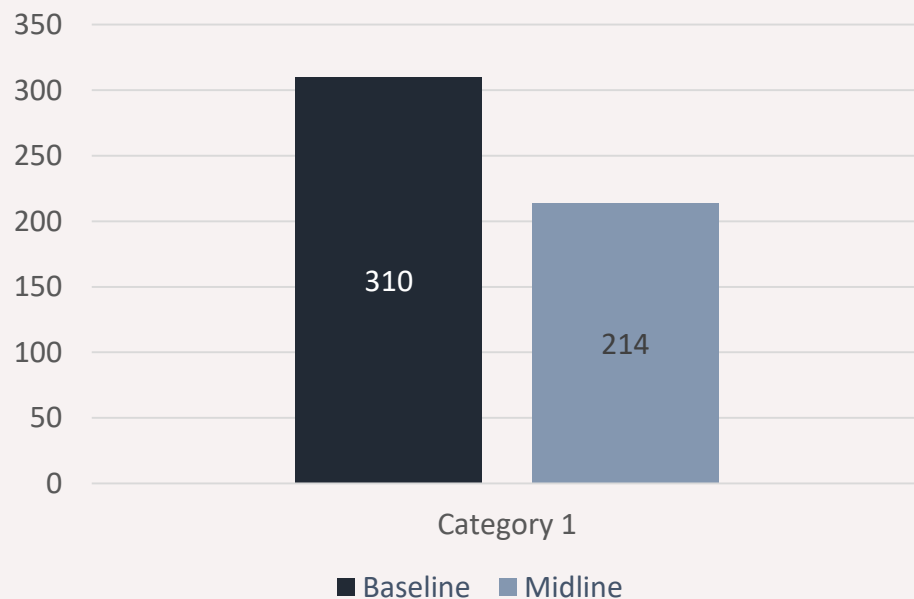
# MUVA'titude learning and adaptation cycle

Reflection

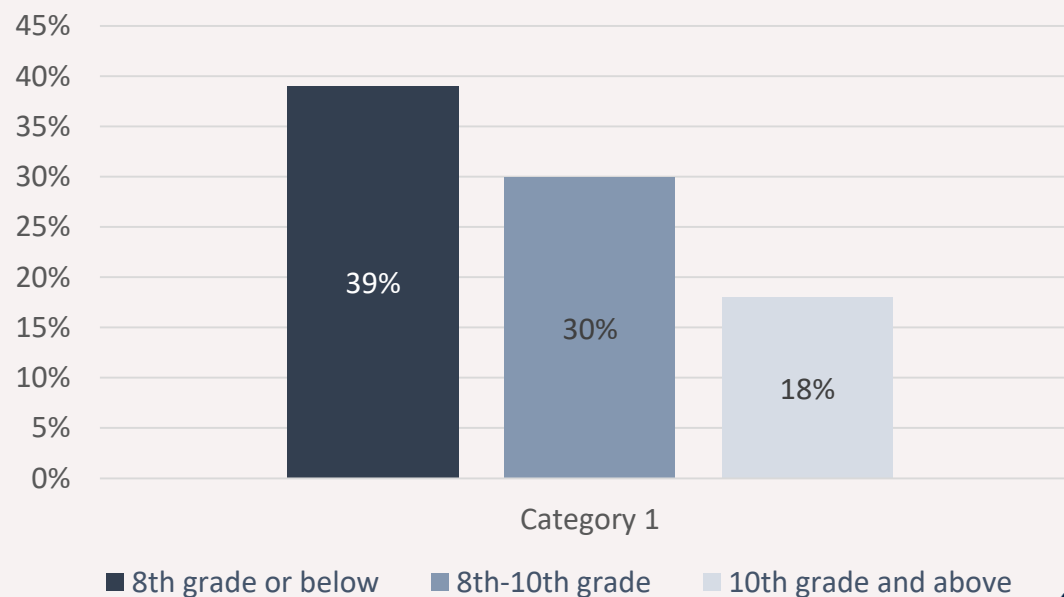


First reflection work-shop  
after 2 months of  
MUVA'titude.

**Main issue: Drop-out rate is high!**



**Drop out rate by level of schooling**



# MUVA: Soft skills improved after training

Figure 2. MUVA'titude soft skills data



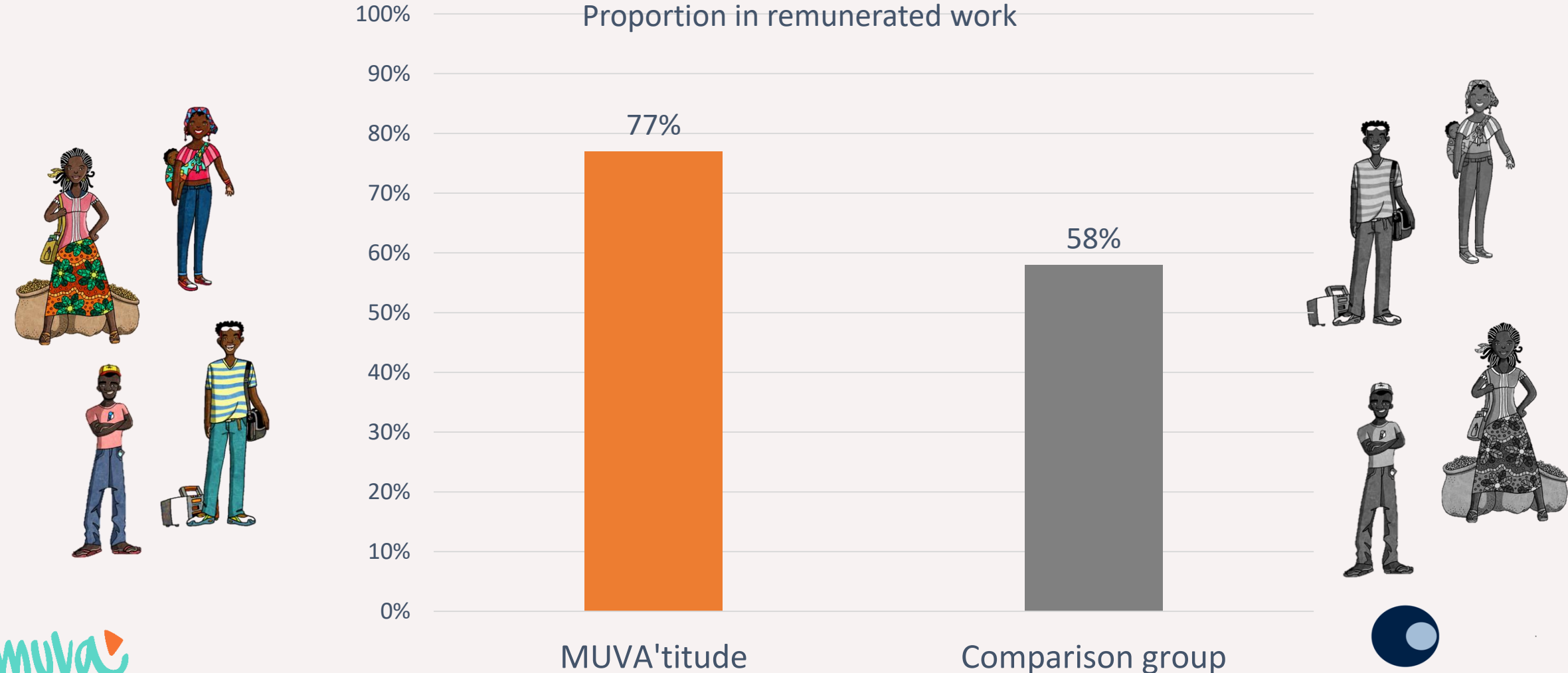
Source: authors

● Baseline ► Endline



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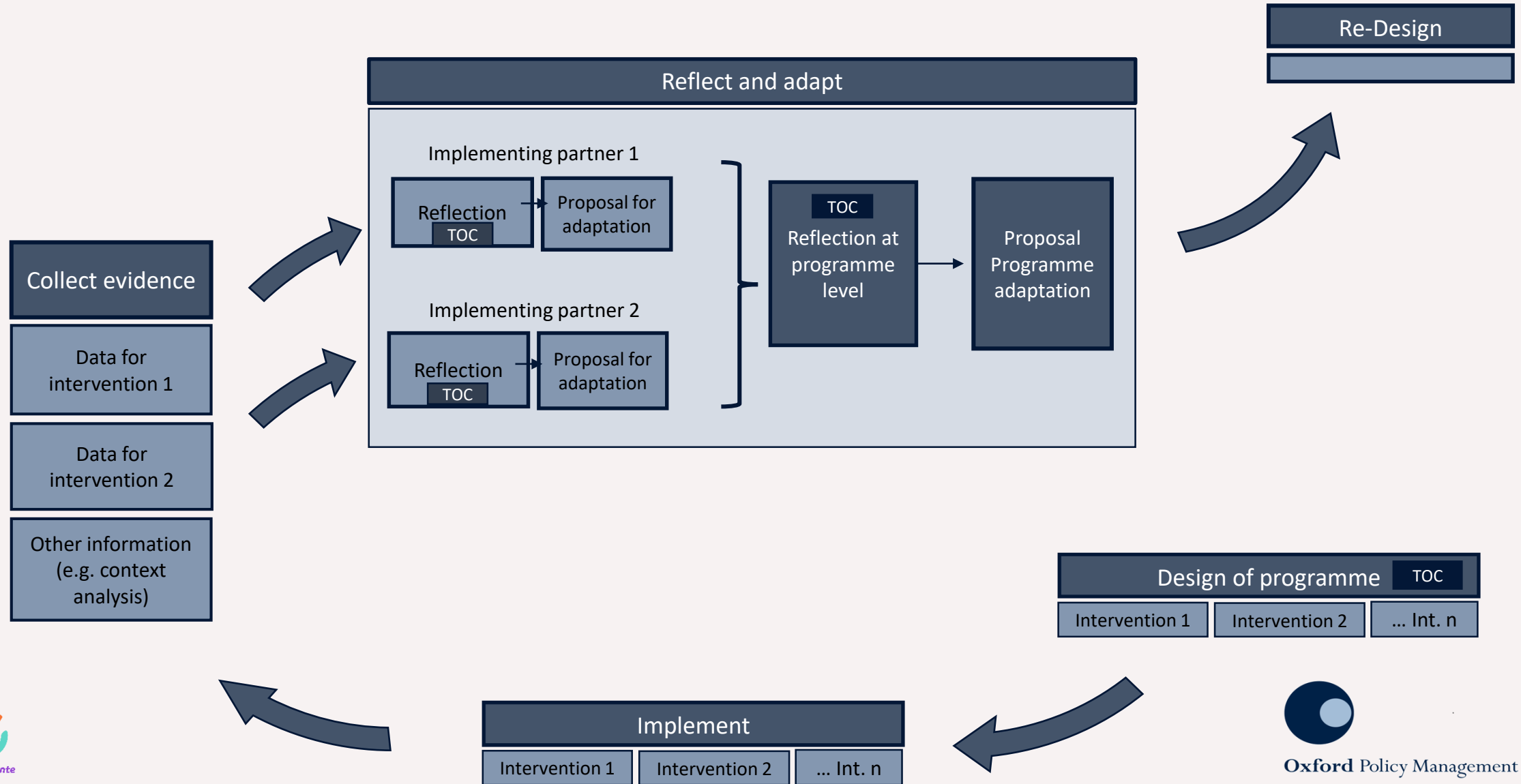
# Most MUVA'titude participants are in remunerated work



\* N=208; difference sig. at 5% level



# MUVA: The learning and adaptation cycle



# MUVA (& other): enabling factors

- Shift of focus from upwards accountability
- Virtuous circle implementer interest & use of MEL data
- Less transactional relationship with implementers
- 'Space' and trust to identify failure and act
  - Management and accountability relationships support it
  - Design, logframe and 'deliverables' give space and value learning
  - Separation of learning and accountability roles
- Time and resources: cost can be significant

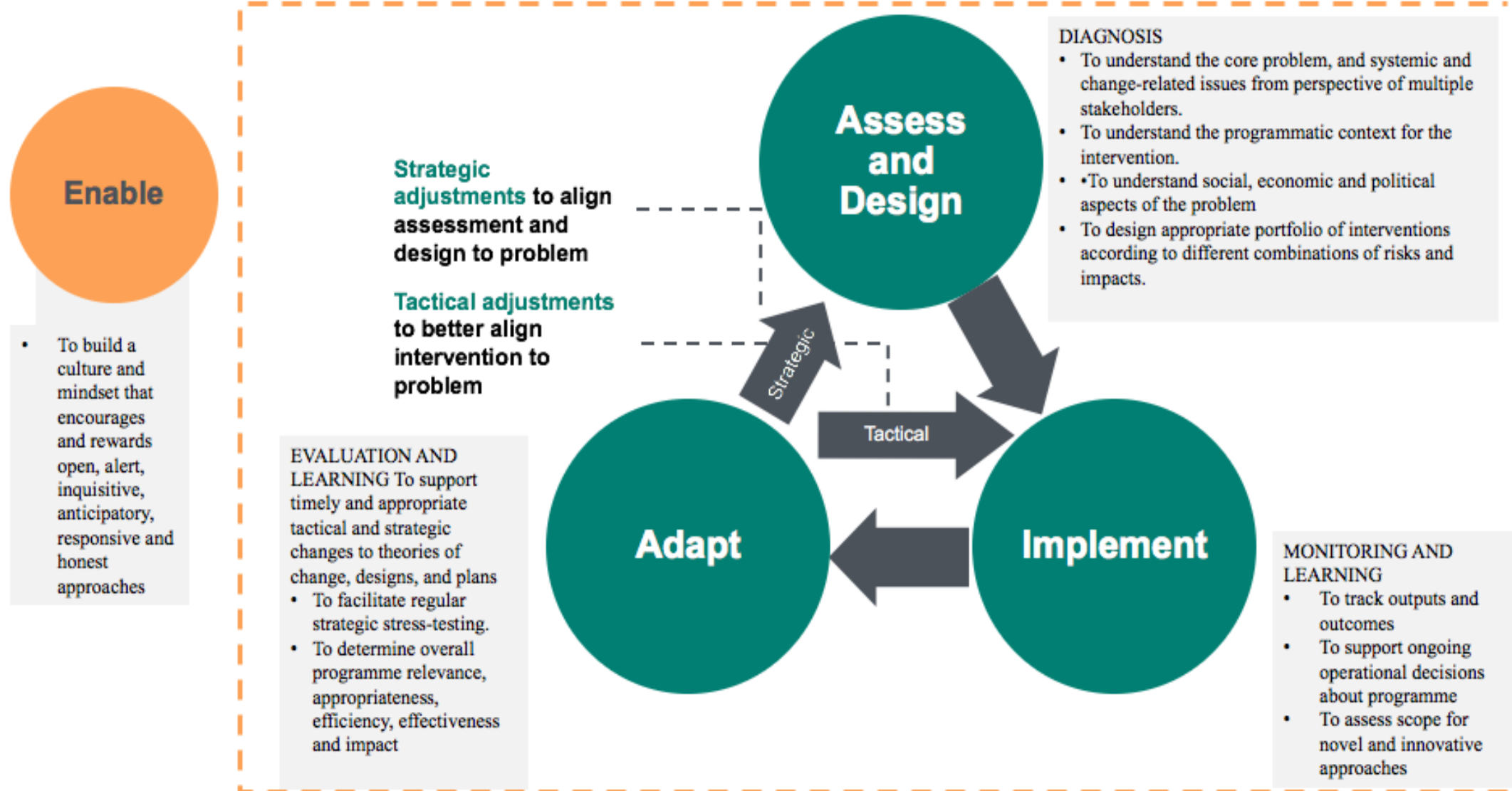
# GLAM MEL4AM – Adaptive Rigour

Global Learning for Adaptive Management (GLAM) outline of ‘adaptive rigour’ identifies:

- MEL structured for systematic, documented reflection on progress and adaptation of strategy and tactics
- Internal learning and action focus, drawing on multiple perspectives
- Variety of approaches and types of data, including qualitative sources & beneficiary perspectives
- Indicators covering a variety of timescales, including short-term learning on progress towards outputs
- Testing of assumptions in the TOC
- Reporting against learning & progress towards an outcome, not just ‘deliverables’

[ODI.ORG/GLAM](http://ODI.ORG/GLAM)

# Roles and functions of MEL in Adaptive Programmes



From: 'Making Adaptive Rigour Work', Ramalingam, Wild & Buffardi (2019)

# MEL4AM: organisation and environment

- 'Safe spaces', culture & incentives to identify failure, learn and act
- Critical thinking and problem solving culture
- Reporting & accountability frameworks aligned with MEL4AM
- Acceptance of trade-offs against other objectives eg in choice of data collected



# AM beyond MEL: broader considerations

- Leadership & institutional cultures
- Time and space for reflection & experimentation
- Staff attributes and skill sets
- Procurement, contracting and implementing mechanisms

Source: GLAM Landscaping study

# Reflecting on ORIE



The happy family of Mohammad and Bilkisu Bawa. Mayalo community, Kebbi state..

Photo Credit: J. Ucheh; Flint Productions/WINNN©2016

# ORIE: Challenges & a learning orientation

- Uncertainty and changes in programme design
  - Support better specification of interventions & testing of approaches
  - Ensure delivery of outputs before evaluating impact
  - Clarity of TOC, design and coverage before evaluating impact
- Problems with routine data
  - Hands-on support to understanding & addressing data discrepancies
- Variable engagement with implementers & govt
  - Respond to desire for more operational learning
  - Closer involvement of govt partners in specifying questions
  - More open dialogue when accountability pressures lower

# Opportunities in MEL4AM

- More responsive management by implementers & financiers:
  - Better link MEL to programme management decisions: relevance, timeliness
  - Increase the focus on delivering development outcomes
  - Attention to assumptions and the programme environment
- Adapt MEL to deal better with more explicit experimentation, risk taking, recognition of failure
- Feed programme level learning into organisational policy, systems and procedures (MEL and beyond)

# Conclusions

- Opportunities to improve development effectiveness through more structured learning and adaptation
- Examples of its practical implementation and reflections on where it could have been strengthened
- Developing thinking around the approach and implications



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# Thank you for listening!

## Get in touch!

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