“For many interventions in complex adaptive systems, the most successful approaches will be based on measurement and data. We cannot predict in detail whether or how interventions will work, but we can (and should) measure effects of what we do, and we should adjust the interventions accordingly. Indeed, my view is that this approach to complexity is not only possible, but the only approach which is likely to be successful.”

The DCED Standard for Results Measurement provides programmes working in complex market systems with the framework, tools and incentives to monitor their results in a systematic way. Credibility is enhanced through an optional external audit of the measurement process used by the programme.

The DCED Standard was developed in 2008 in collaboration with many programmes in the field; it includes all of the elements now accepted as ‘good practice’.

The first step in the Standard calls for managers to articulate the results chain: the logic of their work, already implicit but rarely illustrated in a clear form. This format enables managers to be explicit about the assumptions on which their work is based – including for example sequencing and parallel logics. The rest of the Standard framework flows from the programme logic, supporting managers to test it in real time to see whether it is valid.

Programmes and organisations complying with the Standard are increasingly seen as being committed to effectiveness and excellence. Many donors, INGOs, field programmes and consultants are actively using the framework of the DCED Standard to improve their monitoring systems.

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1 Owen Barder blog, 3/12/2013