



ROUTES TO RESILIENCE

LESSONS FROM MONITORING BRACED

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Reflection paper



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This reflection paper was written by Paula Silva Villanueva and Catherine Gould, based on our experiences of monitoring change in the BRACED programme. We wish to acknowledge critical contributions from Florence Pichon, as well as Emily Wilkinson, Blane Harvey, Katie Peters, Fran Walker and Dave Wilson from the BRACED Knowledge Manager. The authors are also grateful to the M&E and project leads of the BRACED Implementing Partners and to Annie Bonnin Roncerel and Jim Djontu of the BRACED Fund Manager, for openly sharing their experiences and reflections. The paper has benefited from critical review from Robbie Gregorowski and Katie Peters of the Knowledge Manager and Derek Poate (external). The donor DFID have also provided their feedback and discussed how to ensure the lessons are taken up and applied, both within BRACED and other similar programmes. Finally, we thank Charlotte Rye and Clare Shaw of the Knowledge Manager for their support in the publication process.

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Reflections in brief

The basis for reflection

This paper shares insights, reflections and lessons learnt from designing, implementing and reporting against the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework. The BRACED programme aims to build the resilience of up to 5 million people vulnerable to climate extremes and disasters and supports international, regional and local organisations, working in 15 consortia across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and South-East Asia.

To understand what works and what does not in building climate and disaster resilience, the BRACED Knowledge Manager is developing and testing a variety of resilience measurement and monitoring approaches and frameworks. The BRACED M&E framework is designed to enable data collection and evidence generation to track, measure and understand the processes of change that lead to climate and disaster resilience.

Each year, the BRACED project Implementing Partners and the Knowledge Manager's Monitoring and Results Reporting team address the critical question: **'How are BRACED projects contributing to building resilience?'** The answer has been captured in our companion synthesis report – *'Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1'*. This reflection paper was written following the completion of the first annual synthesis report and provides the Monitoring and Results Reporting team's reflections on **'What lessons have we learnt from the monitoring and results reporting efforts to date in BRACED?'**

During the first year of BRACED, we have addressed the following M&E challenges:

- moving from concepts to practice
- rolling out a programme-level M&E framework to 15 projects working across 13 countries
- trialling qualitative reporting approaches at project- and programme-level
- aggregating and synthesising highly contextually specific data.

These experiences have generated new insights into how to approach the monitoring and results reporting of a resilience-building programme at the scale of BRACED.

Developing programme-level M&E frameworks for resilience-building programmes is a relatively new area of work, with limited experience to draw on. Reflection about the BRACED M&E framework is therefore a critical learning step for BRACED itself to improve M&E practice and evidence generation within the programme. It also provides an exciting opportunity to contribute to building the knowledge base on resilience monitoring and measurement for the wider community. We hope that the reflections shared in this paper will contribute to ongoing and future resilience-building programmes.

Lessons learnt so far

In year 1, BRACED project Implementing Partners have embraced a new way of monitoring and reporting change. We have learnt a great deal as a result of taking a programme-level view of how resilience is being built in BRACED. The key lessons emerging from our BRACED experience to date include:

1. **Translating concepts into practice: Measuring progress on resilience cannot be done with one 'simple' indicator. It requires qualitative and explanatory frameworks that contextualise results against shocks and stresses, as well as the wider context projects operate within.** There is a risk of losing and obscuring critical learning about resilience building if we measure resilience using just one indicator. Understanding the determinants of climate and disaster resilience is complex and there aren't any ready 'yes' or 'no' answers.

More detailed lessons on translating concepts into practice can be found in section 3.1 of this paper.

2. **Rolling out M&E frameworks: There are different options for rolling out programme-level M&E frameworks and systems, but each comes with its own trade-off.** Options and trade-offs include decisions about the type and level of support to provide to project partners. The rolling out of programme-level M&E frameworks and systems must find a balance between light-touch and resource-intensive options. They also need to allow for continual adjustments based on the emerging body of knowledge and experience regarding the monitoring and measuring of resilience. In BRACED, the Knowledge Manager was set up after the project logframes, theories of change and M&E plans were defined. Establishing the BRACED programme-level M&E framework would have been easier if it had been developed at the same time as the 15 BRACED projects' M&E.

More detailed lessons on rolling out M&E frameworks can be found in section 3.2.

3. **Reporting on resilience: Qualitative and explanatory frameworks offer an opportunity to complement resilience indicators. However, if we are to truly engage with these frameworks, we need to shift mindsets from accountability to learning-oriented M&E.** Engaging with qualitative and explanatory frameworks requires M&E practices to go beyond 'business as usual' and accountability-driven exercises. M&E experts and project managers also need to engage in more refined and complex data collection and analysis processes than in a traditional programme.

More detailed lessons on reporting on resilience can be found in section 3.3.

4. **Aggregating and synthesising data at scale: Synthesising and aggregating data while retaining context specificity requires time, resources and thorough synthesis methodologies.** Qualitative and explanatory frameworks call for exhaustive synthesis processes that are able to deal with complex data analysis, varying levels of data quality and self-reporting bias. This lengthens the lead time between project-level annual reporting and programme-level learning, which may limit the findings' potential impact on programme and project decision-making.

More detailed lessons on aggregating and synthesising data at scale can be found in section 3.4.

How can BRACED build on this learning?

BRACED is nearly two years into its three-year implementation timeframe and project- and programme-level M&E is already set up and established. There are therefore some limitations to what can be adapted and achieved in the remainder of the programme. In this context, our suggestions below are for both the BRACED programme and other similar initiatives.

“Genuinely understanding resilience in practice means moving away from a logframe-driven and 'accountability'-focused M&E culture”

Monitoring resilience-building efforts and reporting on their progress is challenging. M&E for resilience programming is still nascent and BRACED is learning-by-doing. A key message emerging from this paper, together with its companion programme-level synthesis report, is that genuinely understanding resilience in practice means moving away from a logframe-driven and 'accountability'-focused M&E culture. Moving forward:

- **Project Implementing Partners should enhance their ongoing monitoring and results reporting efforts by taking a more reflective and critical approach.** This could challenge project assumptions and will build a better understanding of how to build climate and disaster resilience in fragile and vulnerable contexts.
- **The programme-level Monitoring and Results Reporting team should consider how to encourage this critical Implementing Partner reflection and dialogue.** There are limits to what reporting templates alone can achieve in this regard. We therefore plan to provide further training to Implementing Partners, along with light-touch helpdesk support.

- **Programmes like BRACED need to find and resource efficient ways of achieving a sufficient level of reflection and learning for the benefit of both project- and programme-level evidence generation.** Ideally, the programme-level M&E framework should be designed in conjunction with the project-level frameworks.

“Outcome-level indicators need to be complemented by systematic monitoring and evaluation of resilience in the context of actual shocks”

To better understand the stability of outcome-level changes over time and how communities learn and 'bounce back better' from disaster events, outcome-level indicators need to be complemented by systematic monitoring and evaluation of resilience in the context of actual shocks. Moving forward:

- **Implementing Partners are in a unique position to contribute to knowledge about how to quantify the number of people whose resilience has been built (KPI 4) at the *project level*.** The Monitoring and Results Reporting team, together with wider members of the Knowledge Manager and the BRACED Fund Manager, should further explore outcome-level resilience indicators in different contexts: the advantages and disadvantages, as well as opportunities and trade-offs.
- **When designing and funding similar programmes in the future, the Department for International Development (DFID) should adopt a pragmatic and realistic view on the feasible level of outcome-level data and evidence generation in a three-year programme like BRACED.** Resilience-building efforts are not only complex, but also involve processes of change that take time to materialise. Prioritising annual data collection efforts against quantitative indicators may come at the cost of losing critical evidence about what works and what does not in building resilience to climate extremes and disasters.
- **Programmes like BRACED should consider having a diverse set of methodologies and analysis in place for interrogating quantitative outcome-level resilience indicators.** They should be pragmatic about what sort of outcome-level data and information can be expected in a three-year period.

While much attention has been given to project-level approaches to monitoring and measuring resilience, programme-level efforts face a unique set of challenges. To date, there is both limited literature and examples from other programmes addressing these challenges. In BRACED, we have been learning-by-doing on an ongoing basis. Moving forward:

- **The Monitoring and Results Reporting team, together with Implementing Partners, should consider ways to further capture their monitoring and results reporting experiences within BRACED.** This would benefit both BRACED and other existing and future resilience-building programmes.
- **Programmes like BRACED should also share experiences and contribute to building knowledge in this relatively new area of work.**

Question for further reflection

This paper aims to contribute to ongoing learning about resilience programming and to initiate discussion. We wish to engage BRACED Implementing Partners, the broader BRACED Knowledge Manager, the BRACED Fund Manager, DFID and wider audiences in the following critical question, which emerges as a result of our collective reflections and learning so far. Together, we should continue to answer it throughout the BRACED programme.

How complex does M&E for resilience need to be? The BRACED M&E framework brings together three different lenses into the analysis of project- and programme-level data. Experience to date, both from Implementing Partners and the BRACED Knowledge Manager's Monitoring and Results Reporting team, indicates the following:

- While the framework provides a multidimensional view into the various levels of complexity, it requires significant time.
- It also necessitates different, non-traditional ways of engaging with data.
- It does not – and cannot – provide simple 'yes' or 'no' answers about whether resilience has been built and, if so, how.

As outlined in our companion report, *'Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1'*, the essence of 'resilience' is that change and progress are not linear – so results reporting should not be linear either. The BRACED M&E framework is complex enough to be able to understand BRACED resilience-building efforts, but could it be made to be more user-friendly, while still retaining the complexity and nuances of resilience-building projects?



1. INTRODUCTION

Image: Neil Palmer,
CIAT

1.1 What is this paper about?

The DFID-funded BRACED programme comprises 15 field-based resilience-building projects across 13 countries in the Sahel, East Africa and South-East Asia.¹ These projects are implemented by 15 Implementing Partners, whose performance and delivery is overseen by the BRACED Fund Manager. The programme also has a dedicated Knowledge Manager² tasked with generating and consolidating learning about the actions that work best to strengthen community resilience to climate extremes and disasters in a variety of contexts. M&E activities in BRACED are undertaken at both the project level and the programme level. (See Annex 1 for further details.)

A key area of the Knowledge Manager's work is generating knowledge about monitoring and evaluation practice in a complex resilience-building programme. To this end, it is developing and testing a variety of resilience measurement approaches and frameworks through a set of monitoring and results reporting,

¹ www.BRACED.org

² BRACED Knowledge Manager (2016) 'Learning about resilience through the BRACED programme: An introduction to the role of the BRACED Knowledge Manager'. BRACED Knowledge Manager information leaflet. London: ODI.

evaluation and research activities. As a core part of this work, the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team has developed the BRACED programme theory of change (see Annex 2) and related M&E framework. The BRACED M&E framework was developed to establish programme-level evidence and learning about *how* BRACED projects are building resilience.

The components of the M&E framework were new and untested ways of monitoring, measuring and understanding resilience-building efforts. During the first year of BRACED, the framework has been adopted by project Implementing Partners and applied to their M&E. At the end of year 1, Implementing Partners provided systematic qualitative and explanatory reporting against the BRACED M&E framework for the first time. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team have since undertaken a programme-level synthesis of all project-level year 1 annual reports.

This paper presents the Monitoring and Results Reporting team's reflections so far, from applying the BRACED M&E framework, overseeing year 1 project-level reporting and completing the programme-level synthesis of this data. The paper addresses the question: 'What lessons have we learnt from the monitoring and results reporting efforts to date in BRACED?' The findings of the programme-level synthesis itself have been captured in a separate report, '*Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1*'.³ The companion synthesis report answers the question of 'How are BRACED projects contributing to building resilience?' and explores BRACED programme progress to date against the BRACED M&E framework.

1.2 Who is this paper for?

Designing and implementing programme-level M&E frameworks for resilience-building programmes is a relatively new area, where limited experience exists. Reflection about the BRACED M&E framework is therefore a critical learning step for the BRACED programme. It provides an exciting opportunity, not only to improve M&E practice within BRACED, but also to contribute to building the knowledge base on resilience monitoring and measurement for the wider community. This paper is aimed at:

- **Stakeholders internal to BRACED: project Implementing Partners, the Knowledge Manager, Fund Manager and the donor DFID.** For this audience, we provide a set of lessons on how change can be monitored, measured and understood in the BRACED programme. These reflections should be used to enhance the BRACED M&E system for years 2 and 3 of the programme. They will inform ongoing monitoring and results reporting at both the project and programme levels, as well as wider BRACED Knowledge Manager work on tracking and measuring resilience outcomes.

³ Silva Villanueva, P., Gould, C. and Pichon, F. (2016) '*Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1*'. BRACED Knowledge Manager. Synthesis Report. Brighton: Itad.

- **Outside BRACED: M&E practitioners, donors and programme staff with an interest in designing, implementing, monitoring and measuring resilience-building efforts.** For this audience, we outline the practical experiences of the BRACED programme so far in terms of conceptualising, rolling out and reporting on how resilience is being built. We also provide lessons and reflections that are relevant and applicable to other similar programmes.

This paper should be read alongside our companion synthesis report, *'Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1'*.

1.3 How have we reflected?

In order to gather lessons about BRACED experiences to date in relation to the M&E framework and its associated reporting templates, the Monitoring and Results Reporting team undertook the following:

- A systematic review and synthesis of each project Implementing Partner's annual report against the M&E framework for the programme-level synthesis report (see Annex 3). Here, we:
 - identified the data gaps and inconsistencies in the use of definitions and indicators
 - looked at the quality of the data provided, identifying common practices and challenges across project-level reports.
- A consultation with the Implementing Partners themselves, gathering informal feedback on their experience of monitoring and reporting against the BRACED M&E framework (see Annex 4). We also asked the Fund Manager for their experiences of gathering and aggregating quantitative data alongside the Knowledge Manager's qualitative work.
- A reflection on what worked well and not so well in the design, rolling out and implementing the M&E framework. We also held a one-day internal reflection workshop on the M&E framework with broader Knowledge Manager team members. This was based on the initial findings in relation to the question addressed in the programme-level synthesis: *'How are BRACED projects contributing to building resilience to climate extremes and disasters?'*

This paper is not an in-depth technical assessment of the BRACED M&E framework. Rather, it is a reflection piece to share emerging reflections and lessons to date. The Knowledge Manager's monitoring and results reporting efforts sit within a larger BRACED M&E infrastructure (see Annex 5). Detailed analysis of the framework, along with monitoring and measuring resilience in BRACED, is part of a wider collective effort. The lessons in this paper are limited to the Monitoring and Results Reporting team's area of work.

1.4 How is this paper structured?

In section 2, we describe the BRACED M&E framework and provide an overview of the BRACED monitoring and results reporting approach and system. In section 3, we present our reflections and lessons identified from the BRACED monitoring and results reporting efforts undertaken during year 1. Finally, in section 4, we provide conclusions and recommendations for BRACED stakeholders and suggest areas for further consideration.



2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN BRACED

Image: Neil Palmer,
CIAT

2.1 The BRACED M&E framework

Monitoring and evaluation activities are undertaken at both the project and programme level. Further information on how M&E is set up and managed across the BRACED programme is in Annex 1.

The BRACED logframe⁴ and theory of change are the two cornerstone documents of the BRACED M&E framework. Two mandatory programme-wide key performance indicators (KPIs) of the International Climate Fund were in place from the beginning of the programme as part of project-level M&E:

- *'The number of people supported by BRACED to cope with the effects of climate change'* (KPI 1 – an output level indicator of BRACED logframe).
- *'The number of people whose resilience has improved as a result of BRACED support'* (KPI 4 – an outcome-level indicator of the BRACED logframe).

The programme theory of change (see Annex 2) and BRACED M&E framework were subsequently developed by the Knowledge Manager to further unpack the assumptions and processes behind the programme logframe. They are intended

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328271/Revised-BRACED-Interim-Logframe-23June14.xlsx

to enable complementary qualitative data generation in order to explain and contextualise the numbers and to understand *how* resilience is being improved. The theory of change and M&E framework do this by situating BRACED efforts in the bigger picture of change and encouraging critical thinking and reflection about change pathways. They also surface and articulate assumptions regarding how change happens.

“The challenge was to develop a coherent programme-level framework across interventions, flexible enough to be relevant across different socio-political, geographical and climatic contexts, while retaining robustness and coherence”

The original purpose of the BRACED M&E framework was to provide a programme-level vision of change and ensure a common language and minimum alignment of monitoring, results reporting and evaluation efforts across BRACED, while acknowledging and accommodating project-specific M&E approaches and plans in different contexts. Each project had its own theory of change and M&E framework and approach. The challenge was to develop a coherent programme-level framework across interventions. The framework needed to be flexible enough to be relevant across a number of different socio-political, geographical and climatic contexts, while retaining robustness and coherence.

The framework was rolled out across BRACED projects during the first months of the programme, through the provision of guidance,⁵ feedback and one-to-one support. (For more information on how we rolled out the framework, see Annex 6.) In addition to the two programme-wide quantitative measures of resilience, BRACED Implementing Partners monitor and report project results against the three main components of the BRACED theory of change on an annual basis: 'Areas of Change', the '3As' and 'Evaluative Monitoring'.

2.2 The concepts

Tracking resilience pathways through 'Areas of Change'

Through reviewing the assumptions and causal chains underpinning BRACED project theories of change, we identified four areas where change had to happen for BRACED to achieve its outcomes. These were and continue to be: (a) Knowledge and attitudes; (b) Capacities and skills; (c) Quality of partnerships; and (d) Decision-making processes. The 'Areas of Change' represent what is often

⁵ Written guidance was provided by the Knowledge Manager to all project Implementing Partners in the [BRACED M&E Guidance Notes](#).

referred to as the 'missing middle' in project logframes. They enable us to better understand the set of processes linking project outputs to resilience outcomes and, ultimately, impacts on human well-being. They also provide the framework for assessment of the BRACED programme's trajectory towards impact.

The four Areas of Change are defined as:

- **Changes in knowledge and attitudes** in relation to resilience-building, in order to further strengthen policies and practices.
 - **Changes in the capacities and skills** of national and local government, civil society and the private sector to manage the risks of climate extremes and disasters.
 - **Changes in the quality of partnerships** to deliver interventions.
 - **Changes in decision-making processes** through inclusive participation, as one key aspect of a resilient system.
-

How do we track and report change? The Areas of Change pay particular attention to the stakeholders and actors involved in BRACED by asking two simple questions across them: *Who is changing? And how?* They use an adapted outcome mapping approach to measure change. This utilises graduated progress markers from 'expect to see' to 'like to see' to 'love to see' changes. Monitoring and results reporting against the four Areas of Change builds knowledge and understanding about the 'pathways to resilience' in BRACED. More details on the BRACED Areas of Change are available in the BRACED M&E Guidance Notes⁶ (Note 3).

Understanding resilience outcomes through the '3As' and transformation

In BRACED, resilience is understood as the capacity of a system to change and adapt in the context of multiple and interacting shocks and stresses. An analysis of nearly 50 existing resilience frameworks identified three interlinked 'capacities' as the outcomes of the Areas of Change processes. These are: the capacity to Anticipate, Absorb and Adapt to shocks and stresses (the 3As). The 3As aim to measure and understand changes in resilience outcomes at different levels and with regard to different kinds of shocks and stresses. Instead of specifying a set of indicators to measure 'resilience', the 3As framework enables Implementing Partners to develop context-specific indicators with their respective stakeholders. It is an organising tool to analyse the outcomes that BRACED projects may be achieving. Monitoring and results reporting against the 3As builds understanding

⁶ Silva Villanueva, P., Gould, C., Gregorowski, R., Bahadur, A. (2015) 'BRACED programme monitoring and evaluation guidance notes'. BRACED Knowledge Manager. Brighton Itad.

of 'resilience outcomes' in BRACED. More details on the BRACED 3As are available in the BRACED M&E Guidance Notes (Note 4) and the paper 'The 3As: Tracking resilience across BRACED'.⁷

Transformation, on the other hand, is not regarded as a type of capacity that contributes to resilience in the same way as the 3As. Rather, it represents an outcome related to the holistic and fundamental ways in which people's capacity to anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks can be built, reshaped and enhanced. The BRACED theory of change hypothesises that BRACED is likely to be more transformational in its focus countries if it achieves changes that are catalytic, at scale and sustainable.

How do we track and report change? BRACED projects report against two International Climate Fund key performance indicators (KPIs) at the outcome level:

- KPI 4 is '*the number of people whose resilience has been improved*'. In BRACED, this number is derived from collating project-level reporting at the outcome level, where Implementing Partners have identified the project-specific outcome indicators that will demonstrate changes in resilience. These indicators have been tagged in relation to the resilience capacities – anticipatory, absorptive and adaptive. In some cases, Implementing Partners have identified additional indicators for transformative change. Implementing Partners decide how to weight the indicators according to their project theories of change and how they expect to see progress in building resilience.
- The second outcome-level indicator is KPI 15: '*the extent to which interventions are likely to have a transformational impact*'. In BRACED, transformation is a self-assessed qualitative indicator. Tracking transformation is difficult – such changes can be deliberately engineered, but are often beyond the scope of a single intervention. The Knowledge Manager developed a scorecard to support Implementing Partners in monitoring the likelihood of transformational impact at the project level in a comparable way. Through this scorecard, the programme M&E system does not define transformational outcomes ex ante, but instead tracks the likelihood of transformation against three pillars identified in the literature: policy, empowerment and innovation. It includes certain characteristics of transformation, including 'catalytic', 'at scale' and 'sustainable outcomes'. Implementing Partners are encouraged to report changes they interpret to be representing these pillars or characteristics of transformation.

⁷ Bahadur, A.V., Peters, K., Wilkinson, E., Pichon, F., Gray, K. and Tanner, T. (2015) 'The 3As: Tracking resilience across BRACED'. BRACED Knowledge Manager Working Paper. London: ODI.

Contextualising results through 'Evaluative Monitoring'

BRACED operates in some of the most fragile and challenging countries in the world.⁸ While the programme is not explicitly conflict or security focused, many of the projects are being implemented in a context affected by conflict or instability. However, there is an assumption within the programme theory of change that BRACED pathways to resilience and resilience outcomes are achieved within an enabling environment at the local, sub-national and national levels. Through Evaluative Monitoring, Implementing Partners explore the nature of the prevailing context – specifically, the governance structure, decision-making processes, incentives and relationships between different groups and individuals – and the extent to which this context supports or constrains change. This builds knowledge and understanding about 'resilience in context' in BRACED. More details on BRACED Evaluative Monitoring are available in the [BRACED M&E Guidance Notes \(Note 5\)](#).

How do we track and report change? BRACED reporting includes Evaluative Monitoring as a critical part of the reflection process. Evaluative Monitoring brings an evaluation lens to the reporting exercises. It does this by situating the data collected within an understanding of the prevailing context. The aim is to shed some light on projects' risks and assumptions and be explicit about the fact that change occurs as a result of many actors and factors. Monitoring and reporting questions include: *What are the key contextual factors (at local, sub-national and national) that may enable or constrain change in the project? How are these contextual factors enabling or constraining change from the project? Have they contributed to any unexpected outputs or outcomes?*

2.3 Reporting progress in BRACED

Combined, the Areas of Change, 3As and Evaluative Monitoring enable the BRACED programme to track, measure and understand the processes of change that lead to climate and disaster resilience to specific shocks and stresses, in specific contexts. Underpinning this approach is the need to critically reflect on project and programme theories of change and, in turn, question them. This is intended to foster internal learning and build a robust evidence base regarding how and why interventions are successfully contributing to improving climate resilience (or not).

The Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team developed a set of reporting templates during year 1 to enable BRACED Implementing Partners to reflect on and report annually against:

- the resilience capacities being built
- the change processes underway

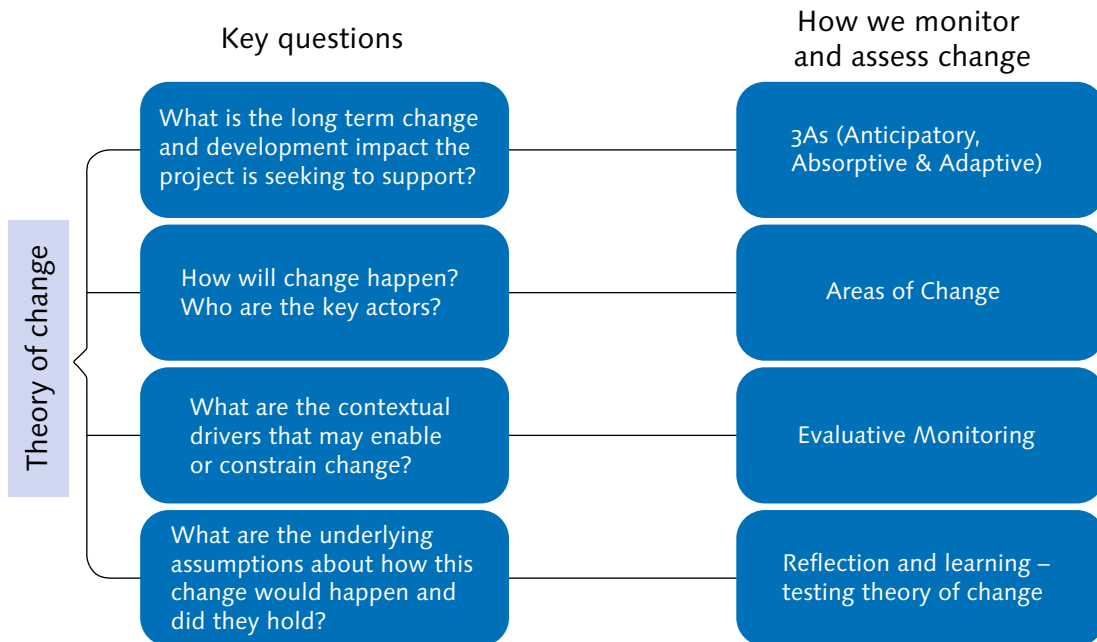
⁸ Wilkinson, E. and Peters, K. (Eds.) (2015) 'Climate extremes and resilience poverty reduction: development designed with uncertainty in mind'. BRACED Knowledge Manager Research Paper. London: ODI.

- if and how the context is affecting these changes
- what the implications are, if any, for the project theory of change design.

At their own request, Implementing Partners submit a single annual progress report to both the Fund Manager (against the project logframe, for onward reporting to DFID) and the Knowledge Manager (against the project theory of change, for evidence generation).

Figure 1 summarises the structure for reporting against the M&E framework. Implementing Partners also report their use of climate and weather information and the likelihood of transformative change, as part of the logframe reporting. For the specific questions asked of Implementing Partners, see the reporting templates.⁹

Figure 1: BRACED Knowledge Manager M&E Framework



⁹ The M&E framework reporting templates form the second of two parts of the BRACED project annual reports. In the first part, Implementing Partners report progress against their logframe indicators to the BRACED Fund Manager. In the second part, they explore, explain and contextualise these results.



3. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT SO FAR?

Image:
USAID/Nepal

This section presents the Monitoring and Results Reporting team's reflections and lessons identified to date, from developing and implementing the BRACED M&E framework and conducting the first programme-level synthesis of BRACED project results reporting. In particular, we reflect on the four main challenges faced when developing a programme-level M&E framework for a programme like BRACED, which comprises 15 unique projects working across 13 different countries:

1. **Moving from concepts to practice:** translating novel concepts into practical monitoring frameworks that are applicable and relevant across projects.
2. **Rolling out programme M&E frameworks and systems to the project level:** designing a coherent programme-level framework that is flexible enough to be relevant across a number of different socio-political, geographical and climatic contexts, while at the same time retaining its robustness and coherence.
3. **Trialling qualitative reporting approaches at project- and programme-level:** developing a set of reporting templates to gather data against each of the M&E framework components to enable standardised and comparable reporting by all Implementing Partners.

4. **Data aggregation and synthesis at the programme level:** aggregating, synthesising and analysing self-reported qualitative and explanatory data from 15 projects in a way that generates evidence and lessons about *how* resilience is being improved at the programme level.

3.1 Translating concepts into practice

1. Encapsulating resilience concepts and thinking into quantitative measures limits what outcome-level indicators may tell us. To better understand the outcome-level figures reported against KPI 4, BRACED applies the 3As framework to analyse the nature of resilience outcomes. This has enabled the programme to understand how BRACED projects have been addressing anticipatory and absorptive capacities to date, but it remains unclear how they will contribute to longer term adaptive capacities. Other components of the BRACED M&E framework have also revealed how the interplay of socio-cultural and governance dynamics shapes resilience pathways. Such critical details would have been missed through the use of the KPI 4 indicator alone.

Tracking progress against KPI 4 – Emerging insights from BRACED

Each BRACED project adopts a different approach to measuring resilience. This is context specific and based on their conceptualisation of resilience, although all use a composite index with constituent indicators 'fed' through the use of large sample household surveys. Implementing Partners use KPI 4 and the guidance provided,¹⁰ which encourages them to contextualise their approach to measurement. This means results are not easy to compare – a limitation of both the method and the approach to measurement. The variety in methodologies has been a particular challenge for the BRACED Fund Manager, who have needed to engage with and understand each project's methodology in detail in order to understand and aggregate the data.

There is significant risk of obscuring potentially rich detail in the data by reporting only a number. There is also scope for reporting errors when KPI 4 numbers are generated across households, communities, regions and projects, which are then aggregated to the programme level. Such simple aggregation across projects may not stand up to scrutiny. This is due to multiple interpretations of the KPI 4 guidance (Wilson and Yaron, 2016).¹¹ Quantitative approaches to KPI 4 measurement should therefore be complemented by qualitative data gathering for triangulation and as an explanatory tool for more in-depth and nuanced understanding.

¹⁰ KPI 4 guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328254/BRACED-KPI4-methodology-June2014.pdf

¹¹ Wilson, D. and Yaron, G. (2016) 'Laying the foundations for measuring resilience'. BRACED Knowledge Manager Working Paper. Brighton: Itad.

The 3As framework has enabled a level of consistency and comparability, shedding some light on the nature of resilience outcomes. However, experience to date also tells us that the 3As have been found to be a useful analytical tool rather than one for measuring changes in resilience.

Similar insights have emerged from early experiences in tracking transformation:

Tracking transformation (KPI 15) – Emerging insights from BRACED

Over-reporting on transformation is common. In their year 1 reporting, Implementing Partners provided evidence of small positive changes as potentially transformational. Incremental changes may be best understood within context, but it is important not to dilute the concept of transformation by reporting *all change* as transformative. Adhering to the pillars of transformation (strategic planning and policy; leadership, empowerment and decision-making processes; and innovative approaches) can clarify the types of transformation change that the BRACED programme aims to achieve.

Capturing transformation that is 'catalytic', 'at scale', 'and sustainable', was challenging in year 1 project-level M&E reporting. The scorecard for transformation attempted to capture the different, often country-specific, dimensions of transformational change, while remaining sufficiently simple to be unambiguous. However, these concepts did not appear to be useful in probing for more descriptive information in project reporting. Often, the evidence provided under one characteristic could easily fit under another. These definitions may not be helpful for explaining the nature of transformational change at the project level. Ultimately, transformational changes require a *critical mass* to overcome political, market and other socio-economic and political factors that cannot be addressed by a single project.

A qualitative outcome indicator for tracking transformation enables the monitoring (not measuring) of the likelihood of transformation, relative to expected change. Reporting transformational change cannot be aggregated at the overall programme level in the same way as KPI 4. At the programme level, results can be synthesised. They can also enable the identification of patterns and trends as a means to assess overall progress, and to tease out lessons, rather than form a view on the expected transformational impact of BRACED.

There is a growing interest in understanding and creating transformational changes through programmes that build resilience to climate extremes and disasters. The BRACED programme provides a collective opportunity to learn about transformational change in order to improve resilience and development outcomes both within BRACED projects and externally. However, the drive to quantify and qualify transformational impact places unrealistic expectations at the project level.

Beyond the challenges and limitations of KPI 4 and KPI 15, this year's programme-level synthesis of BRACED project reports also highlights the unaddressed challenge of systematic monitoring of progress against such indicators in the context of shocks and stresses. To date, it remains unclear in BRACED how we can best contextualise results against the climatic context within which projects operate. More work is required at both the project and programme levels to fully understand the practice of monitoring and reporting progress in BRACED resilience-building efforts in the face of shocks and stresses.

“More work is required at both the project and programme levels to fully understand the practice of monitoring and reporting progress in BRACED resilience-building efforts in the face of shocks and stresses”

2. Assessing resilience and transformation involves tracking progress against multifaceted processes. Concepts and definitions are critical. Conceptualising resilience in terms of capacities puts human agency at the centre of resilience building. Efforts to quantify resilience need to take care when describing changes in resilience capacities, as these will ultimately be contingent on people's attitudes and choices. The Areas of Change framework attempts to unpack the less tangible but vital processes through which BRACED projects influence changes in attitudes and practice.

Findings from the year 1 programme-level synthesis highlight that Implementing Partners tended to report against the Areas of Change 'Knowledge and attitudes' and 'Capacities and skills' with a degree of overlap. This suggests a lack of understanding of the difference between the two and a need for more clarity. Capacity, in particular, is a difficult concept to frame, monitor and evaluate. When reporting against 'Partnerships', some Implementing Partners refer to formal partnerships with a memorandum of understanding, while others refer more to relationships of collaboration and coordination. In BRACED, project-level partnerships differ enormously in both scale and scope, so it is important to clarify the type of partnership being referred to. Meanwhile, information provided on 'Decision-making' varied significantly from one Implementing Partner to another after year 1, with most focusing on the representation of women in decision-making structures rather than the broader issues of inclusion and participation.

Differing interpretations and definitions across projects have not just been an issue for qualitative data reporting in BRACED. They have also presented a challenge for the Fund Manager when aggregating projects' quantitative data to the programme-level BRACED logframe. While much attention has been given to definitions and M&E methodologies for tracking changes in resilience levels, our experience to date reveals that a similar emphasis should be placed on clearly defining concepts such as capacity, knowledge and inclusive decision-making.

3. Understanding the processes, outcomes and context of resilience is complex and there are no straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answers. One of the BRACED programme's ambitions is to construct an evidence base of what works and what does not in building climate and disaster resilience. This requires intensive M&E efforts compared to other more traditional programmes, both in terms of quantifying changes in resilience and understanding how these changes have occurred. Implementing Partners, who rely heavily on local partners in the field, are facing capacity constraints in applying the BRACED M&E framework and in meeting logframe reporting requirements. This is due to the novelty of the concepts and frameworks being tested, the level of rigour and reflection required to engage with these, and the M&E framework being introduced after the design of project-level M&E.

The integrated nature of resilience-building projects requires integrated *analytical* frameworks. In order to better understand the causal pathways linking outputs to outcomes, as well as the factors contributing to resilience building, the BRACED M&E framework investigates change processes from different angles. Though they were originally intended to be used as a coherent whole, the component concepts within this framework were developed separately. Each aspect was designed to understand something slightly different about how BRACED projects and the programme as a whole are building resilience. While each 'lens' provides a valuable insight into how resilience is being built, they do not provide simple answers to the resilience-building question even when taken together.

“Understanding the processes, outcomes and context of resilience is complex and there are no straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answers”

Our experience to date indicates that 'zooming in' to specific Areas of Change or different resilience capacities can mean losing the 'bigger picture'. For example, improvements in the capacity of specific stakeholders to manage a specific shock need to be assessed alongside features such as the role of a project's partners in that particular process and the socio-cultural norms in that specific context. When undertaking the programme-level synthesis, we found that understanding the contributing factors to resilience-building requires data collection and an analysis of why Implementing Partners are engaging in certain activities and how these are contributing to building resilience. This is difficult when data from different frameworks is reported in isolation. While detailed analysis is certainly required, the integration and triangulation of findings, along with reflection on how they relate to each other, is equally important.

3.2 Rolling out M&E frameworks

Annex 6 provides details regarding how the Monitoring and Results Reporting team rolled out the M&E framework. There are a number of lessons to consider for the remainder of BRACED, as well for other similar programmes:

1. M&E designs at the project and programme level should be in place before implementation begins. A common understanding and vision of the programme itself and its M&E is critical for the subsequent success of any M&E system. The starting point for the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team when designing and rolling out an appropriate M&E framework was to develop a programme-wide theory of change to articulate BRACED objectives, assumptions and pathways of change. This step was particularly important, as each BRACED project has different definitions and resilience measurement approaches.

**“Learning about what works and what doesn't
in building resilience requires ownership and
commitment to interrogating the programme-
level theory of change”**

Learning about what works and what doesn't in building resilience requires ownership and commitment to interrogating the programme-level theory of change. In this regard, engaging implementing partners, researchers, the donor and the fund manager in developing a common vision is required right from the beginning. However, the BRACED Knowledge Manager was set up once BRACED projects had already been designed and approved, meaning the programme-level theory of change and M&E framework had to be retrofitted to the existing project-level M&E. To address this challenge, the Monitoring and Results Reporting team followed a consultative process, combining a bottom-up and top-down approach, to develop the BRACED programme theory of change. This included a review of all 15 project-level theories of change and logframes, along with a consultation with the project Implementing Partners. At the programme level, frameworks were developed to enable, as much as possible, the standardisation of concepts, analysis and reporting against the programme-level theory of change.

Combining a bottom-up and top-down approach meant that the programme could retain project-level context specificity. However, most Implementing Partners had not planned or resourced for data analysis and reflection for programme-level M&E beyond the mandatory logframe reporting against the relevant International Climate Fund KPIs. Having the programme-level Knowledge Manager M&E team in place from the start would have helped avoid this situation and may have also ensured that information reporting would not be seen as a top-down requirement. Instead, this would present an opportunity for critical analysis and organisational learning, informing decision-making and impact assessment at both the project and programme levels.

2. There are different options for rolling out programme-level M&E frameworks and systems, but each comes with its own trade-off. Rolling out programme-level M&E frameworks and systems to ensure aggregation and comparability requires agreement on key concepts and definitions as well as standard reporting templates. Otherwise, project-level differences in conceptual framings and terminology can make it difficult to monitor and assess progress

at the programme level, as found by both the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team and the Fund Manager. The BRACED M&E Guidance Notes set out the programme-level definitions to Implementing Partners. Follow-up training and support then enhanced their understanding of these. However, this support was provided in the context of project-level M&E already being designed. (The BRACED Knowledge Manager was set up after the project logframes, theories of change and M&E plans were defined.)

“Rolling out programme-level M&E frameworks and systems to ensure aggregation and comparability requires agreement on key concepts and definitions”

Options and trade-offs for rolling out programme M&E frameworks include decisions about the type and level of support provided to project partners. When comparability and aggregation are a key purpose of the M&E system, more resource-intensive options for project-level support may be better – one such example would be M&E training for project Implementing Partners, complemented by ongoing one-to-one interactions with them. This is underlined further in the context of a resilience-building programme, as knowledge, capacity and experiences are still emerging. We have taken a more resource-intensive approach at key moments: in the design of the M&E framework and its application by Implementing Partners to (a) project-level M&E and (b) year 1 reporting. However, we have also used less resource-intensive options, such as written M&E guidance and one-off engagements with groups of Implementing Partners. Rolling out programme-level M&E frameworks and systems must find the right balance between both approaches and allow for continual adjustment to the growing body of knowledge and experience. Establishing the BRACED programme-level M&E framework would have been easier if it had been developed at the same time as the 15 BRACED projects' M&E.

3.3 Reporting on resilience

This was the first year where Implementing Partners collected data and reported about changes in resilience and the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team synthesised and analysed the data. From a Knowledge Manager perspective, the first year's reporting process went well overall. The M&E framework itself has been found to be relevant to the work of the BRACED programme and the BRACED projects themselves. Implementing Partner reports were particularly impressive, given that:

- Project-level M&E systems were not set up to report consistently against the BRACED M&E framework.
- The reporting was early, compared to when results in terms of resilience building could realistically be expected.

- Implementing Partners were completing the templates for the first time. (See Annex 4 for our further reflections on year 1 reporting.)

From an Implementing Partner perspective, the experience of completing the templates was helpful for internal reflection for some and added value to their own project M&E. There were, however, a number of challenges cited in completing the templates against the M&E framework. This was often due to Implementing Partners not having responded to our original feedback to align project-level M&E to the programme level. It has been an ongoing tension and challenge for Implementing Partners to monitor and report against the programme level M&E framework when this was introduced after project implementation began. (See Annex 4 for further Implementing Partner reflections on the first year's reports and reporting process.)

There are a number of lessons to consider for the reporting and analysis for years 2 and 3:

1. The level of data, analysis and reflection required from Implementing Partners in BRACED is high. As already noted, the nature of the quantitative and qualitative data in BRACED is challenging and goes beyond the M&E requirements of most traditional programmes. This ongoing monitoring work and annual reporting is in the context of Implementing Partners also undertaking project mid-term reviews (mid-year 2), where they are encouraged to further understand how change is happening in more detail, building on their first annual report analysis. This reporting workload is significant and the level of information and analysis that has been provided by Implementing Partners in their year 1 report on the M&E framework is admirable.

In terms of recommendations for the future, several Implementing Partners highlighted the utility of the training workshop held on the reporting templates and requested that similar support be provided again. It was recognised that, though the templates themselves are complex, the second annual report will be easier to complete now that Implementing Partners are more familiar with these. Next year's reporting will seek to build on collective learning from the year 1 reporting process. It will aim to achieve an optimum level of data in annual reports in terms of quantity, relevance and quality to support both programme-level synthesis and project-level adaptive programming in the remainder of BRACED.

2. It is too early in the programme to provide evidence about substantive change. When giving feedback on the first drafts of year 1 reports, we repeatedly requested that Implementing Partners provide more information on the main changes their project has contributed to and the project's contribution to such results, with concrete examples and evidence of how they knew, where possible. Most Implementing Partners were able to provide further information, but this was often limited by the availability of evidence. Reasons for this included: the project M&E system not being set up to collect the data; the time needed for these types of change to happen being more than one year; and delays in project start-up and implementation. The Fund Manager reflected that, although resilience-building results may not have been demonstrable by the end of year 1,

the Implementing Partners' work in setting up the project infrastructures now means that resilience benefits will begin to be seen from mid-year 2 onwards.

3. Truly engaging with qualitative and explanatory frameworks requires shifting mindsets from accountability to learning-oriented M&E. The BRACED M&E framework aims to challenge project-level theory of change assumptions and foster discussion and understanding around how projects move from outputs to outcomes and what happens in between. However, it may be too early in the programme to explore the processes behind the progress made towards outcomes and how contextual factors are enabling/constraining change. Implementing Partners have spent a large proportion of year 1 setting up structures and partnerships, and testing activities. It may also be the case that Implementing Partners are not accustomed (or incentivised) to monitor, reflect and report on such things from a learning perspective rather than an accountability one. The Fund Manager has experienced a similar challenge. Implementing Partners have spent considerable time and effort in adding up complex figures to calculate the numbers of people supported and how many have had their resilience built. However, reflecting, analysing and reporting about what these figures mean has received limited attention in year 1. The Knowledge Manager and Fund Manager agree on the need to move beyond the numbers and will work together in the remainder of BRACED to encourage further reflection by Implementing Partners on the combination of their quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4 Aggregating and synthesising data at scale

The process of bringing together and synthesising evidence from Implementing Partners' year 1 project annual reports at the programme level has taught us that:

1. It is important to achieve an optimal level of comparability, while also retaining project-specific visions and understanding. A key objective of the BRACED M&E framework was to ensure enough comparability between project-level M&E to monitor, measure and understand the resilience-building efforts of BRACED projects at the programme level. However, as previously mentioned, Implementing Partners have struggled to adhere to the overarching programme-wide definitions of the M&E framework, particularly when outlining the different levels of change ('expect', 'like' and 'love to see') that were both anticipated and realised across the four Areas of Change. It is positive that Implementing Partners have engaged with and taken ownership of these and interpreted them for their project context. Broad definitions are intended to facilitate project-to-programme data synthesis. However, where the overarching definitions have not been followed, comparable analysis has been made more difficult. We sought to overcome this challenge by synthesising project-level data against the programme-level definitions as set out in the original BRACED M&E Guidance Notes and using the Monitoring and Results Reporting team's expert judgement where differences arose.

2. Synthesising and aggregating data while retaining context specificity not only takes time. It also requires carefully developed synthesis methodologies.

As highlighted in the companion programme-level synthesis report, BRACED projects cover a wide range of issues and operate in very different contexts. As an example, these include:

- securing, servicing and promoting trans-border livestock mobility across the Sahel
- sharing skills and technology to improve the uptake of climate information in Ethiopia
- supporting smallholder farmers in Nepal to take advantage of economic opportunities and investments in climate-smart technologies.

This project and context specificity has proven to be a challenge for the programme-level synthesis and aggregation of diverse data. We sought to overcome this by undertaking a thematic synthesis analysis, enabling the identification of common patterns and themes across the set of projects. This approach has required considerable time and resources.

3. Dealing with self-reporting bias requires triangulation with other sources of information. In their year 1 reports, Implementing Partners varied between over-reporting changes seen so far and downplaying or under-reporting changes that the Monitoring and Results Reporting team already knew about from other sources. This suggests that the reporting process did not encourage adequate reflection or consistency across projects. To ensure that the programme-level synthesis was representative of what was actually happening on the ground, we complemented the project-level data with our existing knowledge of each project. We also cross-checked and gap-filled by consulting Knowledge Manager staff who had worked with Implementing Partners in the field and referring to other project documentation. The Fund Manager also had to triangulate the quantitative information provided by Implementing Partners in order to come up with sensible, realistic numbers, with some Implementing Partners over-reporting on progress. In future years, we could draw more on the Fund Manager's knowledge and perspective based on their ongoing monitoring and interaction with Implementing Partners.

4. The lead time between project-level annual reporting and programme-level annual synthesis is long and limits programme-level real-time learning and flexibility. Due to the scale and level of analysis required for a programme like BRACED, the reporting task for both Implementing Partners and the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team is significant. In June 2016, Implementing Partners submitted their reports on progress made up to the end of March 2016. This was then followed by a relatively long programme-level

analysis and synthesis exercise, lasting five months (July to November 2016),¹² to draw cross-project, programme-level findings, lessons and recommendations. The length of this process was due to the previously mentioned challenges that the nuances of the processes and outcomes of BRACED presented, namely the difficulties in providing clear 'yes' or 'no' answers to how resilience has been built, along with the need to rigorously aggregate and synthesise data while retaining context specificity. The subsequent programme-level synthesis findings and recommendations identified in November 2016 should therefore be considered as a reflection of the situation up to March 2016. In the context of evolving change, this lead time may limit the findings' relevance and potential impact on programme and project decision-making.

¹² The time gap between receiving Implementing Partner reports and starting the programme-level synthesis is partly explained by the time required from the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team to contribute to the DFID BRACED Annual Review (July-August 2016).



4. HOW CAN BRACED BUILD ON THIS LEARNING?

Image:
Georgina Smith/
Worldfish

M&E for resilience programming is in its early days and BRACED is learning-by-doing in terms of what kinds of progress can be measured and reported, and how best to do this. The BRACED programme as a whole is testing a set of frameworks and approaches that need to be fine-tuned as evidence emerges and experience is built. In year 1, BRACED Implementing Partners have embraced a new way of monitoring and reporting change. We have learnt a great deal as a result of taking a programme-level view of how resilience is being built in BRACED.

“The BRACED programme as a whole is testing a set of frameworks and approaches that need to be fine-tuned as evidence emerges and experience is built”

In this paper, we have shared our experiences in BRACED so far and hope that this will go on to contribute to ongoing and future efforts in designing, implementing and reporting against M&E frameworks of resilience-building programmes. BRACED monitoring and results reporting efforts will continue during years 2 and 3 and we will carry on reflecting on experiences and lessons learnt.

The lessons and experience to date will be used to improve the BRACED M&E framework and reporting for years 2 and 3. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team will explore options to improve project- to programme-level reporting, including:

- simplifying reporting templates, where possible
- reducing the reporting lead time between project- and programme-level reporting
- fostering peer-to-peer learning (in conjunction with the broader Knowledge Manager's ongoing work)
- creating systematic opportunities for data triangulation across projects.

BRACED is nearly two years into its three-year implementation timeframe and project- and programme-level M&E is already set up and established. There are therefore some limitations to what can be adapted and achieved in the remainder of the programme. In this context, our suggestions below are for both the BRACED programme and other similar programmes.

“M&E experts need to engage in more refined and complex data collection and analysis processes than is typical through explanatory and qualitative indicator frameworks”

Establishing M&E frameworks and reporting systems for resilience-building programmes and projects remains an area where more knowledge, experience and learning are required. Lessons to date highlight that M&E for resilience building requires approaches and practices that go beyond 'business as usual'. This involves M&E experts engaging in more refined and complex data collection and analysis processes than is typical. It also requires the setting up of explanatory and qualitative frameworks with strong linkages to research efforts. We have found, through undertaking the programme-level synthesis of BRACED project-level data for the first time, that genuinely trying to measure resilience means we need to move away from an 'accountability' M&E culture. Going forward:

- **Implementing Partners should enhance their ongoing monitoring and results reporting efforts by taking a more reflective and critical approach.** This could challenge project assumptions and will build a better understanding of how to build climate and disaster resilience in fragile and vulnerable contexts.
- **The Monitoring and Results Reporting team should consider how to encourage this critical reflection and dialogue, as well as innovative ways of capturing rich and reflective data from BRACED projects.** There are limits to what reporting templates alone can achieve in this regard. We

therefore plan to provide further training to Implementing Partners, along with light-touch helpdesk support.

- **Programmes like BRACED need to find and resource efficient ways of achieving a sufficient level of reflection and learning for the benefit of both project- and programme-level evidence generation.** Ideally the programme-level M&E framework should be designed in conjunction with the project-level frameworks.

“Quantitative indicators like KPI 4 enable data aggregation and synthesis at the programme level, but miss critical information for ongoing evidence generation and learning about what works and what does not in building resilience in BRACED”

Indicators enable data aggregation and synthesis at the programme level, but miss critical information for ongoing evidence generation and learning about what works and what does not in building resilience in BRACED. The desire to understand if and how resilience is being built is at the core of the BRACED M&E framework. Though KPI 4 might be necessary for DFID to track outcome-level changes across a wider portfolio of programmes, it limits generalisable lessons and loses important detail about context, particularly when indicators require the quantification of a complex concept like resilience. KPI 4 data needs to be complemented by the systematic M&E of resilience in the context of actual shocks. This will enable us to better understand the stability of outcome-level changes over time and how communities learn and ‘bounce back better’ from disaster events. Going forward:

- **Implementing Partners are in a unique position to contribute to knowledge generation about how to quantify the number of people whose resilience has been built (KPI 4) at the *project level*.** The Monitoring and Results Reporting team, together with wider members of the Knowledge Manager team and the Fund Manager, should further explore the advantages and disadvantages of KPI 4 at the programme level, as well as the opportunities and trade-offs of resilience indicators in different contexts.
- **When designing and funding similar programmes in the future, DFID should adopt a pragmatic and realistic view on the feasible level of outcome-level data and evidence generation in a three-year programme like BRACED.** Resilience-building efforts are not only complex, but also involve processes of change that take time to materialise. Prioritising annual data collection efforts against quantitative indicators may come at the cost of losing critical evidence about what works and what does not in building climate and disaster resilience.

- **Programmes like BRACED should consider having a diverse set of methodologies and analysis in place for interrogating quantitative outcome-level resilience indicators.** They should be pragmatic about what sort of outcome-level data and information they can expect in a three-year period.

“While much attention has been given to project-level approaches to monitoring and measuring resilience, programme-level efforts face a unique set of challenges”

While much attention has been given to project-level approaches to monitoring and measuring resilience, programme-level efforts face a unique set of challenges. These include: the harmonisation of M&E frameworks across a wide portfolio of projects, real-time learning from project to programme and back, and the aggregation of highly contextual quantitative and qualitative data through flexible yet standard frameworks. To date, there are limited examples (and subsequent literature) from other programmes addressing such challenges. BRACED has been learning-by-doing on an ongoing basis. Going forward:

- **The Monitoring and Results Reporting team, together with Implementing Partners, should consider ways to further capture their monitoring and results reporting experiences within BRACED.** This would benefit both BRACED and other existing and future resilience-building programmes.
- **More transparent and reflective discussions are required to address the challenges and lessons learnt in establishing M&E frameworks for resilience-building programmes.** Programmes like BRACED should also share and contribute to building knowledge and experience in this relatively new area of work.

4.1 Question for further reflection

With the aim of contributing to ongoing learning about resilience programming, we wish to engage BRACED Implementing Partners, the broader BRACED Knowledge Manager, the BRACED Fund Manager, DFID and wider audiences in the following critical question that emerges as a result of reflections and learning against the M&E framework so far. Emerging insights from this paper shed some light for initiating discussion. However, the BRACED programme should continue to answer this question throughout its lifetime:

How complex does M&E for resilience need to be? The BRACED M&E framework brings together three different lenses into the analysis of project- and programme-level data. Experience to date, both from Implementing Partners and the BRACED Knowledge Manager's Monitoring and Results Reporting team, indicates that:

- While the framework provides a multidimensional view into the various levels of complexity, it requires significant time.
- It also necessitates different, non-traditional ways of engaging with data.
- It does not and cannot provide simple 'yes' or 'no' answers about whether resilience has been built and, if so, how.

“The essence of 'resilience' is that change and progress are not linear – so results reporting should not be linear either”

As outlined in our companion report, *'Routes to resilience: insights from BRACED year 1'*, the essence of 'resilience' is that change and progress are not linear – so results reporting should not be linear either. The BRACED M&E framework is complex enough to be able to understand BRACED resilience-building efforts, but could it be made to be more user-friendly, while still retaining the complexity and nuances of resilience-building projects?

Annex 1: Monitoring and evaluation in BRACED

M&E activities are undertaken at both the project and programme level within BRACED.

Each of the 15 BRACED projects has its own theory of change, logframe, M&E plan and M&E system. Every Implementing Partner reports progress and learning against its logframe and theory of change on an annual basis. Each project is also carrying out a mid-term review and a final evaluation.

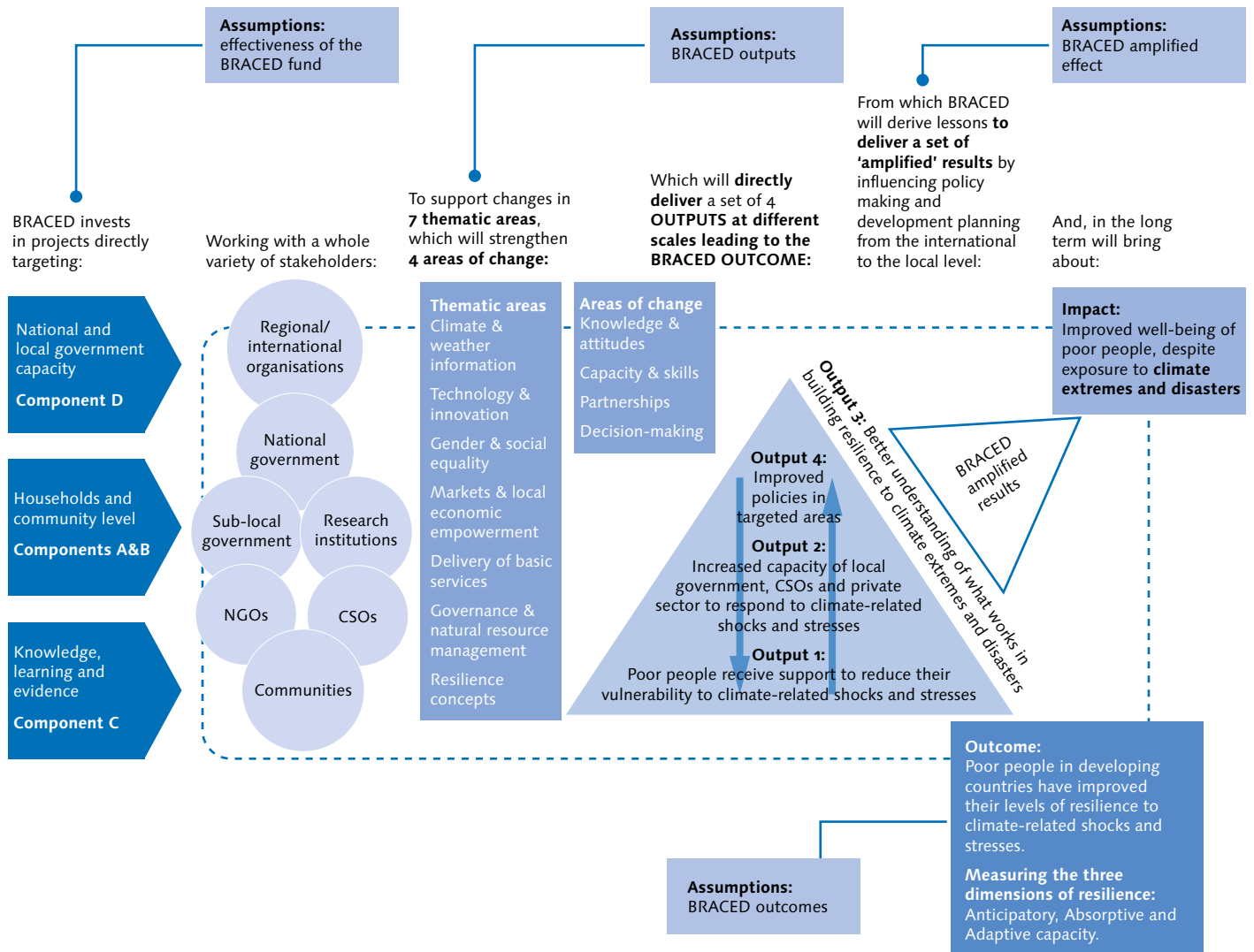
Progress against the project-level logframes is reported to the BRACED Fund Manager, who manages the project grants on behalf of DFID. The Fund Manager then aggregates and reports BRACED project results against the BRACED programme-level logframe. The Fund Manager also undertakes ongoing project performance monitoring.

At the programme level, there is an overarching theory of change (see Annex 2) and a set of Monitoring and Results Reporting and Evaluation activities, led by the Knowledge Manager. The Knowledge Manager has provided support and guidance to project Implementing Partners to ensure the alignment of project- and programme-level M&E through the M&E framework. Progress and learning against project-level theories of change is reported by Implementing Partners to the BRACED Knowledge Manager using the M&E framework in order to understand *how resilience is being built at the programme level*. This paper is based on those inputs.

Within the BRACED M&E system, the Fund Manager is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the BRACED projects. They do this by (a) collecting financial accountability information, (b) annually reporting at the output/activity level, and (c) collating relevant data against the BRACED mandatory key performance indicators of the International Climate Fund, including KPIs 1, 4 & 15.

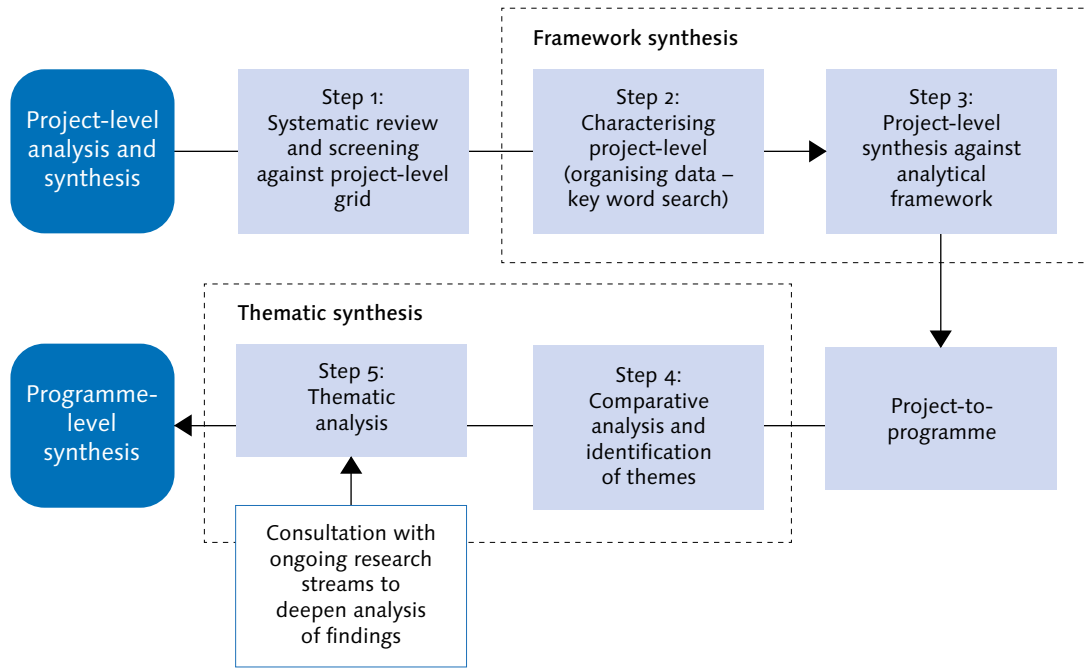
The Knowledge Manager M&E team focuses on building and sharing evidence and knowledge through a theory of change approach. Alongside substantive monitoring and results reporting activities, the BRACED Knowledge Manager is also undertaking a set of evaluation activities to understand the extent to which BRACED project interventions work (see Annex 5).

Annex 2: BRACED theory of change



See Note 2 of the [BRACED M&E Guidance Notes](#) for a full narrative of the Theory of Change.

Annex 3: Project-to-programme synthesis methodology



Annex 4: Further Knowledge Manager and Implementing Partner reflections on experiences of reporting against the BRACED M&E framework

Implementing Partners' informal feedback on the reporting process

Based on the year 1 reports, there seems to be **buy-in across all Implementing Partners to the key concepts of the M&E framework** and reporting against these. On the whole, Implementing Partners told the Monitoring and Results Reporting team that they found the **framework a relevant way of telling their project's story**. Not only did Implementing Partners report information against each part of the framework, many also referred to the concepts throughout the report, such as talking about resilience outcomes in terms of capacities to anticipate, adapt to and absorb shocks and stresses. This is a significant achievement given that the M&E framework was developed after project-level M&E systems had largely been designed, therefore meaning it had to be 'retrofitted'. Overall, there is a **good understanding of the various parts of the M&E framework**.

Implementing Partners were informally asked: *Did you find the BRACED M&E framework a relevant way to frame/structure the 'story' of your project? Are there any gaps?*

Overall, **Implementing Partners seem to find the M&E framework a relevant way to tell the story of the project**, with one saying it *'has guided us to tell our stories in a realistic way'*. Another Implementing Partner told us that *'it was helpful in drawing lessons across the consortium'*. However, members of the same team *'felt it did not add much to [their] existing framework for evaluating progress and impact, and so was more useful to the KM than to IPs themselves'*.

In terms of the specific aspects of the M&E framework,

One Implementing Partner *'felt the request for an analysis of "changes in capacity" in the Areas of Change [template] overlapped significantly with the 3As [template]. As a result, we struggled to parse out which unique insights the KM was looking for in one section versus another'*.

Another found it *'difficult to fit [sub-indicators] under the 3As, though evidently they all fold up under KPI 4' as they 'were not at the time developed around the 3A capacities'*.

Another suggested that *'there could be more consideration of "depleted capacities". That is, while the work of BRACED projects [is] building the adaptive, anticipatory and absorptive capacity of the communities, there are very often ongoing shocks and stresses that require participants to draw on those sources of capacity in the midst of building them up. The [template] talks about the potential trade-offs between the 3As, but I believe a common*

part of many projects' stories will be this cyclical pattern of growth in capacity development, then a shock or stressor that calls them to draw upon them, and then potentially another cycle of growth, etc. It is a non-linear projection that may not clearly be evident in the annual milestone trackers'.

Implementing Partners were informally asked: *How **appropriate** were the Part 2 templates for capturing your project's story? What would you **change** about the M&E framework or the report template to tell your project's story better (remembering that, next year you will have more results to share)?*

Some Implementing Partners reported that the **experience of completing the templates was helpful for internal reflection and added value to their own project M&E:**

'We appreciated all the KM's efforts to use the template to help us tell the real story of what is happening on the ground in a factually supported way.'

The reporting exercise was 'definitely a great opportunity for us to look into our own achievements more critically and systematically – asking ourselves various questions about the project performances/challenges, which we would have otherwise not even thought of. In the beginning, although it appeared highly time consuming and exhausting, with the completion of the report, we felt very satisfied with greater insights and deeper understandings about the project status and future needs.'

'We felt the reporting process was useful in reducing the gap between our project's theory of change and BRACED programme's theory of change, and plan to adapt our own [theory of change] and logframe, based on key takeaways gleaned from this exercise during the mid-term review process.'

However, one Implementing Partner reflected that: *'Some of the changes that we were asked to report on cannot be objectively evaluated within the project lifetime, and so felt like less of a useful exercise. For example, select aspects of our theory of change cannot be objectively measured within the lifetime of the project, because we are looking at long-term changes in resilience (+5 years).'* Along with this, another Implementing Partner felt there was not space to share their already documented case studies and success stories.

There were **a number of challenges cited in completing the templates against the M&E framework.** These were often due to Implementing Partners not responding to original Knowledge Manager feedback to align project-level M&E to the programme level:

In relation to the identification of key stakeholders/partners, *Implementing Partners asserted the following:*

'Though we, to our best of our knowledge, identified the stakeholders relevant to Areas of Change, it was a bit confusing how to categorise them. It was also difficult to ascertain if we have missed any important stakeholders which we could have elaborated.'

'Ours was one of three to four consortia who did not include markers ('expect', 'like', 'love to see') in our baseline, as we were told these were not mandatory. As a result, our project's 'story' was less suited to the template than those who set benchmarks at the start of the project.'

'We continued to struggle to define and apply the concepts 'scale of impact' and 'catalytic effect' embedded in [the template] on transformative impact to our analysis.'

In terms of recommendations for the future, **several Implementing Partners highlighted the utility of the training workshop held on the reporting templates** and requested that, should one be held for the next report, they would like this to be organised further in advance, to enable participation and attendance by field-based team members:

'We'd like to request that, to the maximum extent possible, future sessions like the one held in May either be held in Africa, perhaps as part of the annual learning event, and/or communicated as far in advance as possible, so that we can better plan for attendance, adequate coverage, as well as conduct the logistics necessary for travel (visas, etc.) We recognise the limitations surrounding this round, but just wanted to emphasise that we might have been able to better leverage the learning for our staff and/or contribute more efficiently had we been able to send more and/or more appropriate staff for the workshop.'

'Thanks again for all of your terrific work in pulling together the workshop session. It really was quite helpful and insightful. If there are considerations of holding a similar event next year, I would also suggest ample notification so country staff who know the programmes best would be able to attend and get visas... [The in-country] team were very understanding and terrific at interpreting our insights second-hand, but I'm sure [they] could contribute to the conversation in a richer way than I was able by attending in-person [themselves].'

Another Implementing Partner reflected that: *'it can be challenging to think in terms of strategic, observable change, rather than, say, outputs; it is difficult to bring rigour to a largely qualitative, narrative-based section.'* In order to improve the quality of their report next year, they asked for the Monitoring and Results Reporting team to share *"'best in class' examples for some of the answers and how the IP substantiated it, something we could emulate for the next round, including whether the IP used their normal M&E, conducted special surveys and/or collect testimonials? We feel a concrete example would be extremely helpful for several "templates"'*.

It was recognised that although the template itself is complex, the second annual report will be easier to complete now that Implementing Partners are more familiar with the template.

Appropriateness of M&E reporting

Due to the number of templates, with Implementing Partners completing these in a fairly comprehensive manner, it was a huge task to go through all 14 project annual reports, which often totalled 60–80 pages each.¹³ A number of factors increased the size of this:

- Sometimes the **relevant information was not always provided in the template intended for that data**. For example, changes reported in the 'likelihood of transformation' template were often relevant for inclusion under the Areas of Change but were missed or not referenced. There was therefore a need to consider each report as a whole, rather than looking to specific templates for specific information, when summarising and synthesising at the project level. However, this did enable the team to make sense of data provided by triangulating with information elsewhere in the report.
- Sometimes **not enough detail was provided by the Implementing Partner for the reported change to be fully understood and included** in the synthesis. For example, they may have reported that a particular stakeholder had applied their knowledge but not what knowledge and how. Going forward, examples would be useful to ensure that the changes reported are not too generic/vague, especially given the anecdotal nature of evidence in year 1. Some Implementing Partners were good at providing these. Also, **some were more self-critical than others, and downplayed or under-reported things** that the Monitoring and Results Reporting team knew they were actually doing very well, suggesting that the reporting process did not encourage adequate reflection. To ensure this paper is reflective of what is actually happening on the ground, the Monitoring and Results Reporting team complemented the data with their existing knowledge of the project and also cross-checked/gap-filled with the logframe activity reporting and other project documentation (e.g. theories of change, websites and publications). There wasn't capacity to refer to all project baselines in detail, though this would have been useful for understanding what changes had been achieved during the lifetime of the project.
- Sometimes, **not all of the reported information was relevant or needed** for the programme-level synthesis. For example, in the Areas of Change template, Implementing Partners included information about activities they had done with associated numbers (e.g. the number of trainings completed). However, it is acknowledged that the change being described was so closely associated with the activity being done to achieve it, in some cases, it was difficult to disassociate and distinguish between the two. In the *Use of climate and weather information* template, Implementing Partners often included information on what they expected to happen in the coming year. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team considered only that information

¹³ This includes Part 1 of the report, which was mostly aimed at the Fund Manager.

relevant for the programme-level synthesis. However, it may be useful to refer back to this kind of data when producing next year's version of the synthesis, as this will enable us to see the level of activity/change over the course of a year.

These factors made it more difficult to understand project stories/pathways and then draw cross-project, programme-level lessons. It will continue to be a challenge to achieve the balance between Implementing Partners providing enough of the right information to understand the project and its changes, and too much detail. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team will work alongside Implementing Partners to further improve this for next year's reporting.

The reporting templates and process also seemed to affect the data provided to a certain extent:

- The Areas of Change, 3As and Evaluative Monitoring templates each included a section for reporting progress and another for providing reflection and analysis (e.g. 'To what extent are these change processes contributing to the project outcome?') These 'bigger', **more reflective questions received limited answers from Implementing Partners**. Most projects have a knowledge, learning and research component that could support these reflections; however, these did not come out. The most effective templates were those that walked Implementing Partners through a process of analysis and reflection, such as 'Use of climate and weather information'. Applying this approach to the Evaluative Monitoring template, in particular, would be helpful for (a) reducing repetition of contextual factors at different levels and times, and (b) improving specificity about if and how these have enabled or constrained change. It may have also aided further reflection by Implementing Partners when considering the continued validity of their project theories of change, though premature timing in relation to mid-term reviews limited inputs here.
- During the template design, much effort went into unpacking the BRACED theory of change and understanding the changes being brought about by projects from different perspectives. At times, **'zooming in' to capacity, decision-making and the 3As, means the story of the project can be lost** (e.g. why Implementing Partners are engaging in certain activities and how these are contributing to building resilience). Perhaps the Knowledge Manager was asking too much of projects in the 'likelihood of transformation' template as claims here tended to be overly ambitious. In addition, the 3As template is not currently designed to think about sequencing: if a particular activity has more focus in year 1 compared with years 1 or 3, or if the project is focusing on building one capacity more than the others.
- **The fact the report to the Knowledge Manager was combined with reporting to the Fund Manager (for accountability) may have affected what information Implementing Partners provided for the M&E framework sections** (for learning) and how they framed and presented this information. Reports tended to focus on delivery rather than learning and change pathways, and the context was considered in terms of risks to

activities rather than as an enabler or constrainer of change. The reporting was combined at the request of Implementing Partners at the start of the programme. While results may have been affected, the combined nature of the report may have also supported Implementing Partners buying into reporting against the M&E framework.

Overall, from a Knowledge Manager perspective, the first year's reporting process went well. Implementing Partner reports were particularly impressive, given that (a) project-level M&E systems were not set up to report consistently against the BRACED M&E framework, (b) the reporting was early, compared to when results could realistically be expected, and (c) Implementing Partners were completing the templates for the first time.

It was useful for the Monitoring and Results Reporting team to be able to comment on the first draft of each project report, highlight gaps and receive updated reports in tracked changes with an explanation/response from the Implementing Partner against each general point of feedback. It seemed to be confusing for some Implementing Partners that this Knowledge Manager feedback was provided through the Fund Manager. This was done because those were the official reporting lines. However, some Implementing Partners at that point thought that the feedback was coming from the Fund Manager. A different process could be considered next time.

A set of reports with both the same conceptualisation and optimum level of detail and relevance of information will greatly facilitate the process for moving from project-level reports to the programme-level synthesis report. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team will work with Implementing Partners to consider how to improve both the templates and reporting process, to make the exercise both as useful and light as possible for both the Implementing Partners and the Knowledge Manager. The Monitoring and Results Reporting synthesis process could possibly be further refined by combining the task of summarising project reports and synthesising them. The Monitoring and Results Reporting team will consider how to achieve a programme-level view that is both comprehensive and yet specific by referring back to individual projects.

Feedback given to Implementing Partners on their initial reporting

There was **some confusion over the term 'baseline' in the Areas of Change template**. This referred to the changes the Implementing Partner would 'expect', 'like' and 'love' to see during the lifetime of the project, rather than the situation at the time of the baseline study. Consequently, for a small number of Implementing Partners, the data 'baseline' information received was a mixture of what the situation actually was at the start of the project and what the Implementing Partner could 'expect', 'like' or 'love' to see at its inception. While the former was interesting and useful information, particularly in terms of understanding what had been achieved within the project lifetime, it was the latter that was being sought.

In some instances, Implementing Partners reported changes at the 'like to see' or 'love to see' levels without detailing the earlier changes in the process (i.e. the 'expect to see' aspects). It is not yet clear if this is an issue that challenges the Areas of Change as multi-step processes. Implementing Partners also tended to report changes beyond 'expect to see', even though their analysis stated that most changes seen so far were at the 'expect to see' level. Upon request for clarification, they explained that changes seen beyond the 'expect to see' level were more tentative.

There was also some overlap in project reporting on Area of Change challenges and Evaluative Monitoring constraining factors. Reporting processes of change in isolation from an understanding of the context within which projects operate is not useful. Further thinking is required on how best to integrate these two reporting templates. Underpinning the gaps and challenges is the difficulty in translating key concepts in programme-level theory of change into monitoring templates at the project level.

It is also the case that a number of Implementing Partners missed the opportunity to provide the overall problem being addressed for each Area of Change. It is thought this was due to a lack of clarity on whether this information was required; Implementing Partners were able to provide it on request.

Under the 3As template, a **lack of quantitative 'KPI 4' data on how many people's resilience had been built in the first year of the project** heightened the need for an explanation of how/why the project indicators would contribute to beneficiaries' capacity to anticipate, absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses. Some Implementing Partners left this blank in the first version of their reports. However, most were able to fill this on request. Of all the templates, the 3As was the one most likely to be adapted or completed incorrectly. It seems there is a need to further explain sub-indicators and the exact information being sought.

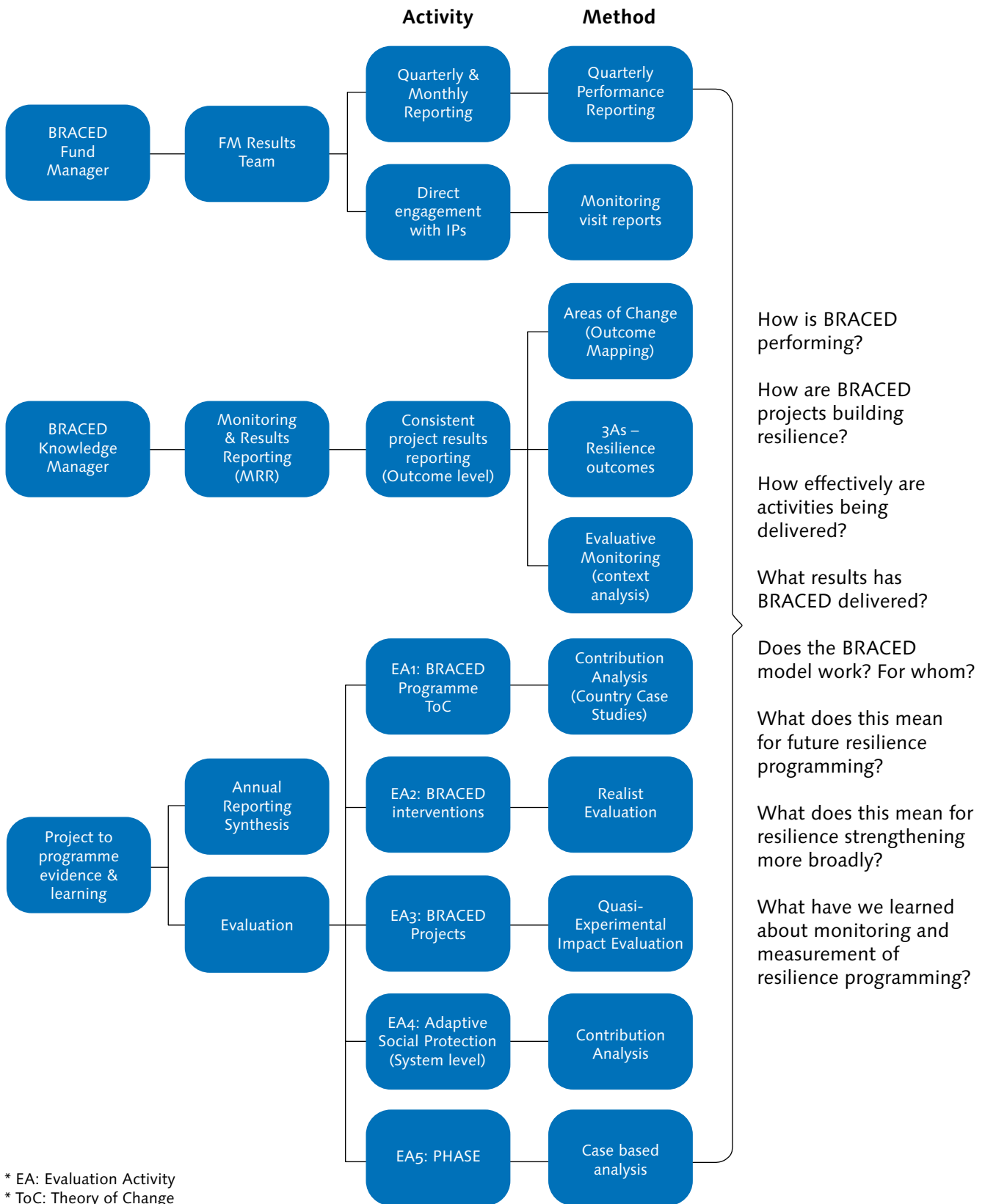
The year 1 reports revealed that **Implementing Partners are either not taking a continual 'Evaluative Monitoring' approach to understanding and responding to the changing context of their projects, or not reporting on it.** All Implementing Partners were able to detail the contextual factors affecting the project at local, sub-national and national levels, both at the start of the project and the end of year 1. Most, however, **struggled to provide in-depth analysis and specific examples showing how these factors were constraining and/or enabling change in the project** (particularly the latter). They were also unclear on whether this was expected or not. In a few cases, shocks and stresses were missing from the Evaluative Monitoring reporting on how the project context had changed during the year.

Another issue where data was limited was in relation to how the use of climate information in the BRACED project improves the resilience of beneficiaries. One Implementing Partner reflected that, *'there is not a lot to mention about how these processes were linking or contributing to beneficiary resilience'*. Sometimes, it was **difficult to distinguish between changes or results that had actually happened (encompassing whether these were during the lifetime of the project or before it began) and those that were**

anticipated on the basis of year 1 progress. This was clarified by Implementing Partners in their second version of the report.

Finally, the last template of the report – which was focused on the continued validity of the project theory of change based on learning from reporting against the M&E framework – was only lightly filled in by most Implementing Partners. The main reason given for this was that it was **too early in the project cycle to review the theory of change** and that changes to it would be considered after the project mid-term review had been completed (mid-way through year 2).

Annex 5: BRACED M&E 'Infrastructure'



* EA: Evaluation Activity
 * ToC: Theory of Change

Annex 6: Rolling out the BRACED M&E framework

The BRACED M&E framework was developed and rolled out as follows:

- The programme-level Monitoring and Results Reporting team combined a bottom-up and top-down approach to develop the BRACED programme theory of change. This included a review of all 15 project-level theories of change and logframes and consultation with the project Implementing Partners. It set out key elements of the programme-level M&E framework to which all projects would contribute both results and data. At the programme level, frameworks were developed to enable standardisation (to the extent possible) of concepts, analysis and reporting against the programme-level theory of change.
- The programme-level Monitoring and Results Reporting team then provided a range of support to project Implementing Partners:
 - Detailed written guidance was shared with all Implementing Partners on the M&E framework and how to operationalise it (in the [BRACED M&E Guidance Notes](#)).
 - One-to-one conversations were held with each Implementing Partner to answer any questions in relation to the framework and how to apply it to project-level M&E.
 - Written feedback was provided on updated versions of project-level M&E documents to check alignment to the programme level.
 - Group support was provided, both face-to-face and remotely on a group basis, to train Implementing Partners in the reporting templates and show them how to report against the M&E framework.

During the first year of BRACED implementation, the Knowledge Manager Monitoring and Results Reporting team has worked alongside Implementing Partners and the Fund Manager to (a) ensure the alignment of project-level M&E with the programme-level M&E framework, and (b) enhance the overall quality and comparability of BRACED M&E.

After face-to-face consultation with all Implementing Partners during the BRACED inception workshop in Senegal, February 2015, focusing on the draft framework, the Knowledge Manager developed written guidance for all Implementing Partners to operationalise the framework. Following the sharing of the [BRACED M&E Guidance Notes](#) (March 2015), the Knowledge Manager provided a programme of 1-2-1 support to Implementing Partners to help them apply the framework in their finalisation of project-level theories of change, logframes and M&E plans.¹⁴

¹⁴ This included a 1-2-1 Skype call with each Implementing Partner to discuss the implications of data collection against the M&E framework at project-level (April–May 2015) and a written review of updated project-level M&E documents (June–July 2015), before they were signed off by the Fund Manager.

The Monitoring and Results Reporting team then developed the set of reporting templates to gather data against each of the M&E framework components. This, in turn, enabled all Implementing Partners to undertake standardised and comparable reporting of year 1 project results. The Knowledge Manager also developed templates for two aspects of programme logframe reporting. These were centred on the 'use of climate and weather information' and the 'likelihood of transformation'. Draft versions of these templates were shared with Implementing Partners for their feedback at the BRACED Annual Learning Event in Senegal, February 2016 and at a webinar in March 2016. The Knowledge Manager then worked collaboratively with the Fund Manager to both finalise the overall annual report template (March 2016) and train Implementing Partners in its completion (May 2016).¹⁵

Implementing Partners submitted their year 1 reports at the end of May 2016. Revised versions were then produced during June 2016. These responded to Knowledge Manager feedback in order to enhance the completeness and utility of the data provided. All of the 14 Implementing Partners that submitted reports completed all templates.

¹⁵ A two-day face-to-face participatory training event was held with representatives of all BRACED projects, organised jointly by the Fund Manager and Knowledge Manager. Implementing Partners had the opportunity to share examples of their draft reports with the group for feedback and continue drafting them, while asking questions and receiving real-time feedback from the Knowledge Manager and Fund Manager.

BRACED aims to build the resilience of up to 5 million vulnerable people against climate extremes and disasters. It does so through a three year, UK Government funded programme, which supports over 120 organisations, working in 15 consortiums, across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and Southeast Asia. Uniquely, BRACED also has a Knowledge Manager consortium.

The Knowledge Manager consortium is led by the Overseas Development Institute and includes the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, ENDA Energie, ITAD and Thomson Reuters Foundation.

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The BRACED Knowledge Manager generates evidence and learning on resilience and adaptation in partnership with the BRACED projects and the wider resilience community. It gathers robust evidence of what works to strengthen resilience to climate extremes and disasters, and initiates and supports processes to ensure that evidence is put into use in policy and programmes. The Knowledge Manager also fosters partnerships to amplify the impact of new evidence and learning, in order to significantly improve levels of resilience in poor and vulnerable countries and communities around the world.

Published December 2016

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Cover image: Mikkel Ostergaard

Designed and typeset by Soapbox, www.soapbox.co.uk

