

Philanthropy's causal: discovering how philanthropy strategy and learning can be informed through causal approaches

Case study from The Rockefeller Foundation

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Sept 19, 2023

Who are we?



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Today's run-of-show

1. Context and program overview
2. Our journey into causal pathways
3. What did we learn?
4. Reflections & Discussion: So What? What's next?

About The Rockefeller Foundation

- 110 years old, HQ in NYC, with offices in Bangkok, Bellagio, Nairobi, and Washington DC
- Recent shift to focus on climate, at the intersection of energy, food, health and finance systems
- Long-standing portfolio in the energy space

Context and Program Overview

Program

- “Energy Service Framework” (ESF) program, launched 2019
- Goal : improve utility health through **billing, metering and collections**, which in turn would get reinvested, improving **quality** and scaling **access**



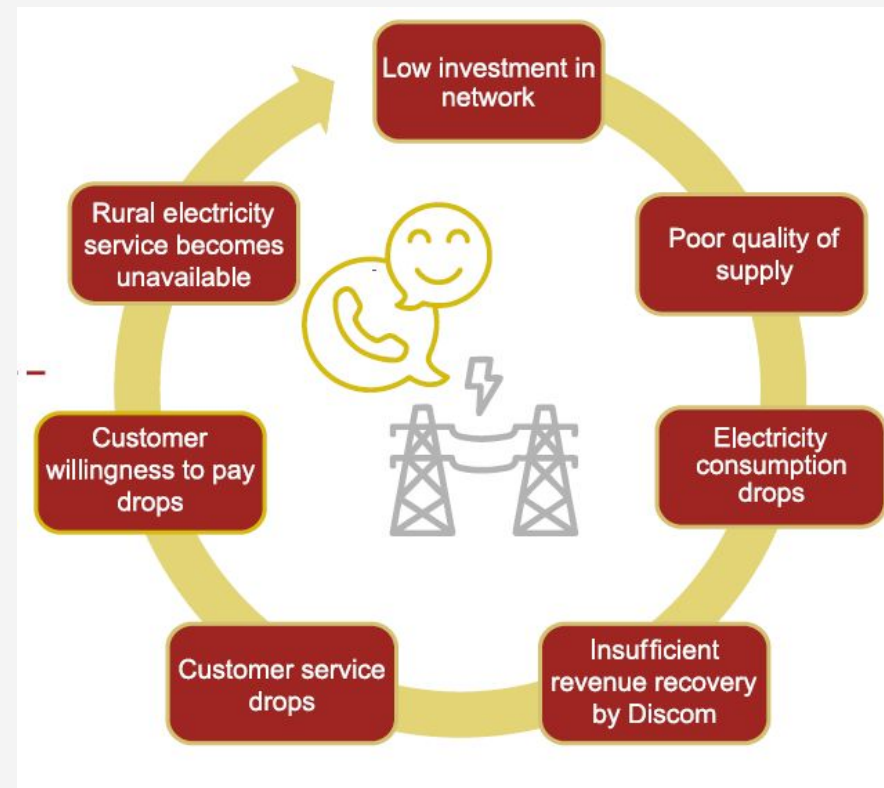
ESF and Causality

- Two years into the program (2021): lots of promising results. But questions about *how / what* is driving outcomes

Entry point into this journey was NOT an explicit plan to investigate causality. But we had important Qs, which led us there.

ESF “theories of change”

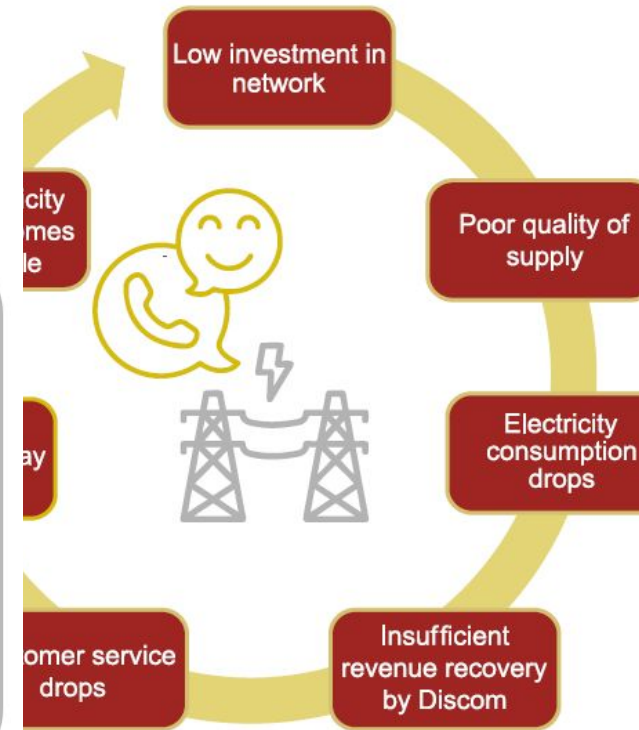
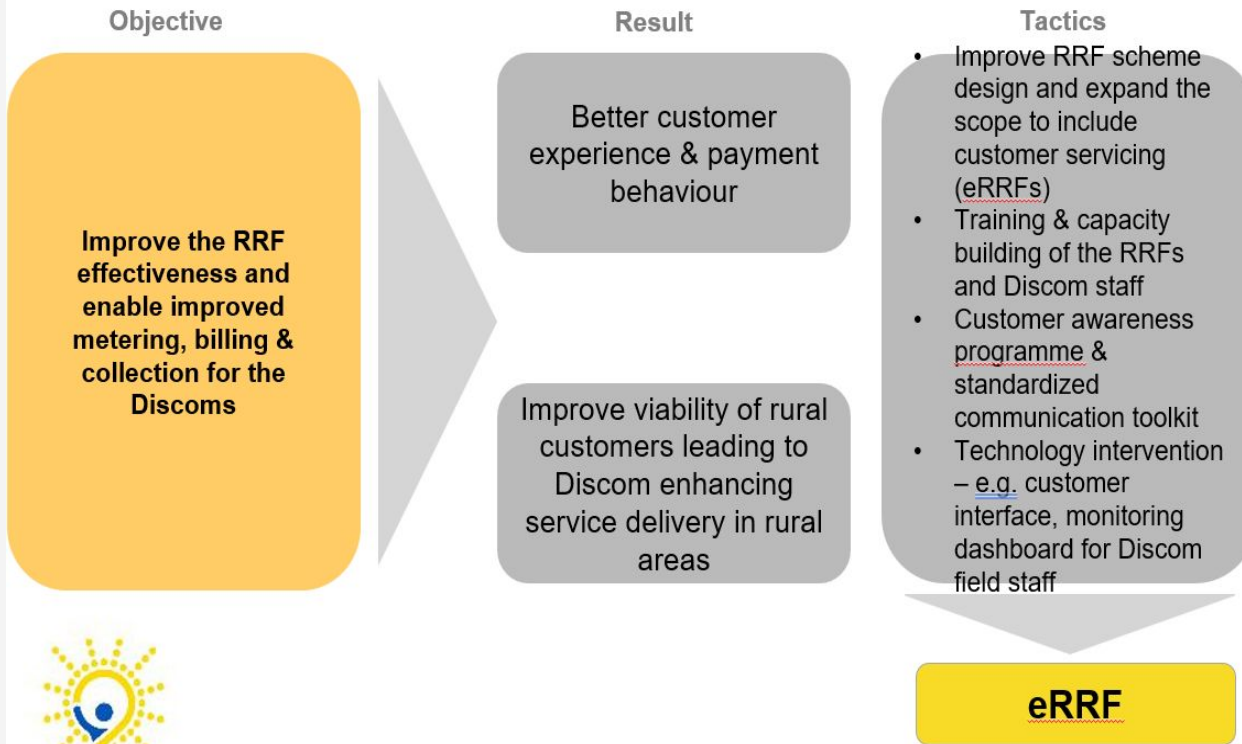
- What did we have that *loosely* spoke to causality?



ESF “theories of change”

Problem Definition and SPI's Approach

RRF to eRRF | Enhance the RRF model from a 'collection franchisee contract' to a 'customer service contract'



So, what did we do?

1. **Take stock of pathways** through which HH-level impacts could be realized

What are the possible pathways through which a BMC intervention can “impact” people/households? What are we assuming?

So, what did we do?

1. **Take stock of pathways** through which HH-level impacts could be realized
2. **Tested the validity** of those pathways through lit review

So, what did we do?

1. **Take stock of pathways** through which HH-level impacts could be realized
2. **Tested the validity** of those pathways through lit review
3. Used **participatory approaches** to interrogate causal relationships and strengthen our understanding

What were the results? Why did causality matter?

- Understanding the *HOW*
- Understanding **unintended consequences**
- Understanding where our **assumptions** weren't holding up

Reflections

- **So what:** What **value** did this bring?
- **Now what:** Where do we go from here?



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THANK YOU!
