



Welcome!



**CAUSAL
PATHWAYS**

The Causal Pathways Initiative

Making visible the "black box" of philanthropic and systems change strategies, helping us collectively see how systems are (or are not) changing

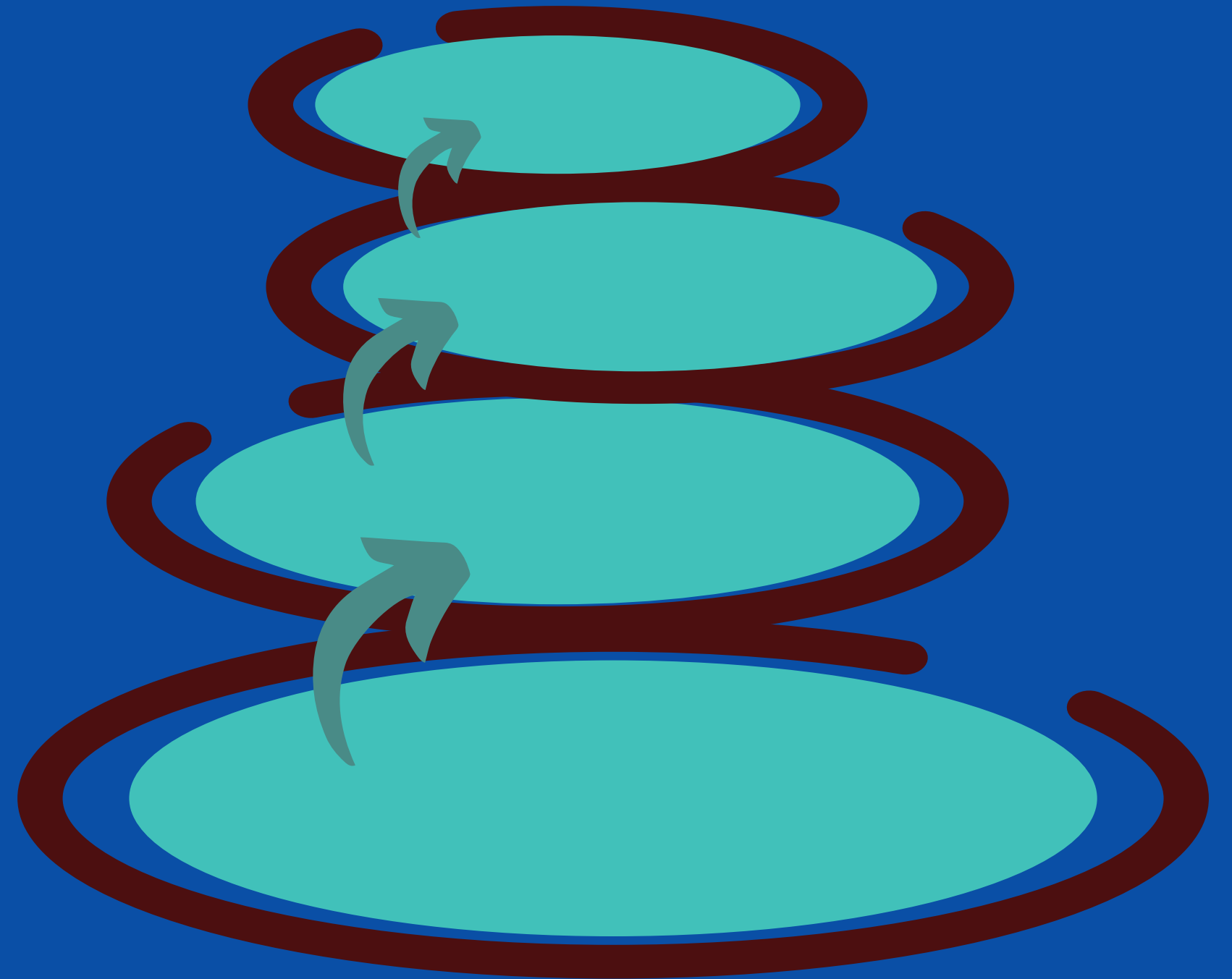
An international network of evaluators, methodologists, philanthropic leaders, and more.

Focused on supporting philanthropy, other funders and their evaluation partners to open-up the black box of strategy and systems change by **building awareness, will, and skills to use evaluation approaches that can make sense of causal relationships** without depending on more traditional experimental and quasi-experimental approaches.

Relational Rubrics for Causal Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Florencia Guerzovich
Alix Wadeson

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Who are we?



Florencia Guerzovich (PhD) is a consultant, thought leader and systems convener with over 20 years of experience working to embed evidence and learning governance and development strategies and programming from the global to the local levels. Florencia has led impact and learning work at the World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability, Transparency and Accountability Initiative and collaborated with Open Society Foundations, Pact, and World Vision, among others, introducing causal pathways, adaptive management, political economy approaches, and portfolio and systems lenses to MEL and research. She also designs and delivers innovative upskilling activities through act4delivery. Florencia is a Member of the Independent Evaluation Panel of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Causal Pathways Network and a Collaborating Researcher of Grupo Politeia, University of the State of Santa Catarina. She is Argentinean and lives in Brazil.

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Alix Wadeson is an independent monitoring and evaluation consultant with 15 years of experience working to support and strengthen social justice, development, and humanitarian programs globally. She primarily works with civil society and funders of their work.

Her thematic foci include climate change resilience, inclusive governance, social accountability, and advocacy. Alix brings specific expertise in qualitative, participatory, and theory-based evaluation methods to assess causal relationships and changes in dynamic systems (e.g., Outcome Harvesting, Process Tracing, Contribution Analysis).

She is Canadian and lives in Vancouver, BC.
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Agenda



The Challenge



Overall Approach



Case Study & Exercise



Insights



Discussion/Q&A



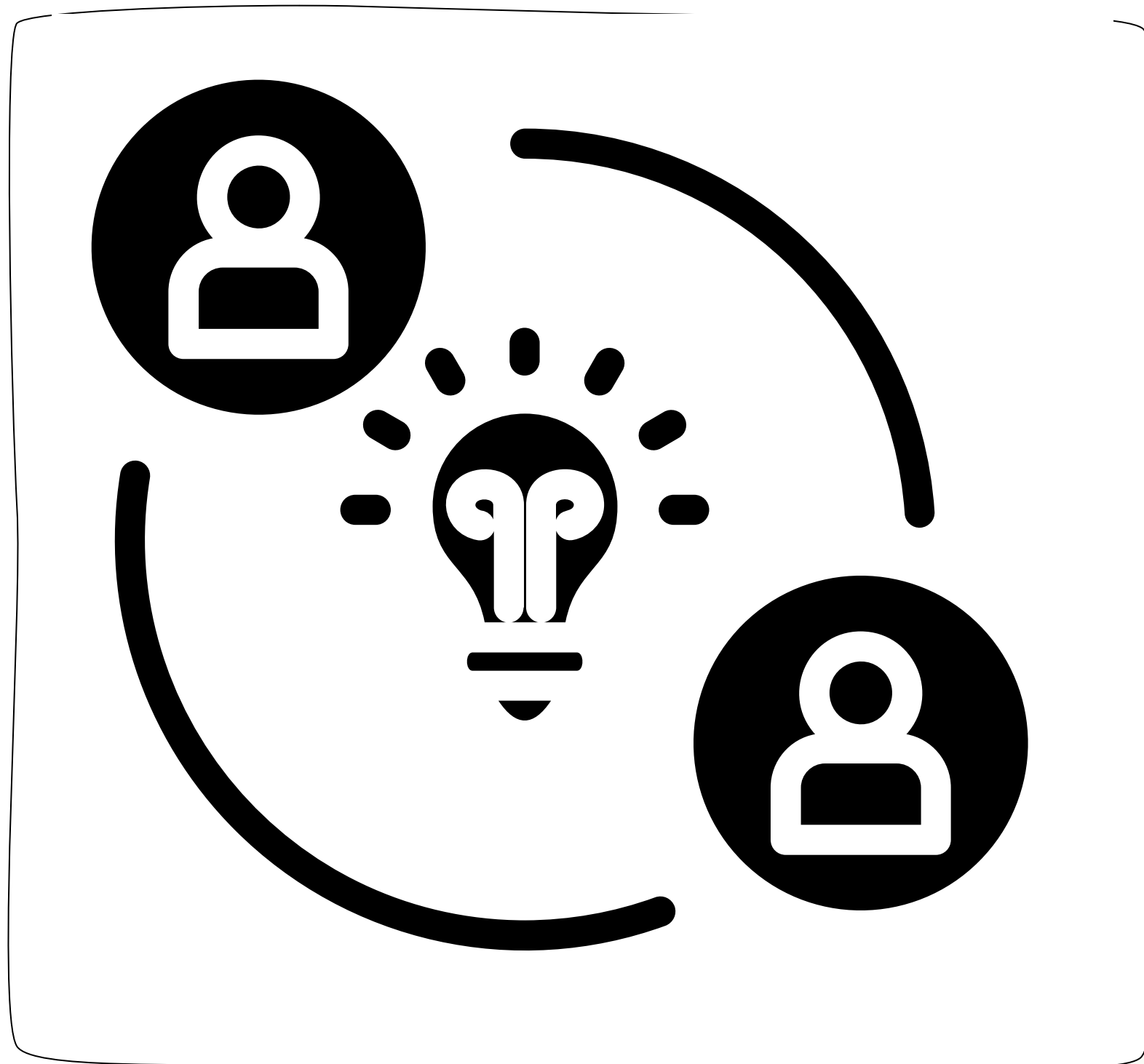
The Gloom and Doom Narrative

Lack of fit -for-purpose
methods and evidence
about why and how
systems change happens

Gaps in evidence for
causal, complex, systemic
outcomes



Quick Poll: Can you relate?



Quick Poll:

Can you relate?

A. 100%! Welcome to my world!

B. Nooooo, I've never experienced this.

C. I may have been there.

Please select 1 of these responses in the Zoom Poll

What we did about it: The How Informs the What



Evaluative Judgements about Causal Pathways

Key Requirements



Specify the Sequence or Steps in the Causal Pathway explicitly



Identify the type of outcomes of interest and ‘what counts’ (Systemic and Relational)



Take a Prospective View when outcomes are not fully evident at the time of assessment (i.e. look at future potential or likelihood of the outcome, OECD-DAC 2021)




Suitable Approaches

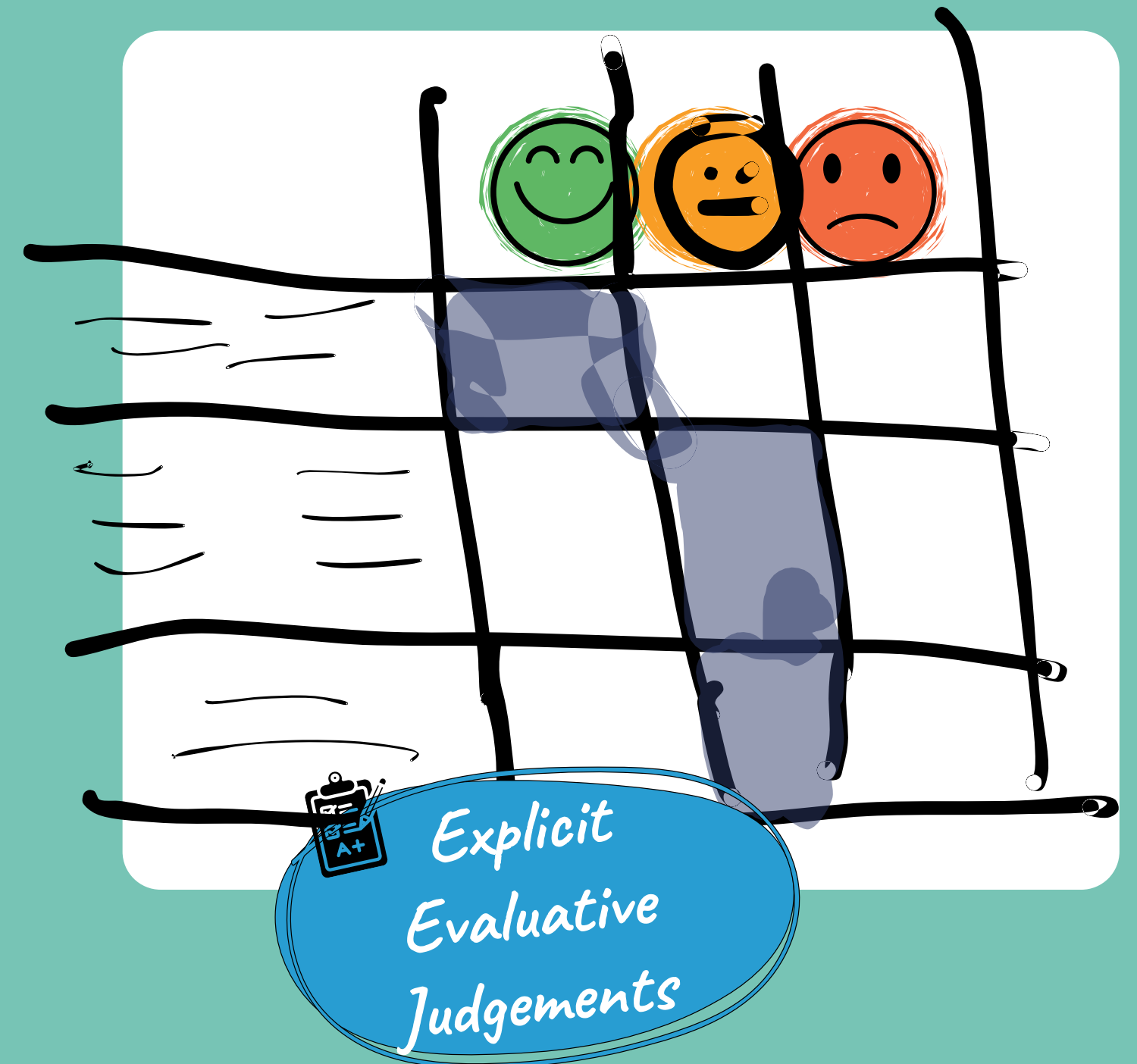


Bricolage qualitative methods to map indicators and mechanisms

What are Rubrics for MEL?

A structured framework for assessing change along a causal pathway that makes clear:

-  The aspects of performance of focus and interest
-  Sequential levels of performance related to the outcomes
-  What performance looks like for each level (criteria)

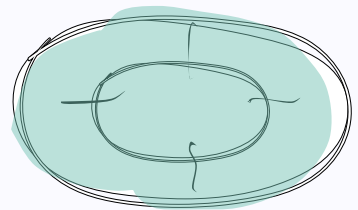


Our #1 Task:

Develop a consistent method for evaluating a complex, systemic outcome & indicator that can:

- Work across similar interventions of diverse contexts and actors
- Produce data for aggregation at portfolio-level for results that are 'greater than the sum of its parts'

Our Portfolio Test Case: The World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA)



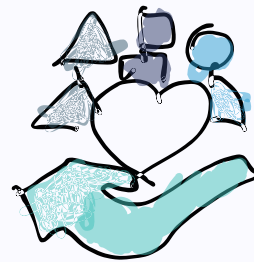
Scope

Est. in 2012: 51 grants to NGOs/CSOs in 34 countries to date



Collaborative Social Accountability Initiatives

Collaboration of civil society organizations with governments, and engagement of citizens in order to solve development problems, strengthen accountability and improve public service sector governance



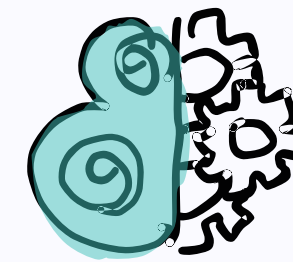
Public Services Sectors

health, education, social protection, water, agriculture, public finance



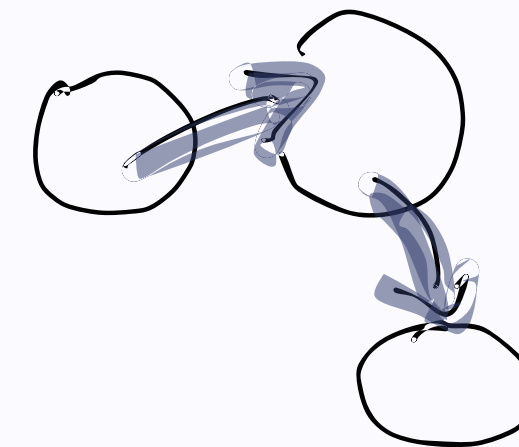
Project budget/timeframes:

Average 500K / 3 years



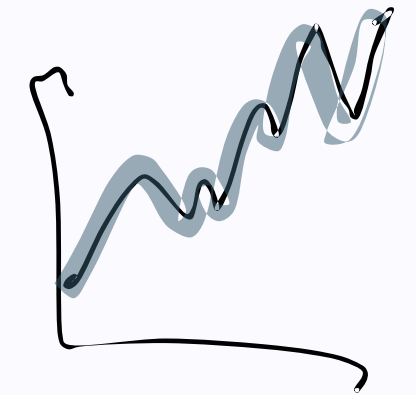
Rationale:

Funding pilots and small-scale initiatives in countries with large WB operations/ investments expected to lead to uptake/sustainability by others in the medium to long-term



Theory of Action & Results Framework

A clear trajectory of outcomes of whole program & grant projects based on learning and evidence on what works



Key performance indicators:

Capacity development, multi-stakeholder engagement, problem/context analysis, adaptive learning, partnerships, knowledge transfer, sustainability

The Outcome of Interest



The GPSA's aim is to contribute to the sustainability & scale of social accountability processes

Outcome:

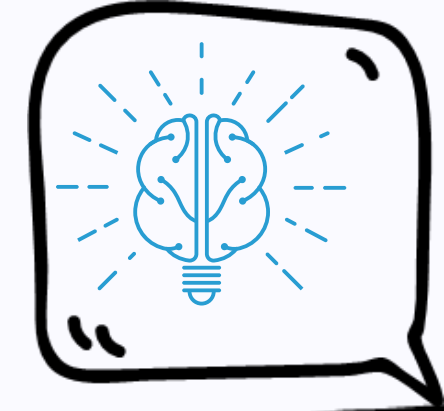
Elements of collaborative social accountability processes are taken up by public sector institutions and other relevant actors* beyond individual GPSA projects.

*Other relevant actors can be NGOs/CSOs, WB teams, other funders

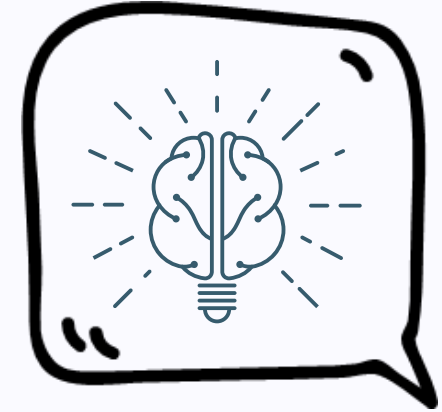
Performance Indicator : Governments/other relevant actors seek to:



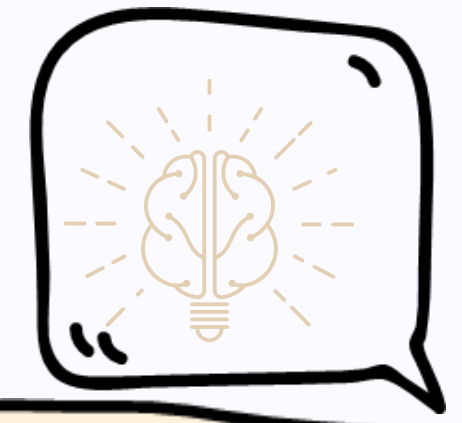
Use substantive lessons for improvements of targeted policies, processes, and mechanisms



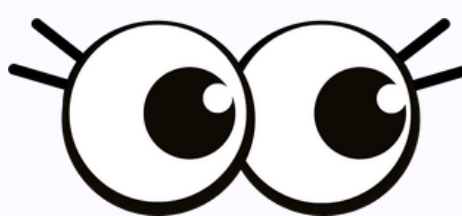
Sustain elements of collaborative social accountability processes after the life of the project;



Adapt insights from projects to scale through other programs or policies;



Apply elements of collaborative social accountability processes in additional localities or sectors

The causal pathway informs what we 

1. Focus on the **likelihood** of uptake: key actors (public sector actor applying or sustaining elements and/or lessons of processes (prospective sustainability)

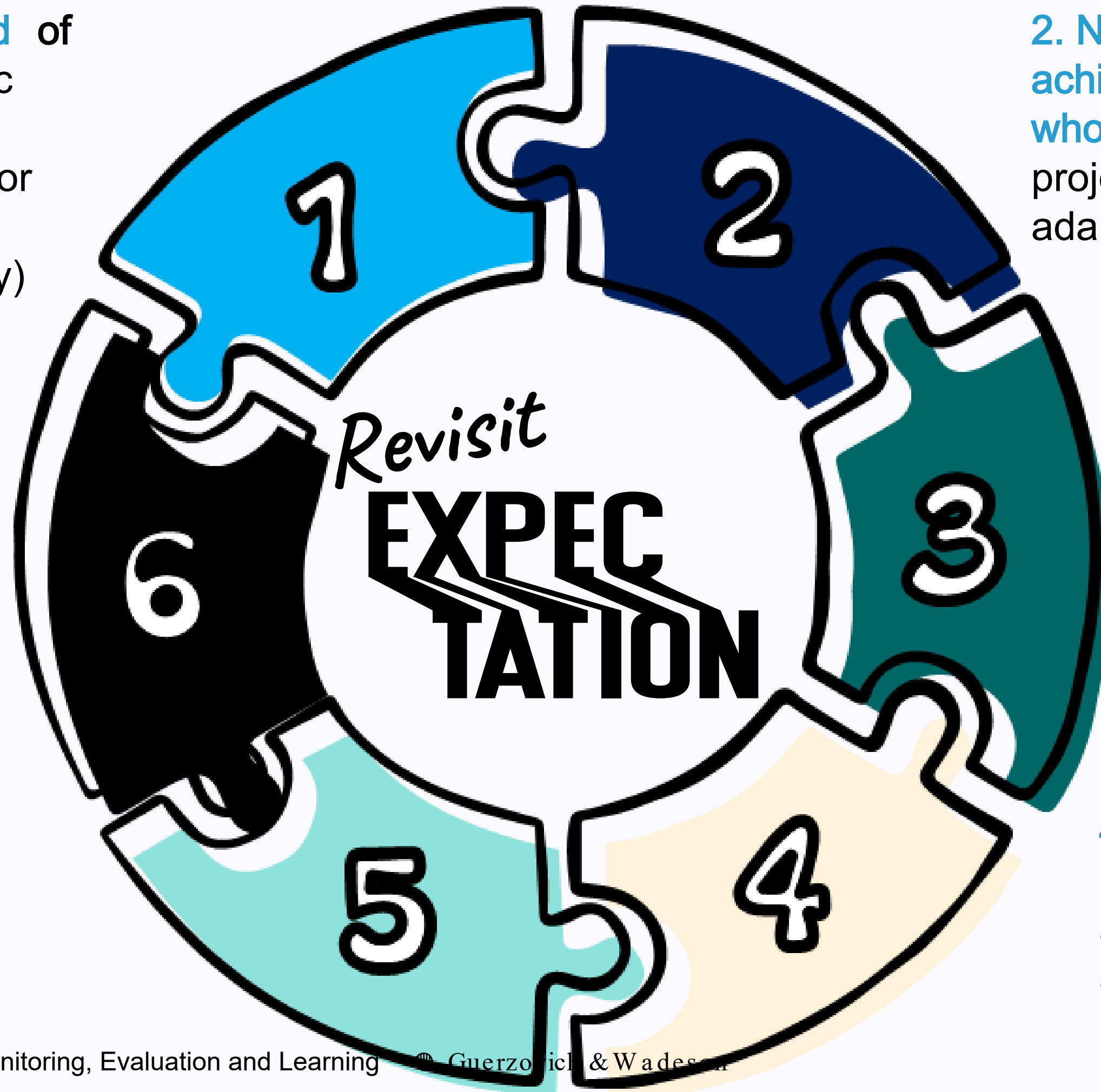
2. Not attempting to **achieve wholesale replication** of project processes – adaptations are expected

6. Proactively **target uptake from project onset** via entry points & ongoing dialogue

5. **Cast a wide net** on potential outcomes - identify “what counts”

3. Emphasis on **function, not form** – many ways to sustain & scale

4. **Focus on relational processes** between key actors - with stops and starts along the way.



The causal pathway informs our judgements

World Bank/other donors/CSOs used lessons or collaborative social accountability approaches to advise public sector/other programs



Ongoing dialogue with key actors to move the process forward for potential collaborative social accountability uptake

Expectations that citizens/CSOs will continue processes without support



Assumptions that good technical expertise, quality evidence, & demonstrated effectiveness are enough to drive uptake & sustainability

What counts for uptake for the GPSA portfolio case?

Casting a wide net of sustainability & scale outcomes along the causal pathway

- ✓ Work by key stakeholders closely engaged directly in a project are being/were integrated into another public sector project/program.
- ✓ Public sector counterparts used lessons from the project to inform public reforms and policies.
- ✓ Local public sector or service providers (e.g., education officials / schools) adopted, or adapted elements of the CSA process from a project.
- ✓ The WB/other funders used lessons and project approaches to advise public sector or other development partners' programs.
- ✓ The WB/other funders financed an adaptation of the project in the same or other sectors/geographies.
- ✓ Examples of uptake, sustainability and/or scale-up of the CSA process led by other I/NGOs & CSOs
- ✓ Staff or officials working in the project changed jobs & used the CSA process/learning in new orgs
- ✓ Communities/citizens engaged in a project applied their learning and CSA capacity to advocate & support improvements to public service delivery (beyond or outside of the project)
- ✓ The project actions and trajectory demonstrated identification of entry points & ongoing dialogue with key actors* to move the process for potential uptake of forward.

* Relevant public sector officials, other funders, and World Bank operations staff

Unpacking the Causal Pathway of uptake: Sequencing sustainability & scale in GPSA projects



! Not be mistaken for 100% wholesale replication or sustainability of the collaborative social accountability process in its current form/location/sector – this isn't a realistic expectation

The causal pathway was embedded into a relational sequential rubric

Making a judgement about which level a project is ranked, depends on the strength of evidence and how far the outcomes have travelled along the causal pathway, at the time of an assessment



SCORE 01	No evidence of any use/application/adaptation of element(s) of or insights from a collaborative social accountability process by any priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions. No evidence of stakeholder interest, dialogue of alignment. The unit of measurement for this indicator in the GPSA's Results Framework is 0%. Therefore, a score of 0% would be provided for the indicator in the Results Framework and considered as 'no uptake'.	0% UPTAKE
SCORE 02	Evidence of interest by priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions expressed publicly or privately about learning from a collaborative social accountability process in the project. In this instance, a score of 25% would be provided for the indicator in the GPSA's Results Framework.	25% UPTAKE
SCORE 03	Evidence that priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions have expressed where to adopt, adapt and/or sustain elements or insights from a collaborative social accountability process and how this could be incorporated in some way into other operations, programs, policies (i.e., concrete entry points have been identified). In this instance, a score of 50% would be provided for the indicator in the GPSA's Results Framework.	50% UPTAKE
SCORE 04	Evidence of dialogue ² with priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions on how to adopt, adapt and/or sustain elements of the collaborative social accountability process in future operations, policies, or programs. In this instance, a score of 75% would be provided for the indicator in the GPSA's Results Framework.	75% UPTAKE
SCORE 05	Evidence of actions taken by priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions on adoption, adaption and/or sustaining elements of a collaborative social accountability process in other operations, policies, or programs. Triangulation of data with at least 2 sources of evidence to confirm is required. In this instance, a score of 100% would be provided for the indicator in the GPSA's Results Framework.	100% UPTAKE

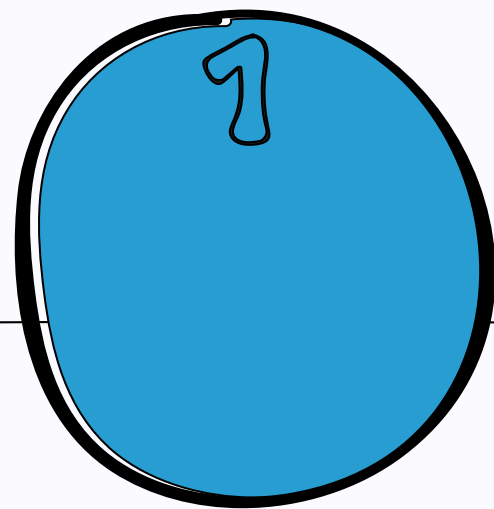
Our ^{1st} Task:

Test drive the method using a sample of 15 closed projects to:

- Produce credible & transparent rubric scores for each project
- Aggregate the results at the Portfolio for an overall snapshot
- Reflect on how to improve the process & method

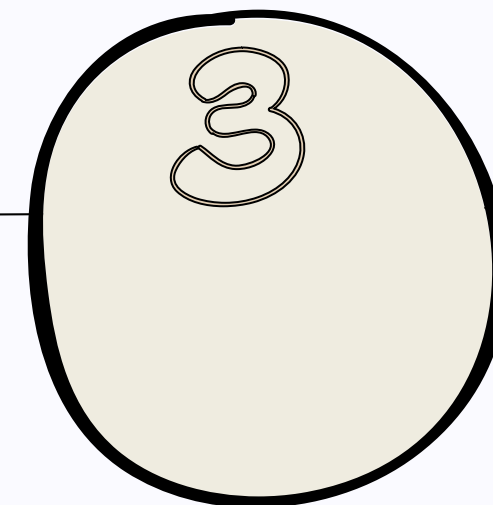
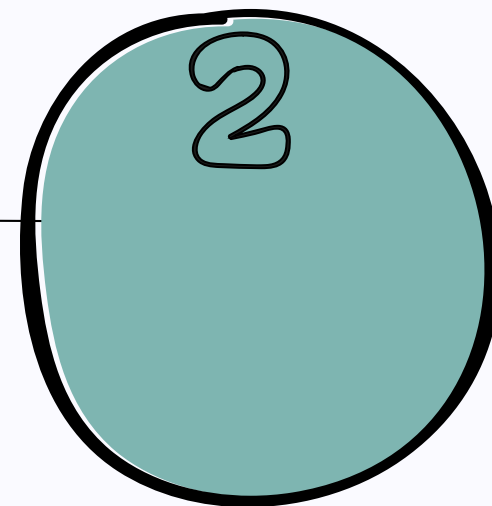
Resources are Limited:
• Relied on the secondary data available rather than real-time primary data. Not the same as ex-post

Key Steps in our Portfolio Case



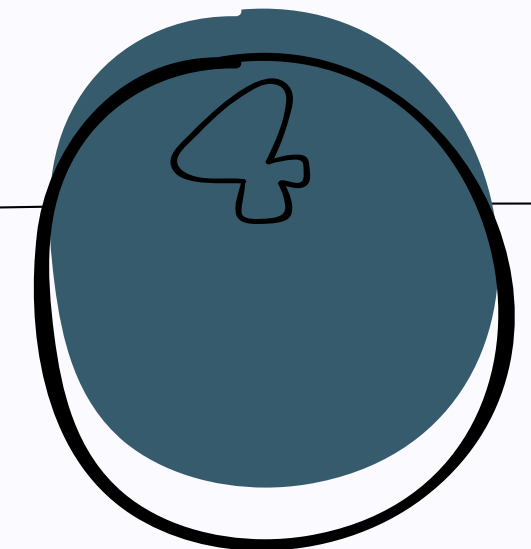
Assess each project in the portfolio against the rubric based on available evidence & qualitative data analysis to assign the 1-5 score with justifications/references

Calculate the breakdown of projects by rubric score – how many reached each of the rubric scores



Calculate the % of projects in sample with scores above 1 to determine the overall % of projects with evidence of uptake or likelihood for sustainability & scale

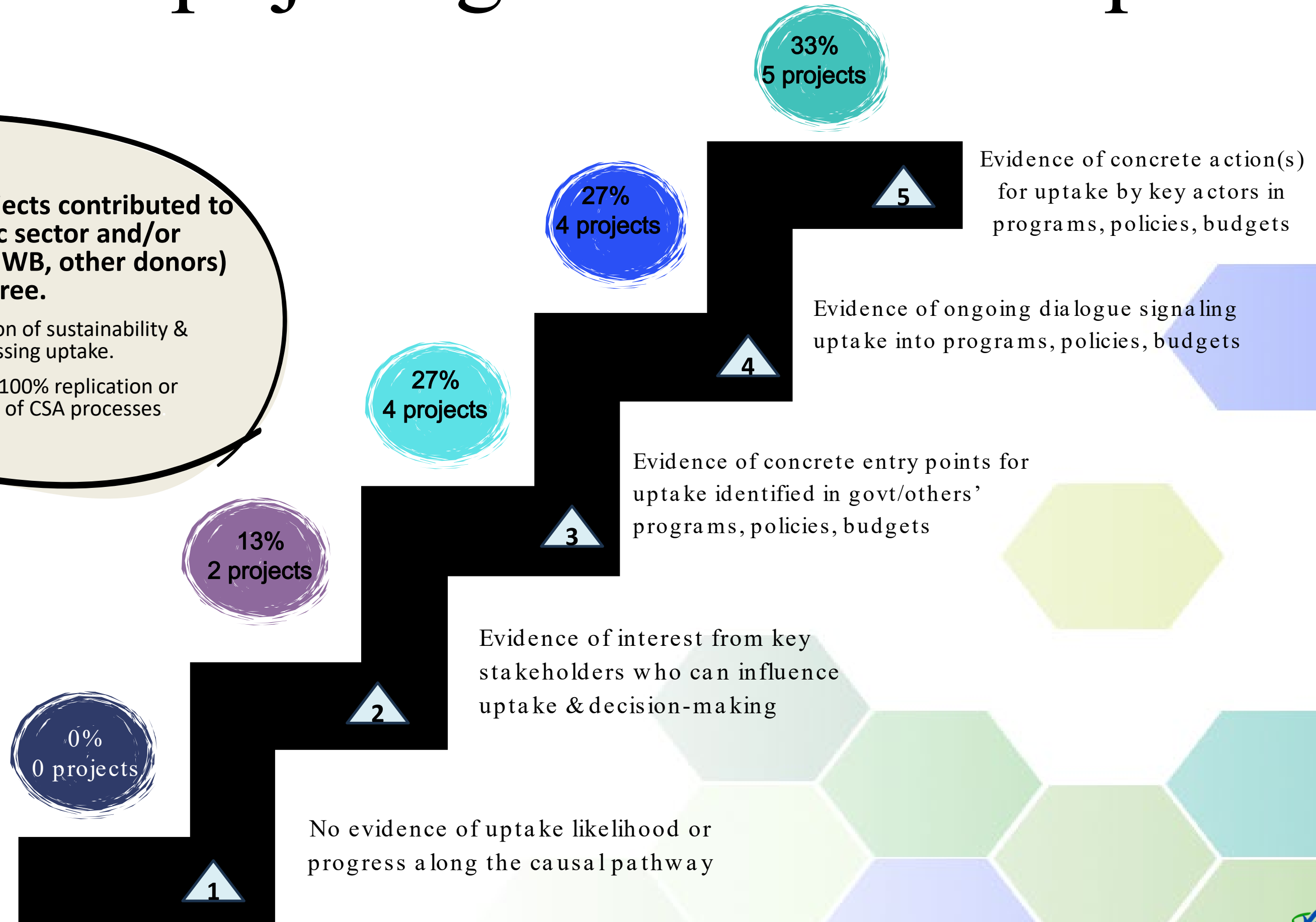
Provide qualitative explanations to accompany the quantitative results for important nuances, case details and comparative information



How far did projects go down the causal pathway?

100% of sample projects contributed to CSA uptake by public sector and/or other actors (NGOs, WB, other donors) to at least some degree.

- Based on this conception of sustainability & rubric method for assessing uptake.
- Not to be mistaken for 100% replication or indefinite sustainability of CSA processes



Example of a rubric '5': An Oxfam Tajikistan Project

Tajikistan Improving Social Accountability in the Water Sector (TWISA): implemented in 5 districts (84,000+ people) to establish a community-based Water and Sanitation Sector monitoring system.

All reviewed evidence generated throughout the project and at time of project close.



Another CSO adopted the project's CSA model to implement it in other country locations



WHO Tajikistan used the project's Service Performance Indicators in their own project on Water Sanitation Sector assessments and water safety plans .



The Swiss Development Cooperation Agency promoted the use of the project's CSA model by implementing agencies that they are funding .



Project demonstrated active identification of entry points and dialogue for uptake with key actors throughout the project



The European Commission supported use of the GPSA project's CSA model in other EU-funded projects

How did we justify the evaluative judgement?

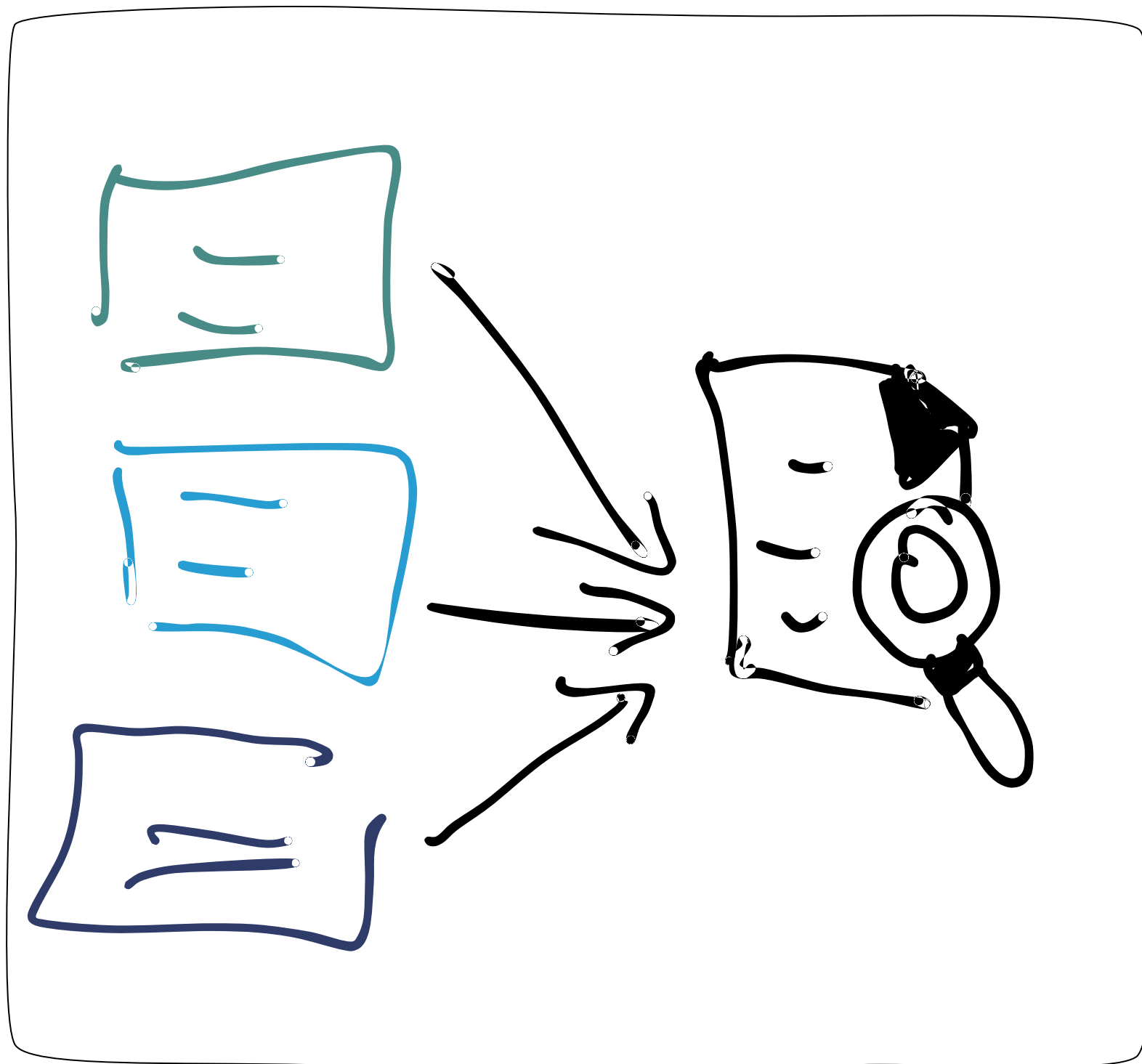
Funder's end of project report

Final Independent Evaluation

Grant Partner bi-annual & final Reports

Monitoring data from the life of the project

Logic & Triangulation



There are many useful sources you could use to assess and justify rubric scores in a real-time evaluation with primary & secondary data

Let's Practice with the Rubric

Please go to this Jamboard link:

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1m-qdHv7Ry40B1YSnFgjCowffvFeQqUNhpyCdbaKvCCk/edit?usp=sharing>

See example case and consider:

- Where each one is on the causal pathway of our rubric and assign a score of 1-5?
- What evidence would you need to justify this score?

Time: 20 mins



Our 3 Task:

- Capture learnings & iterate the method for improvement
- Use it in future project final evaluations, portfolio assessments and ex-post evaluations
- Write a paper to share the method, application, lessons & recommendations
 - Storytelling

Insights: Causal pathway thinking and MEL findings



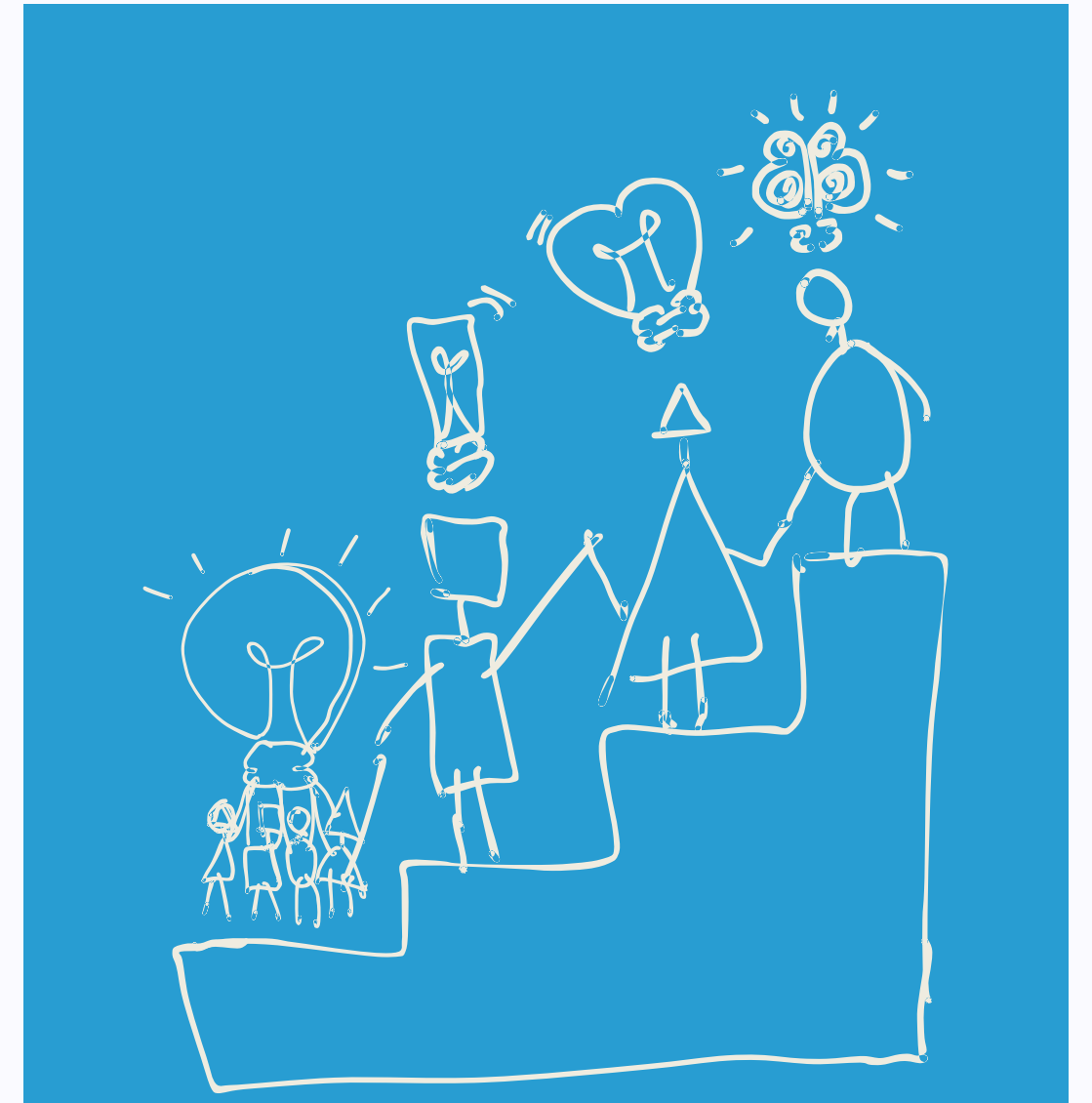
Validated causal pathways that spell out how change is happening in many cases, distinguishing those from how some sought it ought to occur



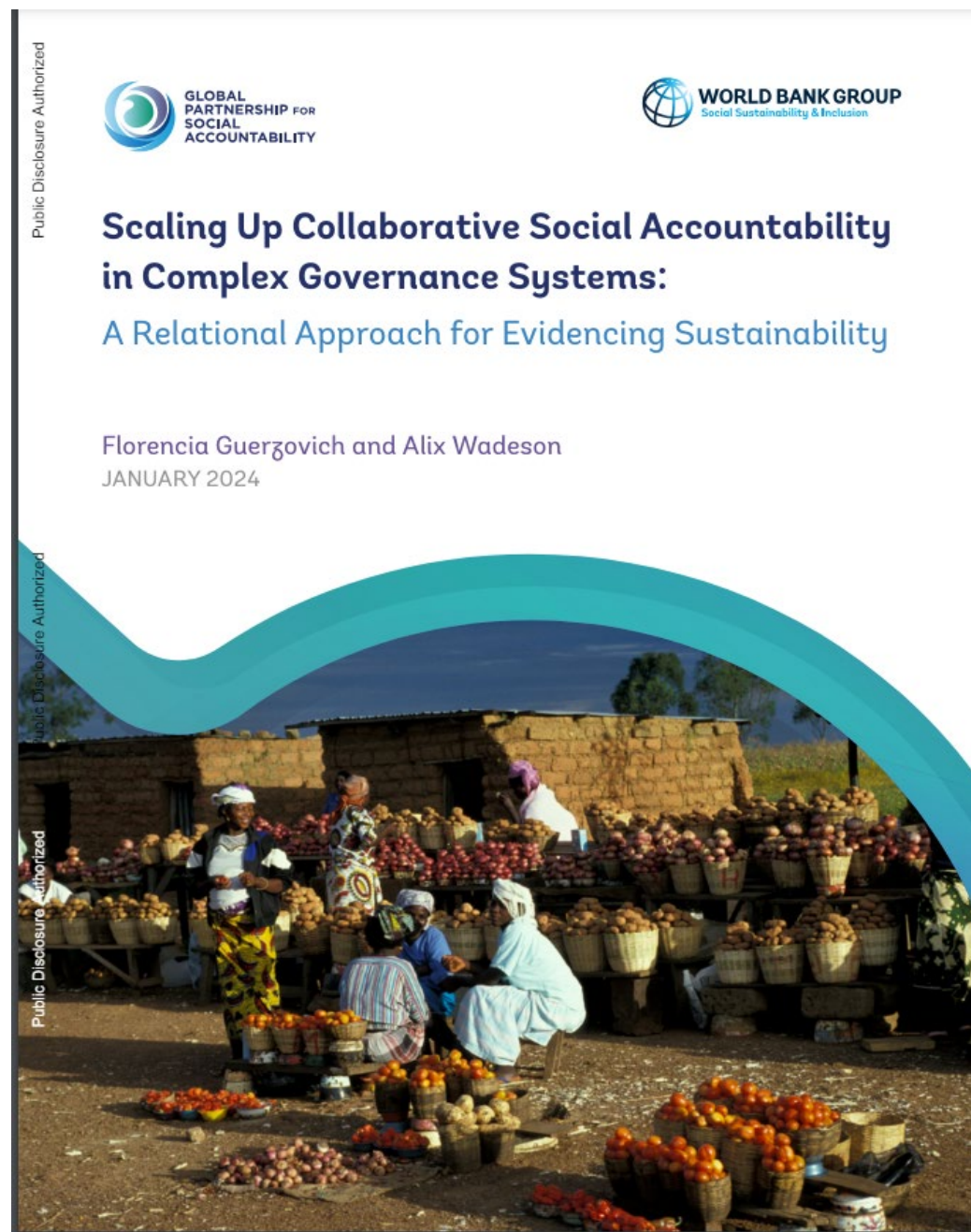
Reinterpreted status quo evaluations looking only for predefined outcomes without testing the alternative, absence of fit for purpose evidence, rather than absence of evidence of systemic effects.



Things look different when we test complex causality with fit for purpose tools.
The stories are more accurate, empowering and inclusive explanations of how change happens.



Find Out More



[Scaling Up Collaborative Social Accountability in Complex Governance Systems: A Relational Approach for Evidencing Sustainability](#)

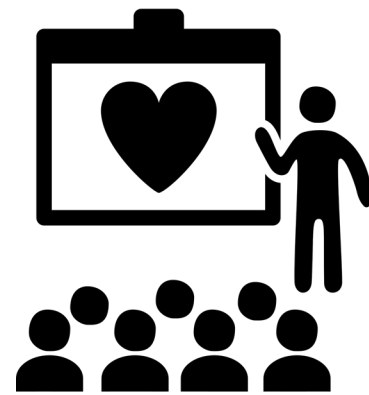
Guergovich F., Wadeson, A. (2024)

Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.



- Is this rubrics method relevant to your work?
- Would you consider using rubrics in your causal pathways journey?
- Do you have questions & comments about it?

Resources from the Causal Pathways Initiative

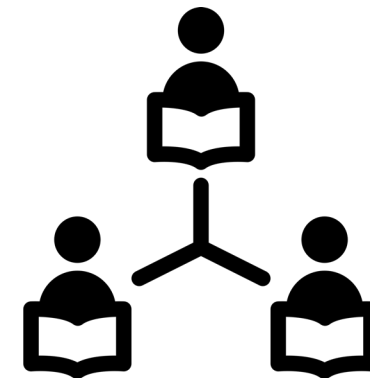


Presentations & trainings to build understanding and will

American Evaluation Association

Available to attend other events by request

Virtual 101 level training available on request



Resources to support understanding and action

Pending:
BetterEvaluation.com updated resource hub on causal pathways

Case studies to provide overall stories and more detailed examples



Learning and acting together with support

Brain Trust to help funders work through tough questions with field experts

Pending: Peer learning spaces and early career support