

Chapter 16

Evaluating Climate Change Adaptation in Practice: A Child-Centred, Community-Based Project in the Philippines

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Abstract Whilst the principles of evaluating climate change adaptation are widely documented, there are many challenges in applying these principles in practice to evaluate, improve and learn from multi-sector, multi-scale and multi-stakeholder CCA initiatives with uncertain and future-oriented outcomes.

This chapter documents a research-evaluation approach applied during a 3-year, child-centred, community-based CCA project implemented in 40 barangays across four vulnerable provinces in the Philippines. The research aimed to help project implementers to learn from real-time feedback and perspectives from children and their communities and other participants. Researchers from the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney and practitioners from implementing NGOs Plan International and Save the Children collaborated on translating theory-based and development evaluation techniques into the field. We developed local-level indicators of adaptation, participatory focus group discussion and interview methods, and a guidance document for gathering and analysing evidence against these indicators.

Key to the success of this method was its participatory foundations – operationalising the principle that since ultimately adaptation is local, local voices and perspectives matter in understanding the impact of a project. Whilst there are limits to the “ideal” evaluation process, it is possible to achieve evaluative rigour in a process that is sensitive to the practical realities and pressures of project implementation. Embedding research and learning within practice – in the inherently uncertain context of supporting a community to adapt to climate change – provided new pathways for realising and sharing learnings to achieve better adaptation outcomes.

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16.1 Introduction

Supporting communities to adapt to climate change is a complex, uncertain exercise, and there is significant potential to learn directly from the practical applications of adaptation projects and the people whom they aim to assist. Interventions that focus on communities recognise that impacts and vulnerabilities are specific to local contexts, livelihoods are often directly dependent on local environments, and communities are at the front line of responding to the impact of climate-related disasters. Yet adaptation invariably requires concerted, coordinated action across multiple scales, sectors and actors, and community-based projects increasingly focus not only on the relationships and actions within local communities, but also whether and how government policy, planning and programs are informed by community priorities and needs.

Consequently, there is no one size fits all for community-based climate change adaptation (CCA) – and there is no singular way to evaluate or draw learnings from such projects. Nevertheless, key principles and general characteristics for monitoring and evaluating (M&E) of CCA interventions are widely articulated. In particular, it is well understood that conventional M&E approaches are ill-suited to CCA¹; and that because adaptation constitutes pathways rather than end-points, evaluating CCA requires investigation of qualitative processes, rather than just solely relying on measurement of quantitative inputs or outputs. However, questions remain: how can project practitioners, researchers, evaluators and donors (interested in learning as well as accountability) operationalise these principles in practice? And, given the need for CCA interventions to generate and communicate transferable learnings about CCA activity design, implementation and impacts, how can we draw on good evaluation practice and theory to apply to the complex context of understanding a CCA project on the ground?

This chapter responds to a need for documented case studies of CCA evaluation in practice that generate and share methodological learnings about how to *do* rigorous, participatory and useful evaluations of CCA interventions. We share one example of an evaluation method applied over a 3-year community-based CCA project, implemented by Plan International and Save the Children in cooperation with communities and key government stakeholders, with research partner the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney. This project acknowledged that children are amongst the most vulnerable to climate change,² but that they have the potential to advocate for adaptation practice and

¹Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2014. *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Wgii Ar5 Technical Summary*. Geneva, Switzerland.

²Risdell, J and C McCormick. 2013. *Protect My Future: The Links between Child Protection and Disasters, Conflict and Fragility*: Plan International and Save the Children.

policy. The evaluation sought to help implementers understand how the project was supporting communities adapt to climate change, and also posed the question: what does successful adaptation look like *from the perspective* of children, youth and their communities?

16.2 The Project

Across the Philippines, many communities are extremely vulnerable to climate change due to high levels of poverty combined with high exposure to a wide range of climate change impacts. The Philippines was ranked 2nd on the 2014 World Risk Index³ and 122nd out of 177 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index.⁴ All areas of the Philippines are expected to see increased average daily temperatures and a spike in the number of very hot days. Rising sea levels and increased storm surges will impact coastal zones, whilst changes to seasonal rainfall patterns are likely to affect food security. The wet season is likely to become wetter, while the dry season becomes drier. However, given the diversity across the Philippines, the effects of these changes will vary across the country and will ultimately be localised and highly context-specific.⁵

The Child-Centred Community-Based Adaptation (CC-CBA) project, implemented from 2012 to 2015 and funded by the Australian Government, aimed to respond to these challenges by enhancing the resilience of children, youth, and their communities to the unavoidable impacts of climate change in 40 barangays across four vulnerable provinces (see Fig. 16.1): Aurora (led by Save the Children), Eastern Samar, Northern Samar and Southern Leyte (led by Plan). The four provinces were targeted due to their high poverty levels and vulnerability to climate change impacts. The design assessments found that the majority of the population had a low level of understanding of climate risk and vulnerability and low capacity to adapt. Likely impacts of climate change upon children include reduced ability to attend school, malnutrition, food insecurity, increased workloads, increased child abuse and increased morbidity and mortality from water and vector-borne diseases. All four provinces are located on the Eastern seaboard and are regularly subjected to extreme weather events such as typhoons, storm surges and flooding. The project areas were severely affected by Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013, as well as earlier Typhoons Utor and Nari in Aurora province.

³United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). 2014. *World Risk Report 2014*. Bonn, Germany.

⁴United Nations Development Programme. 2014. *Human Development Report 2014, Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*. New York.

⁵PAGASA. 2011. *Climate Change in the Philippines*: PAGASA, ADAPTAYO & MDG.F.



Fig. 16.1 Project sites

The project has two interconnected, long-term objectives; (1) increase the resilience of children, youth and their communities to climate change impacts across 40 Barangays (villages); and (2) develop a strengthened evidence base from the CC-CBA that informs policy and practice in the Philippines. These are in turn underpinned by three interconnected outcome areas around Knowledge, Advocacy, and Policy and Practice. The Theory of Change was built from a

foundation that increasing communities' knowledge⁶ about climate change, and options for adaptation and associated links with disaster risk reduction are essential to increasing resilience to climate change.

Increased knowledge also enables children and youth to take a leading role in CC-CBA activities and become climate change educators within their communities.⁷ The project facilitated the active engagement of children and youth in climate change adaptation within their communities. Through supporting children, youth and the wider community to identify, develop and implement small-scale adaptation action, the project also sought to support the community to actively improve their resilience and at the same time speak with relevant decision-makers at the local, regional and national level to influence change. By working with duty bearers, the project helped to ensure these advocacy efforts do not 'fall on deaf ears'.

Project activities included school curricula development, community education, and supporting peer education and outreach.⁸ Children and youth participated in training on using multimedia for communication and advocacy, including a radio media program, music, theatre and jingle-making. Local governments (LGs) and communities were supported to undertake participatory, climate change vulnerability and capacity assessments (PCVAs), which involved the participation of children and youth. From these assessments, locally developed adaptation initiatives were developed by school groups, by children and youth, as well as by adult community groups through a small grants programs. The project also supported LGs to use PCVA results to help plan, budget, design and implement local CCA activities, such as disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities. As well as working with children, the project directly supported LGs to design CCA-related local policies and regulations.

With the focus of children and communities, and through directly working with duty-bearers at various levels including within government, CC-CBA was fundamentally a human rights-based project. As Windfuhr (2000:25) notes, "a rights-based approach means foremost to talk about the relationship between a state and its citizens."⁹ CCA requires actions and coordination by communities and

⁶Williams, Casey, Adrian Fenton and Huq Sallemul. 2015. "Knowledge and Adaptive Capacity." *Nature Climate Change* 5(February):82–83. notes the growing agreement that knowledge is an important determinant of adaptive capacity, in research frameworks, and in international policy and agreements.

⁷Children in a Changing Climate Research. 2010. *Children, Climate Change and Disasters: An Annotated Bibliography*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies University of Sussex, Tanner, Thomas. 2010. "Shifting the Narrative: Child-Led Responses to Climate Change and Disasters in El Salvador and the Philippines." *Children & Society* 24(4):339–51. doi: [10.1111/j.1099-0860.2010.00316.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2010.00316.x)

⁸Schoch, Corinne and Pia Treichel. 2015. *Child-Centred Climate Resilience: Case Studies from the Philippines and Vietnam*: Save the Children and Plan International.

⁹Windfuhr, Michael. 2000. "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Development Cooperation." in *Working Together: The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation-Report of the Ngo Workshop.*, edited by A. Frankovits and P. Earle.

governments, and in parallel rights-based approaches focus on the claims and voices of citizens, and duties of the state, and mechanisms to enable accountability and action on both sides.¹⁰ Rights-based projects address inclusion and power imbalances and ensure poor, marginalised and vulnerable have opportunities to participate.¹¹ The human rights principles and standards applied in the project informed the evaluative method and sharpened the focus of participatory techniques.

The evaluative research component was explicitly built into the project design, and related to the project objective of strengthening the evidence base for child-centred, community-based adaptation. The research brief was: help project implementers understand how children and their communities are adapting to climate change by developing a set of indicators, and a process – a method – for gathering and analysing evidence. An indicator approach was selected because the implementing organisations considered that it would be a straightforward basis to systematically understand, measure and communicate outcomes.¹² At the same time, a set of indicators addresses the complexity of CCA that means there is no single appropriate metric for adaptation.¹³

As detailed in section 4, the main evaluative tool was focus group discussions (FGDs) with children. A total of 18 FGDs were conducted to pilot, develop and apply the indicators and method in Las Navas (including in Barangays of San Isidro and Hangi) in Northern Samar; Salcedo (including Barangays Matarinao, Garawon and Alog) and Hernani in Eastern Samar; and Maria Aurora (including Barangay San Joaquin), Dinalungan and Baler (including Barangay Zabali) in Aurora.

16.3 What ‘Type’ of Evaluation?

The research aimed to help project implementers to learn from real-time feedback about how the project was supporting children and their communities to adapt to climate change. From the outset it was clear that the approach needed to be both

¹⁰Cornwall, Andrea and Celestine Nyamu-Musembi. 2004. “Putting the ‘Rights-Based Approach’ to Development into Perspective.” *Third World Quarterly* 25(8):1415–37.

¹¹Uvin, Peter. 2007. “From the Right to Development to the Rights-Based Approach: How ‘Human Rights’ Entered Development.” *Development in Practice* 17(4–5):597–606. doi:10.1080/09614520701469617

¹²Chong, Joanne, Anna Gero and Pia Treichel. 2015. “What Indicates Improved Resilience to Climate Change? A Learning and Evaluative Process Developed from a Child-Centred, Community-Based Project in the Philippines.” *New Directions for Evaluation*.

¹³Bours, D, C McGinn and P Pringle. 2014, “Guidance Note 1: Twelve Reasons Why Climate Change Adaptation M&E Is Challenging”: SEA Change CoP. (<http://www.seachangecop.org/node/2728>), Brooks, N, S Anderson, Jessica Ayers, Ian Burton and I Tellam. 2011. *Tracking Adaptation and Measuring Development. Iied Climate Change Working Paper No. 1*. London, United Kingdom: International Institute for Environment and Development.

rigorous *and* pragmatic, and be attuned to the realities and pressures of project implementation.

Beyond these broad aims, and unlike in many accountability-styled evaluations, the evaluative approach was not limited by pre-specified requirements in terms of questions, stakeholders or methods of inquiry. As the project itself evolved over time, we tailored the evaluative method to project needs.

The method also reflects elements of several ‘types’ of evaluation practices that are variously described by theorists, researchers and evaluation practitioners. This section unbundles what is meant by ‘theory-based’ and ‘developmental’ approaches to evaluation, and maps key characteristics of these approaches that were relevant to the CC-CBA project context.

16.3.1 *Theory of Change Based Evaluation*

‘Program theory’, also referred to ‘theory-based’ or ‘theory-of-change (TOC) based evaluation’ refers to developing a causal model from project activities (inputs) to a series of outcomes, then using this model as the basis for evaluation.¹⁴ It is widely used for evaluations across sectors including to evaluate aid and development interventions.¹⁵ Theory of change-based evaluation generally uses the theory established at program design, not just to trace if different steps actually occurred, but also to test the assumptions between the causal links in the model.¹⁶ Findings from these types of evaluations can also be used to improve the ‘quality’ of theories, including by investigating alternative causal explanations to that incorporated into the initial theory of change.¹⁷

When framing an evaluation around a theory of change for a child-centred, community-based CCA project, the context for evaluation is a complex system that does not allow for a “neat” or “predictable” TOC to be articulated at the outset. CCA projects are usually dynamic and emergent interventions – whilst parameters and activities are set at the design stage, the exact details of implementation need to emerge and be developed over the course of implementation. For example, community participation in adaptation planning will always result in actions and

¹⁴Rogers (2000) in Rogers, P. J. 2008. “Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions.” *Evaluation* 14(1):29–48. doi: [10.1177/1356389007084674](https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389007084674)

¹⁵Rogers, Patricia J. and Carol H. Weiss. 2007. “Theory-Based Evaluation: Reflections Ten Years On: Theory-Based Evaluation: Past, Present, and Future.” *New Directions for Evaluation* 2007 (114):63–81. doi: [10.1002/ev.225](https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.225)

¹⁶White, Howard. 2009. “Theory-Based Impact Evaluation: Principles and Practice.” *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 1(3):271–84.

¹⁷Rogers, Patricia J. and Carol H. Weiss. 2007. “Theory-Based Evaluation: Reflections Ten Years On: Theory-Based Evaluation: Past, Present, and Future.” *New Directions for Evaluation* 2007 (114):63–81. doi: [10.1002/ev.225](https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.225)

pathways that cannot be exactly predicted at the outset of a project.¹⁸ One of the potential applications of theory-based evaluation is to identify measures that can be used for monitoring over time.¹⁹ But in complex systems relevant to CCA interventions, “SMART” measures may not be able to be developed in advance, making pre-and post-comparisons difficult.

Whilst some versions of program theory evaluation rely on close adherence at a detailed level to the initial theory to guide the evaluation, we do not take this strict definition. The complex character of CCA interventions far from makes theory-based evaluation redundant. Rather, flexible application is needed, and a balance struck between evaluation questions that are closely guided by the (initial) theory of change, and an approach that is open to outcomes, and the means to achieving them, emerging during implementation itself.²⁰

16.3.2 Developmental Evaluation, or, Learning in Complex Systems

‘Developmental evaluation’ was coined by Paton to describe the types of evaluations applicable in complex situations where outcomes are emergent, where activities are not set in stone, and where it is not exactly known how, why or where activities will lead.²¹ Developmental evaluation aims to “support real-time learning in complex and emergent situations” where the focus is on “adaptive learning rather than accountability.”²²

Development practitioners and researchers have widely recognised that for projects in complex environments to be successful, self-evaluation and ongoing learning is key. Developmental evaluation can be understood by considering what its purpose is not – it is not summative, in that it doesn’t aim to evaluate at the end of a program and make a judgement about whether and how the program will continue;

¹⁸Rogers, Patricia J. 2011. “Implications of Complicated and Complex Characteristics for Key Tasks in Evaluation.” in *Evaluating the Complex: Attribution, Contribution, and Beyond*, edited by K. Forss, M. Marra and R. Schwartz. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction.

¹⁹Funnell, SC and PJ Rogers. 2011. *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

²⁰Rogers, P. J. 2008. “Using Programme Theory to Evaluate Complicated and Complex Aspects of Interventions.” *Evaluation* 14(1):29–48. doi: [10.1177/1356389007084674](https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389007084674)

²¹Gamble, Jamie A.A. 2008. *A Developmental Evaluation Primer*: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation.

²²Dozois, Elizabeth, Marc Langlois and Blacnhet-Cohen. 2010. *A Practitioner’s Guide to Developmental Evaluation*: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development.

nor is it formative, in that it is nor primarily about setting baseline data for a future summative evaluation.²³

These high complexity situations have characteristics such as dynamic, emergent, non-linear and uncertain²⁴ – a list which also fundamentally characterises climate change, its impacts on communities, and what is needed to support adaptation. Developmental evaluation has applicability where there is uncertainty, and where the program might need to change and adapt according to emerging and changing contexts. This is particularly applicable in the case of climate change adaptation, and in the case of the CC-CBA project, significant path changes were required in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in December 2013.

A key characteristic of developmental evaluation is that it supports continuous learning and innovation through embedding evaluators as part of the team engaged in project delivery, in a long-term partnering relationship.²⁵ The CC-CBA design integrated the research component within the project and indeed it was the role of researchers to facilitate evidence-based, systematic reflection on project progress. Strong individual and organisational partnerships were successfully built.²⁶ The practical realities of program budgets meant that evaluative researchers could not be embedded full-time within the project implemented, but were directly involved in research design and inception and through the course of the evaluative process interacted with project implementers periodically throughout the 3-year project.

16.4 The Method: Details and Reflections

The evaluative method described in this section was developed through a collaborative effort between researchers and project implementers,²⁷ and field-tested in a participatory fashion through several iterations with child, youth and adult participants. The method focuses on collecting and analysing evidence against a set of indicators. These indicators were initially drafted by the team based on the theory of change and the experience of project implementers. The indicator set was revised

²³Patton, Michael Quinn. 2011. *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: The Guilford Press.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Dozois, Elizabeth, Marc Langlois and Blacnhet-Cohen. 2010. *A Practitioner's Guide to Developmental Evaluation*: The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the International Institute for Child Rights and Development, Patton, Michael Quinn. 2011. *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. New York: The Guilford Press.

²⁶Treichel, Pia, Joanne Chong and Anna Gero. 2014. *A Partnership for Learning, Reflection and Evaluation in Action: Exploring Opportunities for Understanding Program Impact*: ACFID University Network.

²⁷Chong, Joanne, Anna Gero and Pia Treichel. 2015. "What Indicates Improved Resilience to Climate Change? A Learning and Evaluative Process Developed from a Child-Centred, Community-Based Project in the Philippines." *New Directions for Evaluation*.

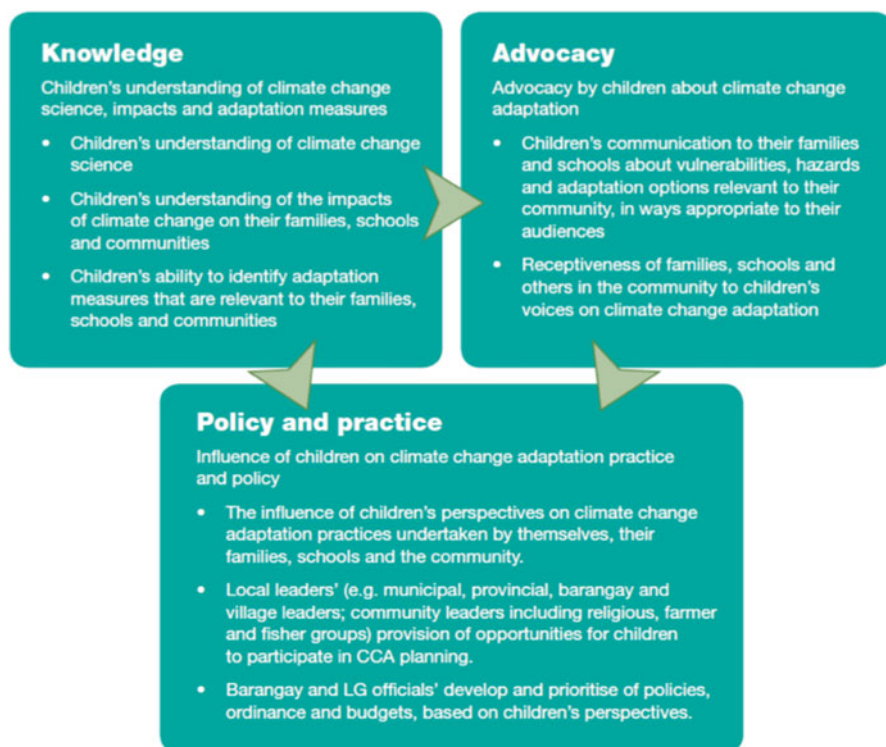


Fig. 16.2 Child-centred, community based climate change adaptation indicators

following pilot, “ground-truthing” focus group discussions (FGDs) with children and youth to ensure they reflected children’s experiences. From a rights-based perspective, participants should ideally be involved in setting the evaluation agenda.²⁸ In this case, the team sought to reflect participants’ views in the indicator set through the process of iterative FGDs, and incorporating children’s voices to refine the indicator set.

The indicator set is illustrated in Fig. 16.2, the method outlined below is also available in the format of a guidance document for project implementers.²⁹

²⁸See Johnson, Vicky. 2009. “Rights through Evaluation and Understanding Children’s Realities.” in *A Handbook of Children and Yount People’s Participation*.

²⁹Chong, Joanne, Pia Treichel, Gero, Anna, Rachelle Nuestro, Joseph McDonough, William Azucena, Joan Abes and Nina Abogado. 2015. *Child-Centred Commuuty-Based Climate Change Adaptation in the Philippines: Guidance for Local Adaptation Indicators*. Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney and Plan International.

16.4.1 Step A: Focus Group Discussions with Children and Youth

Participatory FGDs were the core of the method applied to evaluate, test assumptions, and hear the perspectives from children and youth about their experiences of the CC-CBA project. The focus groups were designed for small groups of 8–12 children, but in practice larger groups who attended were managed flexibly with a similar process.

The team conducting the focus group discussions comprised a facilitator, documenter and a few observers, all from the project or research team. The children were familiar with the facilitators, who were specifically selected as members of the implementation team who had worked closely with the children through various activities. Although familiarity between evaluators and participants is sometimes thought to adversely affect the “impartiality” of the process,³⁰ in this situation encouraging participation and ensuring children were comfortable with the adults present was considered paramount to inclusive participation, consistent with the rights-based approach to the project, and particularly important given the sensitive and potentially troubling issues discussed related to the lived experiences of children through typhoons, landslides, floods and other climate change impacts. “Bias” resulting from the familiarity was effectively managed through careful FGD design and implementation.³¹

The facilitators were well placed to encourage children to participate. However, some children were at times hesitant to speak, at least initially, when there were several adults present as observers in the background (including one to three not from the Philippines). Over repeated visits throughout the research process children became familiar and comfortable with the Manila- and Australia-based members of the team – by the end of the project activities, familiar enough to notice and ask about where we were when some or a few of us were not present. In other cases some younger children were reluctant to offer views if the groups were dominated by older children, although overall working with teachers beforehand generally ensured children within a group were fairly consistent in age. Separate FGDs were conducted with out of school youth groups. However, there were challenges in organising to hear from children with disabilities and from ethnic minorities.

Adults from the community – parents, teachers, and local government members – were generally not present at the focus groups with children, as we sought to avoid power imbalances that would discourage children from sharing their perspectives. However, in some focus groups, local government or some teachers attended, discretely in the background. In these cases, team members familiar with these adults (who were also project participants), gauged that they would not inhibit

³⁰House, E R. 2005. “Deliberative Democratic Evaluation.” in *Sage Encyclopedia of Evaluation*.

³¹Chong, Joanne, Anna Gero and Pia Treichel. 2015. “What Indicates Improved Resilience to Climate Change? A Learning and Evaluative Process Developed from a Child-Centred, Community-Based Project in the Philippines.” *New Directions for Evaluation*.

children's participation, and considered there would be value in them hearing children's perspectives directly.

A nested approach was taken to translate the TOC indicator set into a series of questions linking knowledge, advocacy and practice and policy. The questions in the focus group were developed to investigate qualitative processes – for example, whether, how and why were knowledge and advocacy activities have influenced practices and policy? The FGDs focussed on those project activities which directly involved children, particularly on knowledge and advocacy activities. The FGDs were also used as a tool to explore whether children were aware of or involved in other participatory, planning- and policy-oriented activities such as the PCVAs conducted by local government. Beyond FGDs, policy impact was explored further through supplementary interviews with local leaders (see section).

In FGDs, children were specifically invited to share problems and barriers around communicating to their families, schools, community and government members about climate change adaptation, and project implementers found their responses crucial to fine-tune advocacy program activities with both children and duty-bearers. Children also shared with team members new stories of how they had influenced their family members (including for example, family members who were also Barangay leaders) to recognise the importance of climate change adaptation.

Attribution was a key consideration in designing questions – it was considered in such a situation that establishing precise counterfactuals was not a realistic exercise, but the questions explicitly probed fact (e.g. what children learned from a specific project activity) as well as alternative explanations (e.g. sources of information about climate change beyond the project).

The final topic of the focus groups was key to applying the rights-based approach to the evaluation. We explored with children their vision for what climate change adaptation would look like, including by asking what else they would like to do to prepare for the impacts of climate change, and what else they would like to see others do – family members, school, community and local governments. By giving children a voice on this open question, useful information was provided to the implementation team about ideas for future activities. By posing this discussion topic, it also prompted children themselves to think creatively and independently about how to adapt.

16.4.2 Step B: Supplementary Interviews with Adults

Supplementary interviews were conducted after the focus groups to gather additional perspectives on pathways of impact and changes that had occurred through the project. Attention to the responsibilities of duty-bearers is fundamental to rights-based programming and adults' attitudes and actions were explored during the supplementary interviews. Parents, teachers and local governments were asked questions that were parallel to those posed in focus groups, around knowledge, advocacy and practice and policy. For example they were asked for their

perspectives as ‘audience’ members of children’s advocacy, both formally through project activities (e.g. radio programs) and through other informal communication channels, such as at home. Local government members were asked specific questions to inform the “policy” sub-set of indicators, including about how children and their communities were involved in Barangay-level planning for disaster risk reduction and CCA. The policy impact of the project relied not solely on advocacy by children and their communities, but also critically by directly supporting local governments to: provide opportunities for children and community’s to share perspectives in forums (such as PCVAs); and then use these perspectives to inform their planning and budgeting for CCA activities and development of CCA-related policies and regulations. These issues were explored during supplementary interviews.

Project implementers, reflecting on these supplementary interviews in comparison with the focus groups, noted in some cases how children and youth had developed a much more sophisticated understanding of climate change science, impacts and adaptation solutions than some of the corresponding adult participants in the project. These supplementary interviews thus provided project implementers with useful information about priorities for continuing their work with duty-bearers, including particularly on advocacy activities.

16.4.3 Step C: Reflection and Analysis via Team Debrief

The analysis of FGD and interview results was mostly conducted through structured ‘debrief’ sessions involving facilitators, documenters, observers and interviews closely after each community was visited. This approach to analysis was driven by the practical realities of project implementation – the busy schedules and limited time for team members to conduct further desk-based analysis – as well as recognising the value of involving the team in joint reflection exercise.

The main purpose of the debrief session was to foster learning through structured reflection on the FGDs and interviews. Through the debrief sessions, the team also captured additional observations from the FGDs that were not possible to capture in detail at the time of the FGD; to reflected on what went well and less so about the FGD and facilitation itself to inform future FGDs and briefings required; and to identify learnings from the FGD and interviews, and how these might help inform future program activities. Debriefs also involved capturing representative example quotes from children in a structured away against indicators areas that showed how well children’s knowledge improved, their communication and advocacy, and the impact on practice and policy – with a reminder to link to participation in the program.

Although the emphasis was on qualitative investigation, the project team also considered it could be useful to formulate scalar measures of the indicators, potentially to enable comparison and, beyond the original thinking for applying the indicators, to assist reporting for accountability purposes. This required the

team working together in the debrief sessions to articulate ‘levels’ of knowledge improvement, capacity to advocate, and practice and policy impact – and then assessing how many girls and boys in each focus group were at each level. Defining levels for scalar translation was a challenging process, particularly within the timeframe of a debrief session. The notion of scalar measures also prompted discussions about the appropriate baseline, adjustments for age level, and adjustments for variations in ‘external’ factors such as the overall level of education, access to media or other information, and whether or not children had themselves experienced climate-related disasters. Nevertheless, these discussions about how to quantify changes were in themselves valuable for the team to reflect on not only what level, but qualitatively what kind of changes were expected and could be expected as a result of the project.

16.4.4 Step D: Further Analysis

The learning and reflection aims were achieved through steps A to C, but an optional extra step was developed and trialled, and could be implemented if further resources and time are available. The aim of further analysis – detailed consideration of notes and transcripts from FGDs, interviews and the debrief sessions – is to produce written narrative that can be used to record, share, report and compare learnings, and be used as examples to inform CCA practice on the ground. Ideally, the draft narrative could be shared with those children and youth who participated in the FGDs to gather their further reflections and feedback. In practice however, time availability was a major constraint limiting this aspect of the method.

16.5 Conclusions

These FGDs have been really useful for me as a member of the project implementation team. We have had the chance to stop, reflect, and listen to the children about what they have learned about climate change adaptation and what difference the project is making. – Theresa Abogado, member of the project implementing team in the Philippines.

Key to the success of this method was its participatory foundations – operationalising the principle that since ultimately adaptation is local, local voices and perspectives matter in understanding the impact of a project. The method focused on hearing the perspectives of participants and facilitating structured, but open discussion and sharing between participants, and with project implementers. There are three main avenues by which this participatory, rights-based approach underpinned an effective evaluation that generated learnings and in itself contributed to project outcomes. Firstly, the indicators and process itself were developed through piloting in a participatory fashion with children and their communities, which in and of itself contributed to overcoming the challenges of balancing the

rigour and participatory goals of evaluating a community-based CCA project. Secondly, asking questions that prompted communities to think about what it means to be more resilient, is not only a way to ascertain how the project has helped improve understanding, but is also key to enabling this resilience. And thirdly, by asking communities “what else is needed?” beyond project activities to date helps to inform the details of subsequent activities, and also helps to inform how and what changes to look out for as measures of community-defined success.

This example also illustrates that there are practical limits to the “ideal” evaluation process but that it is possible to usefully draw on key principles to inform the approach to evaluating a CCA practice. There were practical limits to full application of a right-based approach, and the extent to which children themselves are included in the development of the approach and the analysis and articulation of learnings. There were also limits to what ‘can be known or found out’ through an evaluation about causal relationships between activities and outcomes, when there are a myriad of interacting factors at play. It was nevertheless particularly useful to use the project’s general theory of change to guide the evaluation, but allowing flexibility for the specific links and relationships – such as how knowledge, combined with formal and informal communication activities would assist communities to advocate for change and influence practice and policy – would emerge.

In practice, we developed strong team and organisational partnerships between the NGOs and research organisations involved in the evaluation and the project, which proved particularly valuable given the type of project and the project context. Whilst not ‘developmental evaluation’ to its full extent – researchers were not embedded in the team on a continuous basis – the approach was far from the ‘conventional’ end of the research spectrum where external groups of academic researchers seek out an existing applied project in order to test or calibrate a model or theory. The process involved joint learning and reflection from both implementing and research organisations throughout the project. The project was adjusted in real time to integrate lessons learned from the evaluative research; concurrently, the evaluative approach itself evolved to reflect lessons from the project’s activities on the ground. Embedding research within practice – in the inherently uncertain context of supporting a community to adapt to climate change – provided new pathways for realising and sharing learnings from the ground, to achieve better adaptation outcomes.

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