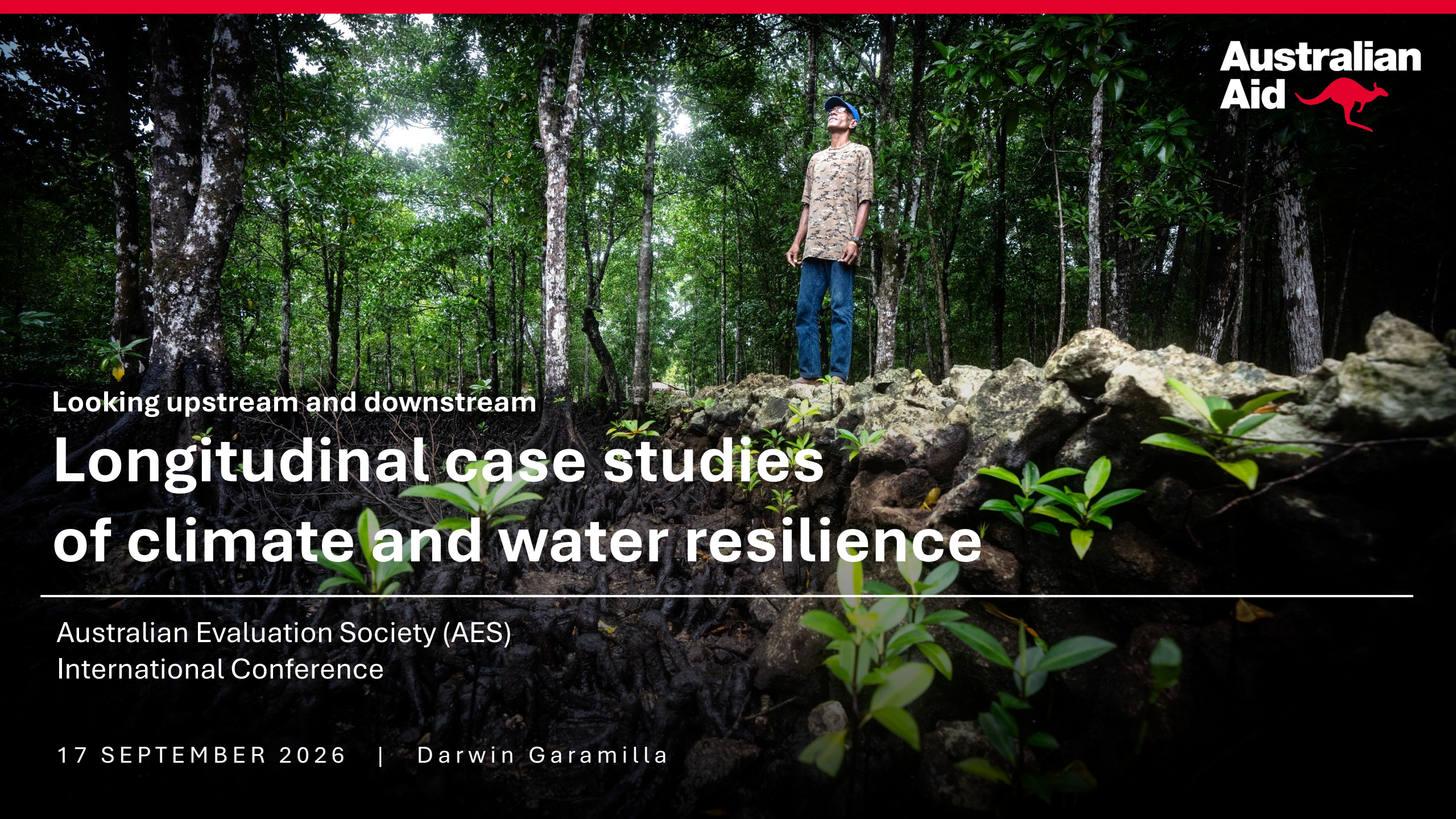


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Looking upstream and downstream

Longitudinal case studies of climate and water resilience

Australian Evaluation Society (AES)
International Conference

17 SEPTEMBER 2026 | Darwin Garamilla

Welcome and Introductions



MODERATOR

Stuart Raetz

MEL Lead

Climate Resilient Communities (CRC)



SPEAKER

Dr Keren Winterford

Associate Professor

University of Technology Sydney Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF)



SPEAKER

Dr Primatia Romana Wulandari

MERLA Advisor

Australian Water Partnership (AWP)

Agenda

SESSION	WHO	TIME
Introductions	Stuart Raetz	10 mins
Case study: Climate Resilient Communities (CRC)	Dr Keren Winterford	10 mins
Case study: Australian Water Partnership (AWP)	Dr Primatia Romana Wulandari	10 mins
Interactive discussion: Perspectives and orientation	All	15-20 mins
Reflection and wrap up	All	10 mins

Resilience

The **capacity of interconnected social, economic and ecological systems** to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disturbance, **responding or reorganising** in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure. Resilience is a positive attribute when it **maintains capacity for adaptation, learning and/or transformation.**

(IPCC, 2016)



Resilience

“Makataki'i 'a e pole mo e faingta'a 'i he fononga
‘oe moui 'i he maama 'o e lototo'a mo e mo’ui tuiaki”

“Encountering challenges and adversities of life’s journey in the light of courage and perseverance”

Leonaitasi Hoponoa (Tonga Community Development Trust)



MEL for climate resilience

- Long **time** horizons
- Inherent **uncertainty**
- Incomplete **data**
- Shifting **baselines**
- **Dynamic** change
- Divergent **values**
- **Cross-disciplinary** approaches

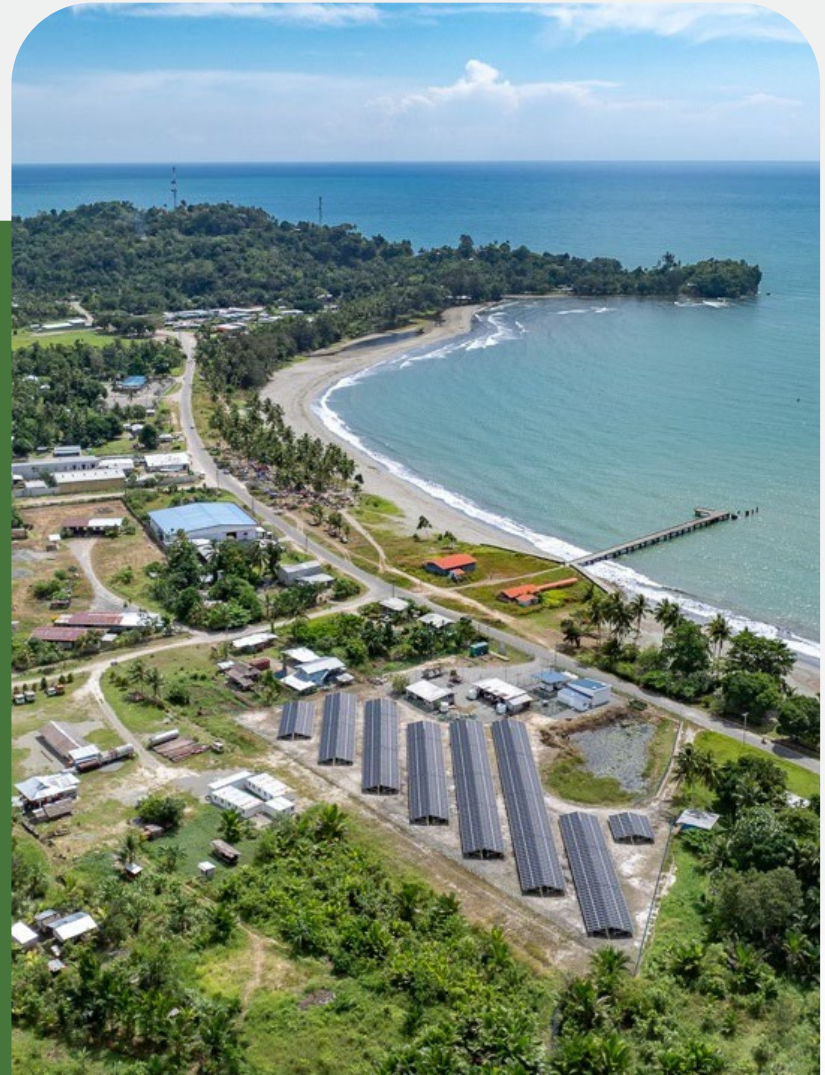


Bours et al (2015) *'Monitoring and Evaluation of Climate Change Adaptation: A Review of the Landscape'*, New Directions in Evaluation (147).

Longitudinal Case Studies

Longitudinal: **trajectories of change** over time to understand **how, why and under what conditions change occurs** rather than providing a snapshot

*"…study of **particularity and complexity** of a single case…to understand its activity within **important circumstances**"*



Stake, R (1995) 'The Art of Case Study Research' Sage.

Climate Resilient Communities

Climate Resilient Communities (CRC**) supports implementation of the Australian Government's inclusive climate change commitments** under Australia's *International Development Policy*, in line with partner government priorities.

- Supports climate investment
- Drives climate integration
- Addresses climate change and disaster risk
- Incentivises gender-responsive locally led climate and disaster resilience programming

Designed for **9 years** from 2024 to 2033

$234.9M investment for first 5 years (2024–29)

Focused on **Indo-Pacific** region

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Longitudinal Case Study Example: Climate Resilient Communities

Dr Keren Winterford
University of Technology Sydney Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF)

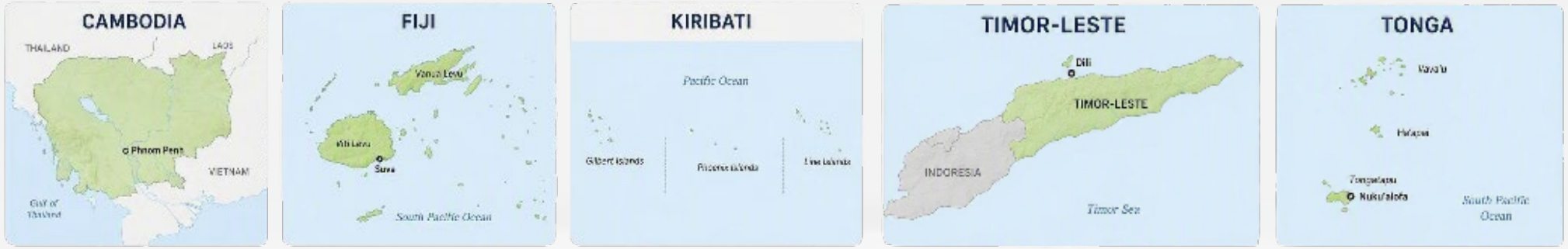


Longitudinal Case Studies

Community case studies are carried out through a research partnership of five national organisations, with coordination and support from the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures.

During a multi-country co-design workshop we identified a principled practice for how we work.

COUNTRIES



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Longitudinal Case Studies

1 

‘Resilience’ requires open, locally grounded inquiry.

2 

Deep place-based case studies are needed to understand complex resilience dynamics.

3 

Forward-looking longitudinal case studies function as formative evaluation, helping shape outcomes as they emerge.

4 

The process of inquiry and learning can itself contribute to resilience building.

5 

Broader exploratory MEL complements project-focused evaluation by revealing what really matters to people and communities.

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Longitudinal Case Study Example: Australian Water Partnership (AWP)

THE AUSTRALIAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

Dr Primatia Romana Wulandari
Alinea International, Australian Water Partnership (AWP)



Australian Water Partnership

The **Australian Water Partnership (AWP)**, established in 2015, **is DFAT's global water resource management program** — mobilising Australian water expertise to support international development and foreign policy objectives across the Indo-Pacific.

- Shares knowledge and builds capacity
- 250+ Australian partners across 30+ countries, more than 550 activities implemented
- Goal: climate-resilient water resource management
- Phase 3: 2 EOPOs (EOPO 1: Adoption of climate-resilient WRM policies, practices, and tools and EOPO 2: Enhanced capacity, partnerships, and collaboration for climate-resilient WRM)

Established **2015**

250+ partners
across sectors

30+ countries
Indo-Pacific & beyond

$35m
investment for
Phase 3 (2024-2028)

Beyond the Project Lens

1 

Resilience is not a project outcome — it's a capacity that accumulates through repeated investment, not single interventions.

2 

Systems change follows relationships and trust, not linear project pathways

3 

Complementary open inquiry (unbound by the program logic) has surfaced unanticipated outcomes; in fact, many of AWP's most significant outcomes were never captured in the original program logic.

Climate science now describes climate as standing on two legs — atmospheric and ecological. AWP's resilience story stands on the same two legs: the delivery evidence we track, and the relational capacity that usually goes unmeasured.

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Four Pathways, One Story

112 activities · 12 countries · 3 phases · 2015–2026

01

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY · Climate & Water

SOBA → AdaptWater → Mekong Water Facility → Climate-Resilient WRM

WEIDAP, Vietnam:
~54% cut in water use, higher yields

02

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY · Inclusion

GESI policy (2017) → GEDSI mainstreaming → GEDSI-climate nexus

85%+ of activities now GEDSI-responsive

03

GOVERNANCE CAPACITY · Trust & Partners

Trusted relationships → Co-design → Policy reform → Regional governance

Vietnam's Water Law amended ·
Cambodia's Climate Roadmap

04

TRANSFORMATIVE CAPACITY · Leadership

YWP training → Professional networks → Regional leadership

Alumni now leading utilities, ministries
& regional bodies

These four capacities are not separate outcomes.
They are one story of resilience AWP has been building over a decade.

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The Catch

A decade is hard to see clearly, in either direction.

RECALL BIAS

Reconstructing a decade relies on memory and outcome-harvest records that tend to favour recent, positive, institutionally convenient accounts.

MOVING CONTEXT

The water governance themselves change — governments, stakeholders, tools and data standards — so a clean “before / after” comparison rarely holds over 10 years.

SHIFTING CONTEXT

Climate variability, political cycles and funding priorities move independently of AWP's program logic, confounding what can be attributed to the partnership.

TURNOVER OF PEOPLE

The relationships this study says matter most are carried by individuals who move on — so the mechanism of change is hard to track consistently.

Not a reason to abandon longitudinal MEL — it's why Phase III triangulates across sources, verifies harvested outcomes with the institutions concerned, and tests alternative explanations.

Naming the Shift

Frequently treated as interchangeable. They are methodologically distinct.



CONTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

Starts from the theory of change and works outward: do the causal mechanisms we specified plausibly explain what happened?



OUTCOME HARVESTING

Starts from observed outcomes — including unexpected ones — and works backward: what changed, and how did we contribute?

Better suited to uncertainty and continuous adaptation — AWP's operating conditions.

AWP isn't experimenting alone — recent practice across sectors:

- **Water & climate services (Senegal):** 20-year reconstruction combining innovation history, outcome harvesting and impact-pathway analysis (Blundo-Canto et al.)
- **Freshwater partnership (NZ / Fonterra):** 10-year Complexity-Aware Monitoring and Evaluation — CAME (Allen & Sherwood, 2024)
- **Health systems (5 countries):** complexity-aware causal analysis of COVID-19 response (Molla et al., 2024)

Portfolio-level, pathway-based MEL isn't a departure from rigor — recent practice treats it as the emerging standard for long-horizon, multi-actor programs (Rosenberg, Kotschy & Pollard, 2025).

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Not Just a Method Swap

Three levels of systems engagement

01 Understanding interrelationships

how do activities, actors and institutions connect?

02 Acknowledging multiple perspectives

whose theory of change counts?

03 Critically reflecting on power & boundary judgments

who decides what is “in scope”?

AWP's shift from project-level to portfolio-level MEL is not a technical upgrade. It is a boundary judgment — a decision to redraw what counts as the unit of change.

Every MEL redesign is also a decision about whose story gets told.

From Evidence to Practice

1. Capacity — not delivery — is the leading indicator of resilience.
2. The evaluation question shifts from attribution (did we cause it?) to contribution (how did we help?).
3. MEL must complement delivery tracking with methods that can see emergence.



The Story of AWP

Projects → Relationships → Institutions → Capacity → Resilience



The story of AWP is not the story of projects. It is the story of people, institutions and partnerships building capacity over time.



If we only evaluate the project, we see one leg of the story — not the resilience it helped build.



Phase III's task: a longitudinal MEL system that can see this story — and triangulate it, since much of the evidence is AWP's own outcome-harvest data.

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Discussion



Interactive discussion

Reflecting on your own experience and practice, what are the **methodological opportunities and challenges** that you have encountered in MEL for resilience?

Think about:



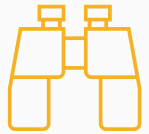
Place.

What was the ‘case’ that you focused on? Communities? Institutions? A program?



Scale.

How did you set the boundaries of the case that you were focusing on? How did the case interact with context?



Orientation.

Did you look back (retrospective)? Or forward?

Discuss with your group.

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Closing reflections



Closing reflections (Prima)

1

If resilience accumulates rather than delivers, our evaluation timelines need to stretch further than our project cycles ever will.

2

The relationships we spent the least time evaluating were often the ones that mattered most.

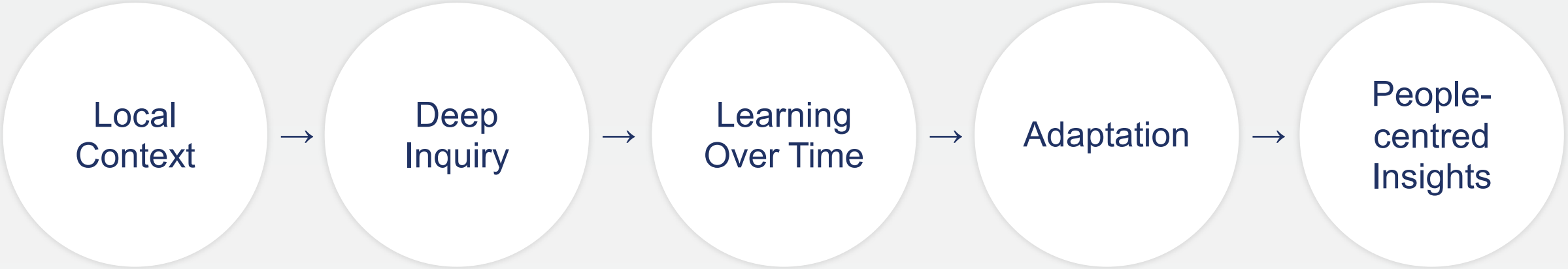
3

Rigour, for a longitudinal study, means triangulating our own story — not just telling it well.

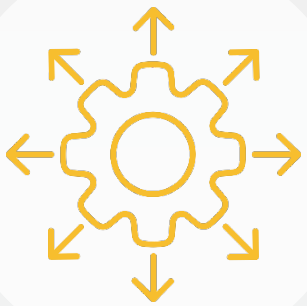
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Ten years in, the unit of change was never the project. It was the people who stayed in the system.

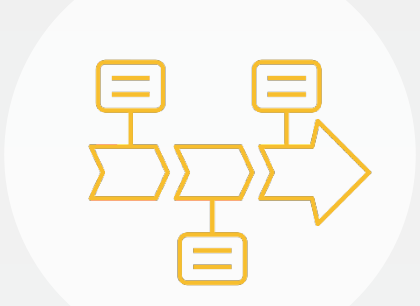
Closing reflections (Keren)



Wrap up (Stuart)



Scope:
Scale and place



Time horizon:
Forward looking
vs retrospective approaches



Methodological orientation:
Exploring vs explaining

Contacts



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Thank You

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