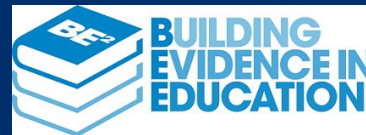


# DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR: 2023 UPDATE

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In collaboration with the Building Evidence in Education (BE<sup>2</sup>) working group.



# WHAT DID THE REVIEW DO?



- Package with brief descriptions of tools and frameworks
- Mapping of 21 tools and frameworks to identify similarities/differences with respect to their:
  - Status of development/implementation
  - Objectives
  - Boundary/Scope
  - Nature of Implementation
- Main Take-Away: an impressive wealth of experiences/perspectives that present an opportunity for learning from each other and collaboration.

| Tools                                                                     | Objectives                   |   |                 |  |   |                   |   | Boundary                                                           |   | Implementation                                                                  |   |                                        |   |                                                                                          |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   |                  |         |                                                                                                               |                       |               |               |   |   |         |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----------------|--|---|-------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---|---|---------|---|---|
|                                                                           | 1<br>Descriptive             |   | 2<br>Diagnostic |  |   | 3<br>Prescriptive |   |                                                                    |   | 1<br>Primary<br>Executor                                                        |   | 2<br>Expertise<br>Required             |   | 3<br>Amount of<br>Time Required                                                          |   |   | 4<br>Amount of<br>Budget Required                                                                                                                                 |                  |         | 5<br>Breadth of Participation                                                                                 |                       |               |               |   |   |         |   |   |
| *Tools updated since 2019 shown in dark grey                              | 0: Not<br>1: Some<br>2: Very |   |                 |  |   |                   |   | 1: Sub-Sector<br>2: Sector-Wide<br>3: System Level<br>4: All Three |   | 0: Mostly external<br>1: Equally internal<br>and external<br>2: Mostly internal |   | 0: Limited<br>1: Some<br>2: High level |   | 0: Short <1 month<br>1: Medium 1-6 months<br>2: Long 6-11 months<br>3: Very long >1 year |   |   | 0: Minimal funds required <\$50K<br>1: Moderate funds required<br>\$50-250K<br>2: Large amount required<br>\$250-500K<br>3: Very large amount<br>required >\$500K |                  |         | 0: Only a team of experts<br>1: Team of experts<br>& some participation<br>2: Highly participatory<br>process |                       |               |               |   |   |         |   |   |
| RISE Diagnostic*                                                          |                              | 1 |                 |  |   | 2                 | 0 |                                                                    |   |                                                                                 | 3 |                                        | 0 |                                                                                          |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 1       |                                                                                                               |                       | unknown       |               |   | 0 |         |   |   |
| Decision Protocol                                                         |                              | 1 |                 |  |   | 2                 |   | 1                                                                  |   |                                                                                 |   | 4                                      |   | 0                                                                                        |   |   | 1                                                                                                                                                                 |                  |         | 1                                                                                                             |                       |               | unknown       |   |   |         | 1 |   |
| IIEP Education Policy Toolbox                                             | 0                            |   |                 |  |   | 2                 |   |                                                                    | 2 | 1                                                                               |   |                                        |   | 1                                                                                        |   |   | 1                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 0       |                                                                                                               |                       |               | 0             |   |   |         | 1 |   |
| USAID Education System Diagnostic*                                        |                              | 1 |                 |  |   | 2                 |   | 1                                                                  |   |                                                                                 |   | 4                                      |   | 1                                                                                        |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 | 1-2 (1-9 months) |         |                                                                                                               | 1 - 2 (\$100k-\$500k) |               |               |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Gujarat systems diagnostics                                               |                              |   | 2               |  |   | 2                 |   | 1                                                                  |   | 1                                                                               |   |                                        |   | 1                                                                                        |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 1       |                                                                                                               |                       | unknown       |               |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Identifying Binding Constraints in education                              |                              |   | 2               |  |   | 2                 |   | 1                                                                  |   | 1                                                                               |   |                                        |   | 1                                                                                        |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  |         |                                                                                                               | 3                     | unknown       |               |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Education Sector Analysis Vol. 3                                          |                              |   | 2               |  |   | 2                 | 0 |                                                                    |   |                                                                                 |   | 4                                      |   | 1                                                                                        |   |   | 1                                                                                                                                                                 |                  |         | 1                                                                                                             |                       |               | 1             |   |   | 1       |   |   |
| GEQAF                                                                     |                              | 1 |                 |  |   | 2                 |   |                                                                    | 2 |                                                                                 |   | 3                                      |   |                                                                                          | 2 |   | 1                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | unclear |                                                                                                               |                       |               | 1             |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Labor Market Assessments                                                  |                              |   | 2               |  |   | 2                 |   |                                                                    | 2 |                                                                                 |   | 4                                      | 0 |                                                                                          |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 1       |                                                                                                               |                       | unknown       |               |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Delivery Labs                                                             | 0                            |   |                 |  |   | 2                 |   |                                                                    | 2 |                                                                                 | 2 |                                        |   |                                                                                          | 2 |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 1       |                                                                                                               |                       |               |               | 3 |   |         | 2 |   |
| Rapid Education and Risk Analysis (RERA)                                  |                              |   | 2               |  | 1 |                   | 0 |                                                                    |   |                                                                                 |   | 4                                      | 0 |                                                                                          |   |   | 2                                                                                                                                                                 |                  | 1       |                                                                                                               |                       | varies widely |               |   |   | 1       |   |   |
| SABER                                                                     |                              |   | 2               |  | 1 |                   |   | 1                                                                  |   | 1                                                                               | 2 |                                        |   | 0                                                                                        |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   | 2                |         | 1                                                                                                             |                       |               | 1             |   |   | 0       |   |   |
| USAID Education Sector Assessments                                        | varies                       |   | varies          |  |   | varies            |   | varies                                                             |   | varies                                                                          |   | varies                                 |   | 0                                                                                        |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   | 2                |         | 1                                                                                                             | 2                     |               | varies widely |   |   | varies  |   |   |
| Surveys of Enacted Curriculum***                                          |                              |   | 2               |  | 1 |                   | 0 |                                                                    |   | unknown                                                                         |   | unknown                                |   | 0                                                                                        |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   | 2                | unknown |                                                                                                               |                       | unknown       |               |   |   |         | 2 |   |
| Guidelines to Strengthen the Right to Education in National Frameworks*** | yes                          |   | yes             |  |   | yes               |   | yes                                                                |   |                                                                                 |   |                                        | 4 | unknown                                                                                  |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   | 2                |         | 1                                                                                                             | 2                     |               | unknown       |   |   | unknown |   |   |
| A Primer for Engaging Education Stakeholders in Policy Reviews***         | yes                          |   | yes             |  |   | yes               |   | yes                                                                |   |                                                                                 |   |                                        | 4 | 0                                                                                        |   |   |                                                                                                                                                                   | 2                |         | 1                                                                                                             | 2                     |               | unknown       |   |   | unknown |   |   |
| Education Microplanning Toolkit***                                        | 0                            |   |                 |  |   | yes               |   | yes                                                                |   | community level                                                                 |   | community level                        |   |                                                                                          |   | 2 |                                                                                                                                                                   | 1                |         |                                                                                                               | 1                     |               | unknown       |   |   |         |   | 2 |

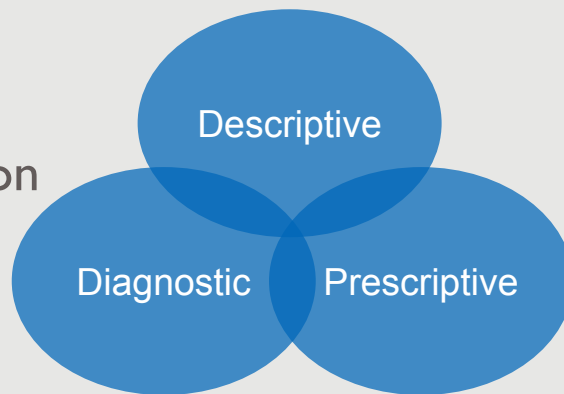
# WHY SO MANY TOOLS?

- Localized tools– tools which are tailored to work in a sub-national context or a national context with minimal role of international actors
  - Examples: Delivery Labs, Gujarat Systems Diagnostics, Education Microplanning, GEQAF
- National-level tools– tools which are intended to inform policies and reforms at the country level
  - Examples: ESA, IIEP-UNESCO Screening Tool, PsDP
- Specialized tools– tools which are intended to look at a particular topic within the larger education system
  - Examples: Surveys of Enacted Curriculum, Labor Market Assessments, Right to Education in National Frameworks

# — CHARACTERISTICS OF TOOLS

# WHAT DOES IT DO?

- **Descriptive** – ‘what is the state of education policies and outcomes’?
- **Diagnostic** – ‘what do we see these education policies and outcomes’?
- **Prescriptive** – ‘what can be done to improve these education policies and outcomes’?
- Very few tools are purely descriptive, diagnostic or prescriptive – usually a mix of two or all three
- Several tools build on each other (such as Decision Protocol and RISE Diagnostics building on SABER, ESA-PEA building on ESA’s earlier chapters)



# WHAT ARE ITS BOUNDARIES?

## SUB-SECTOR

- Basic, ECD, Secondary, TVET, Tertiary
- Different Policy Areas

## SECTOR-WIDE

- “Older” tools generally started out with sub-sector or sector as their boundaries but some expanded in recent years to look at the supra-sector/system

— examples: ESA-PEA, SABER Education System Snapshot

- “Newer” tools build on “older tools” but look beyond the sector into the political/economic/social realms.

— examples: Gujarat system diagnostics, RISE diagnostic framework

## SUPRA-SECTOR/SYSTEM

(wider political/economic/ social contexts with their respective actors, relationships, interests, values)

# IMPLEMENTATION



- Primary implementers vary
  - Researchers ('binding constraints', RISE,), IO technical teams (SABER, Decision Protocol), national technical teams (ESA), national policymakers (GEQAF)
- Breadth & Depth of participation varies
- Temporal/Financial/Human resources required for implementation varies
  - From a couple of weeks to a year or more
  - From <\$50K to multi-million
  - From a couple of experts to large teams



# RESOURCES REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION



- Varying levels of resources are required for the different tools
- Intensive resource requirements— uses medium or high amounts of resources in 3 or more categories
  - Examples: Delivery Labs, Labor Market Assessments, RERA
- Medium resource requirements— uses medium or high amounts of resources in no more than 2 categories
  - Example: RISE Diagnostic, Decision Protocol, IIEP Education Policy Toolbox

**ACCESS THE REPORT HERE:**



**ACCESS THE USAID TOOLKIT HERE:**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared by EnCompass LLC for the Data and Evidence for Education Programs (DEEP) contract (Contract No. GS-10F-0245M/7200AA18M00018). The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



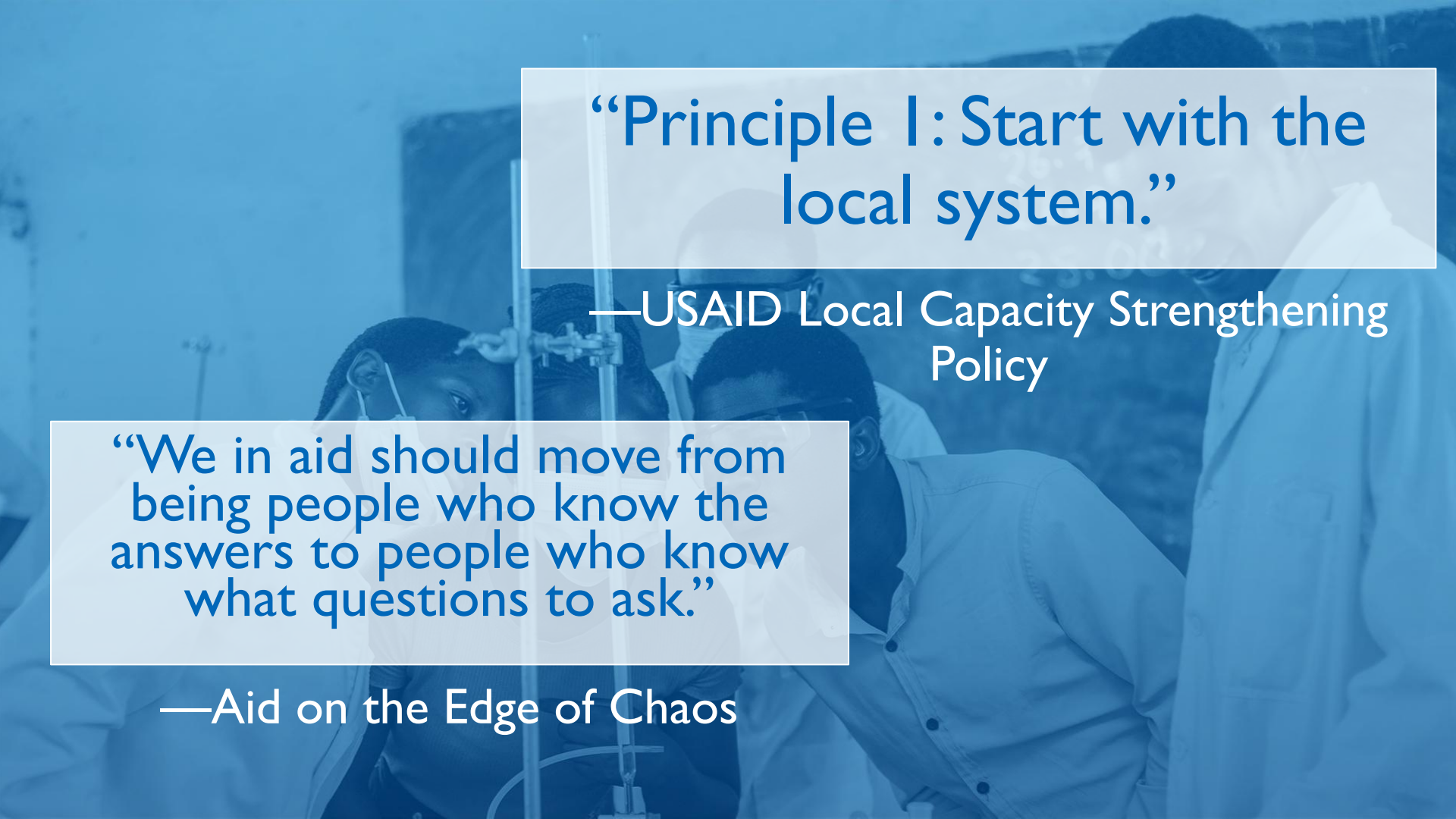
**USAID**

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# USAID 5Rs

## A framework for understanding systems

03/2024 Andrew Meaux, Systems Strengthening, Governance, and Localization Specialist



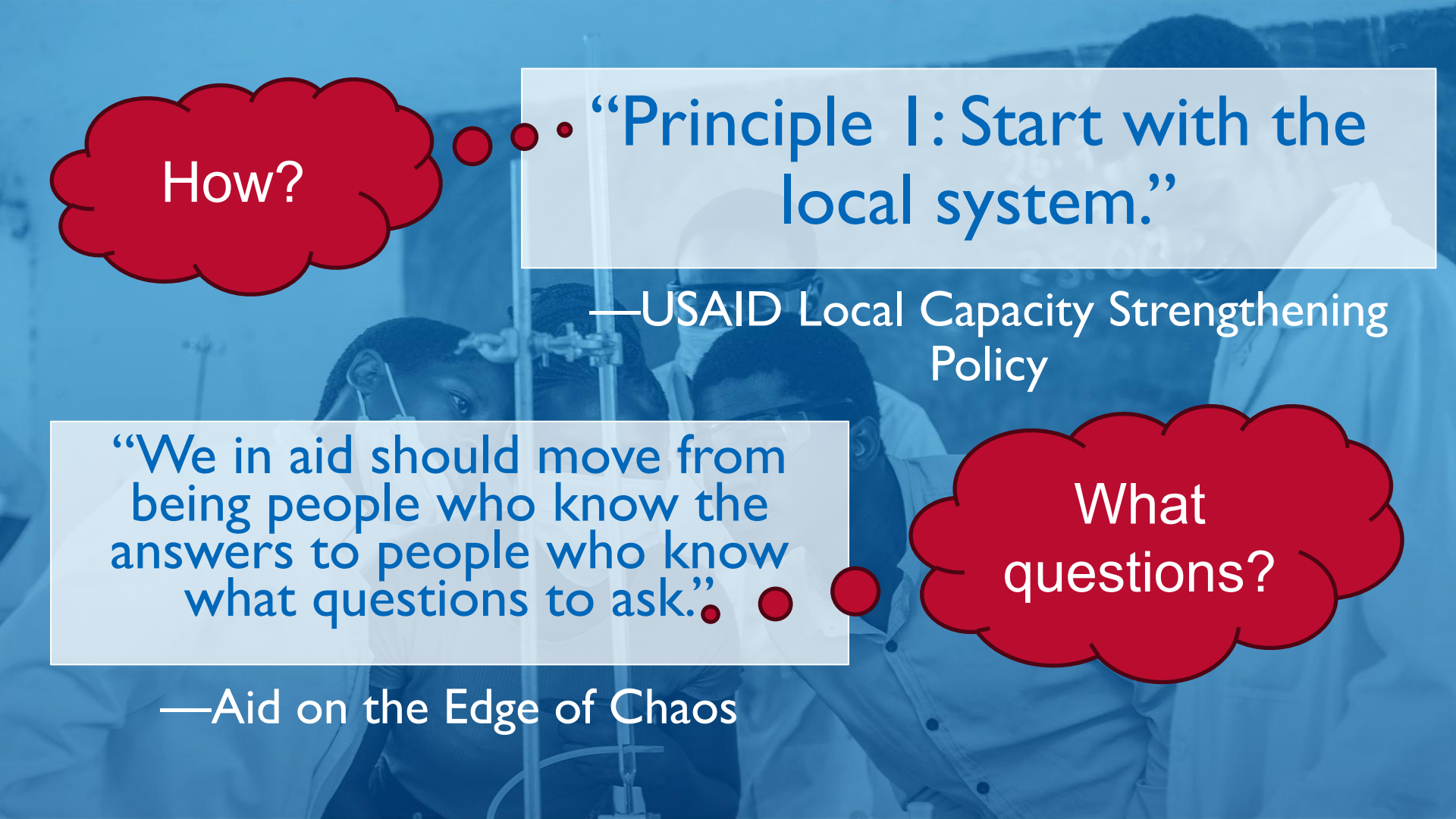
“Principle I: Start with the local system.”

—USAID Local Capacity Strengthening Policy

“We in aid should move from being people who know the answers to people who know what questions to ask.”

—Aid on the Edge of Chaos





How?

“Principle I: Start with the local system.”

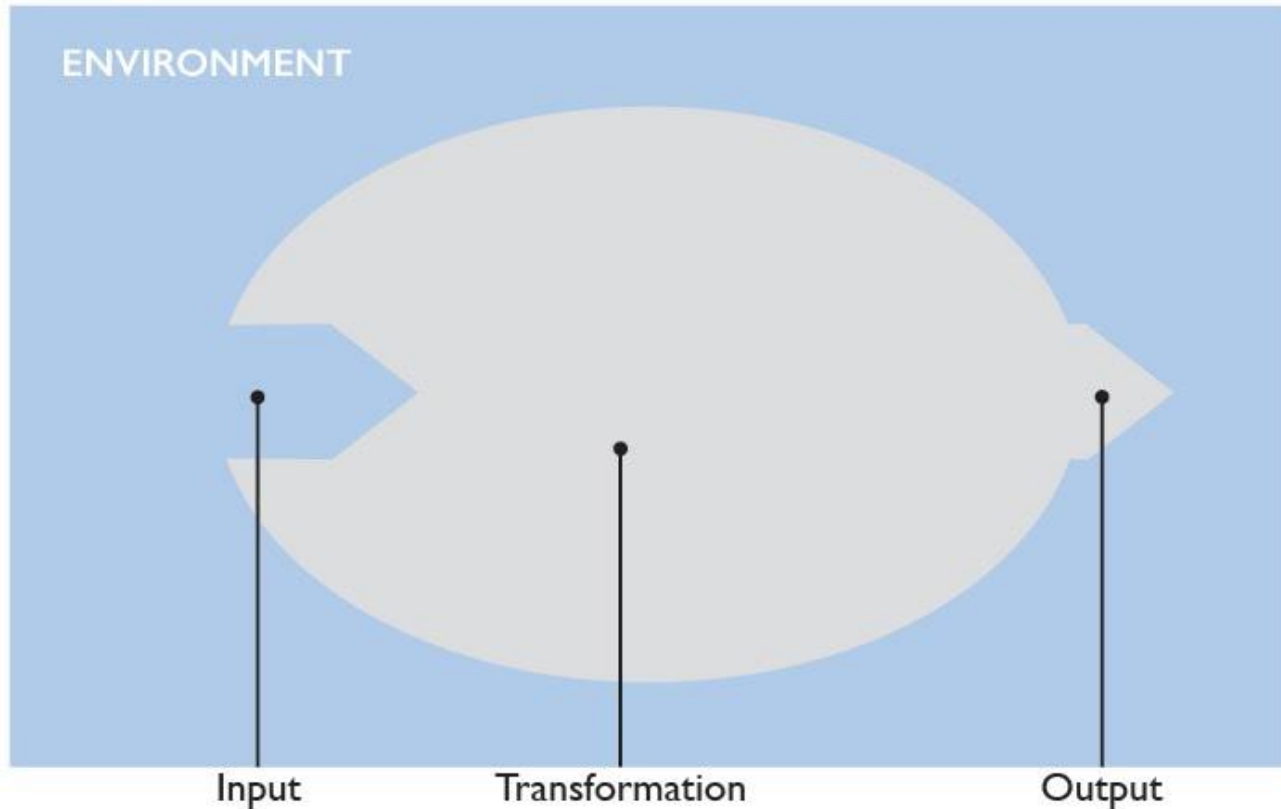
—USAID Local Capacity Strengthening Policy

“We in aid should move from being people who know the answers to people who know what questions to ask.”

What questions?

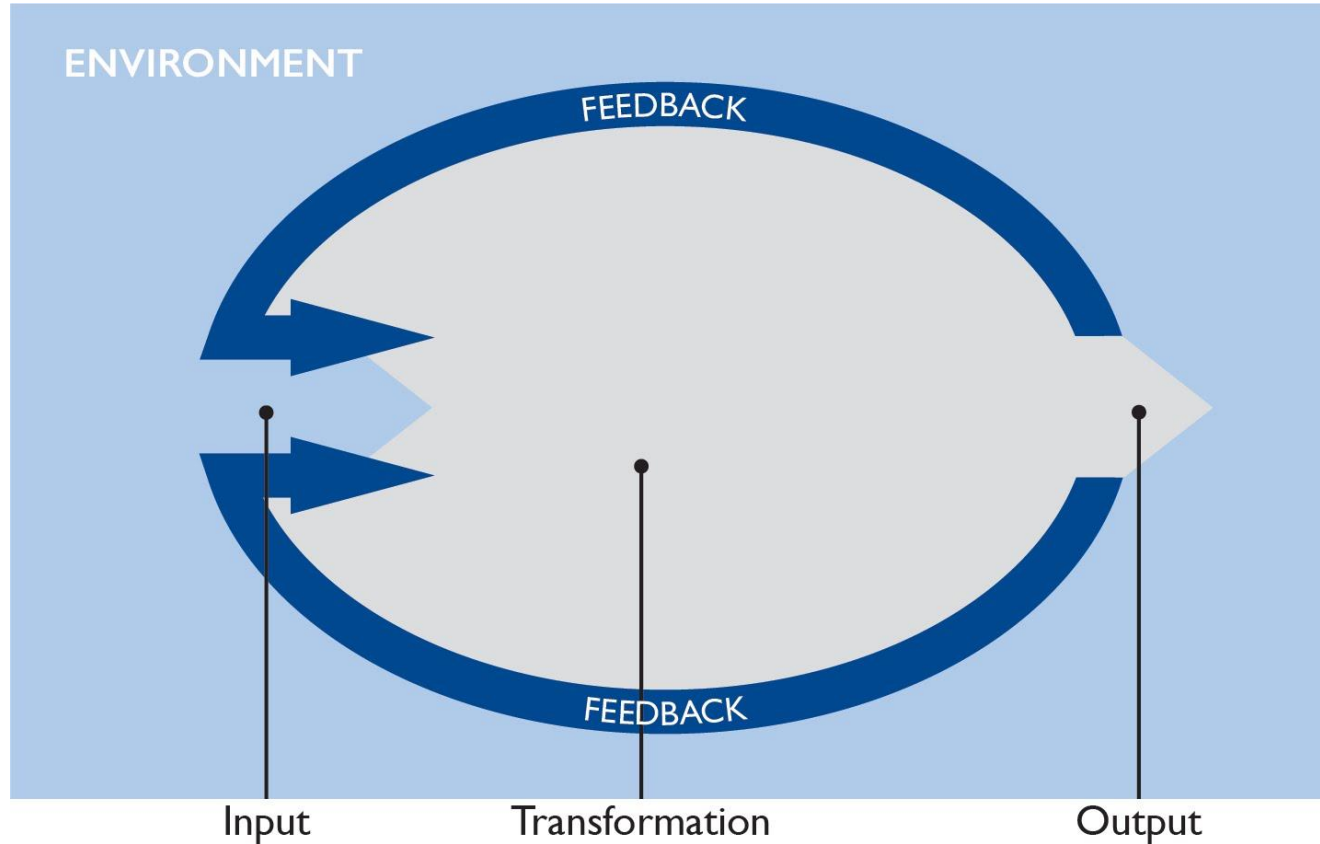
—Aid on the Edge of Chaos

# A simple system

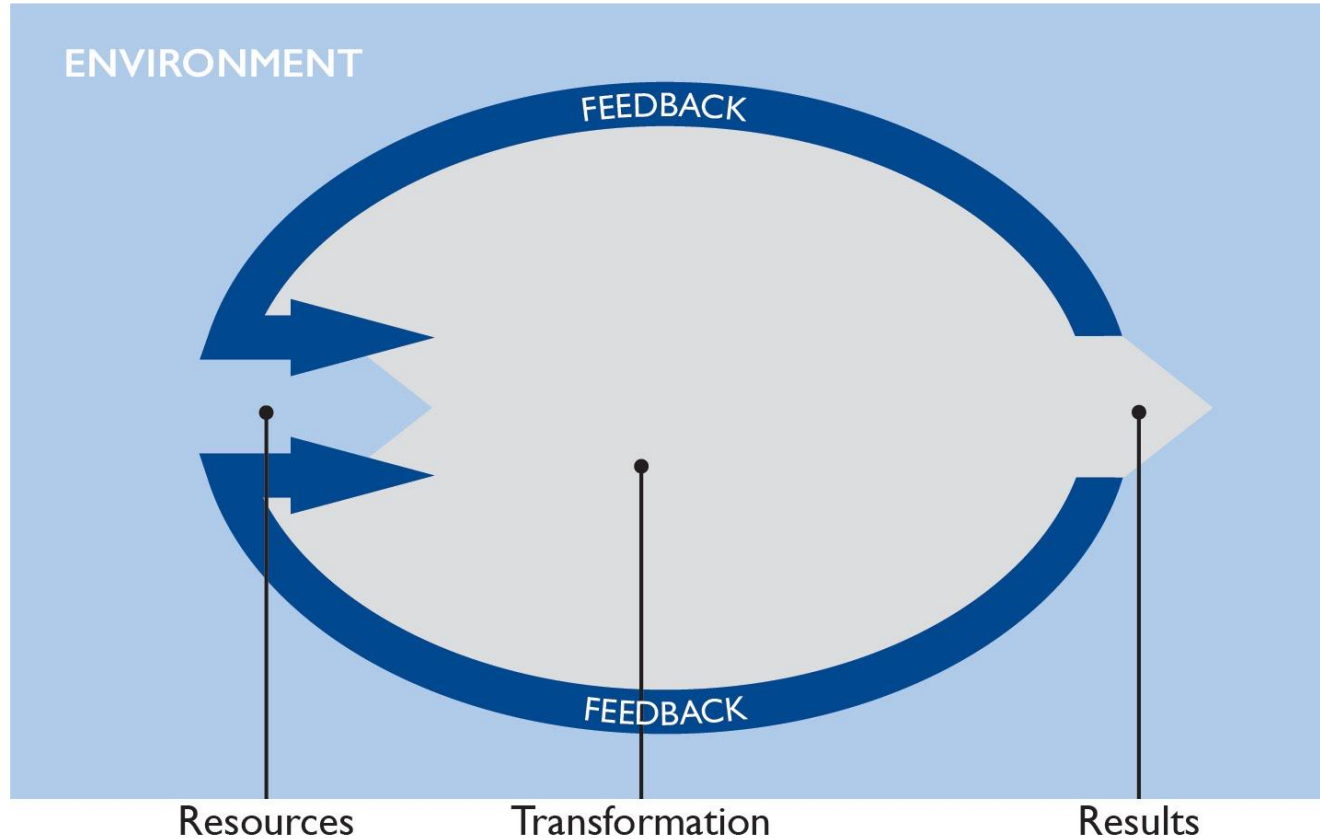




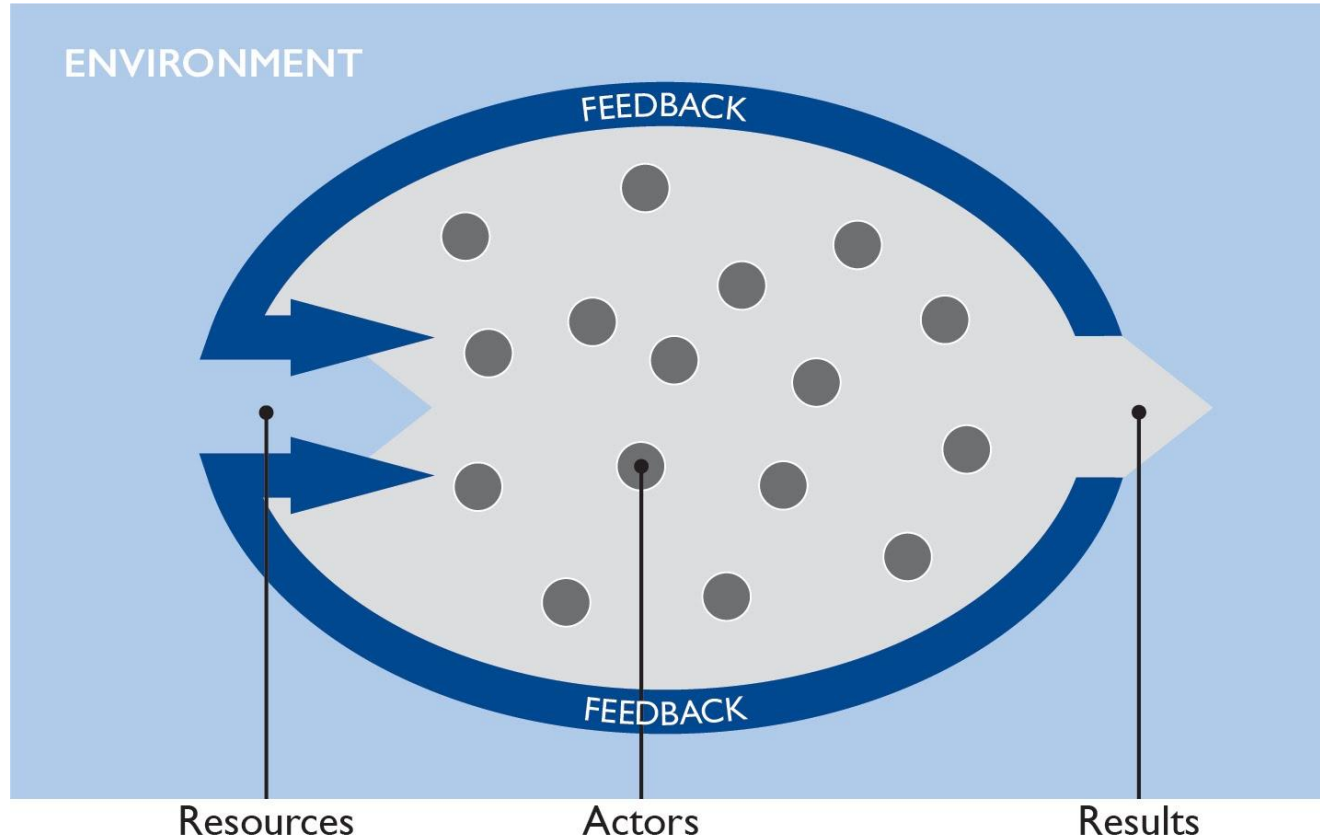
# A more complex system



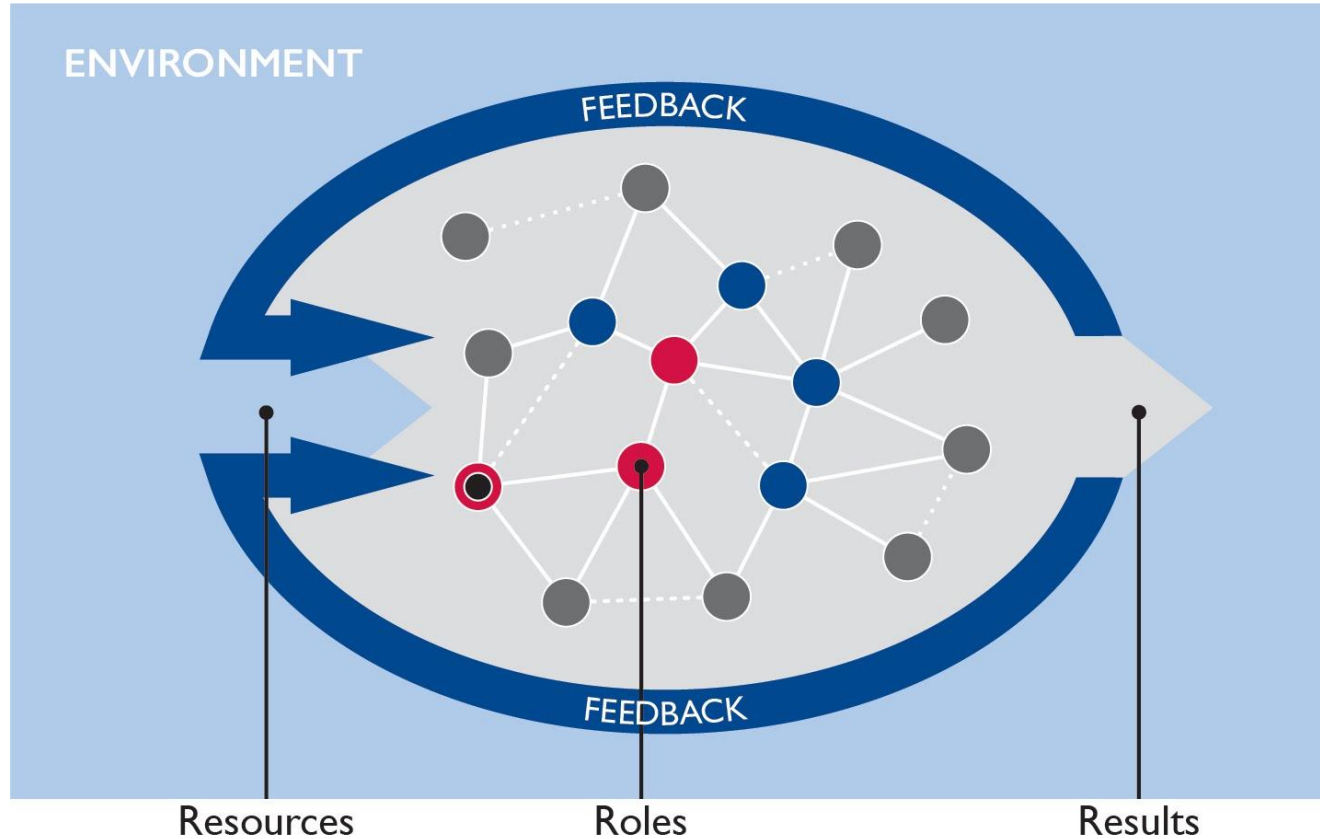
# Changing the language



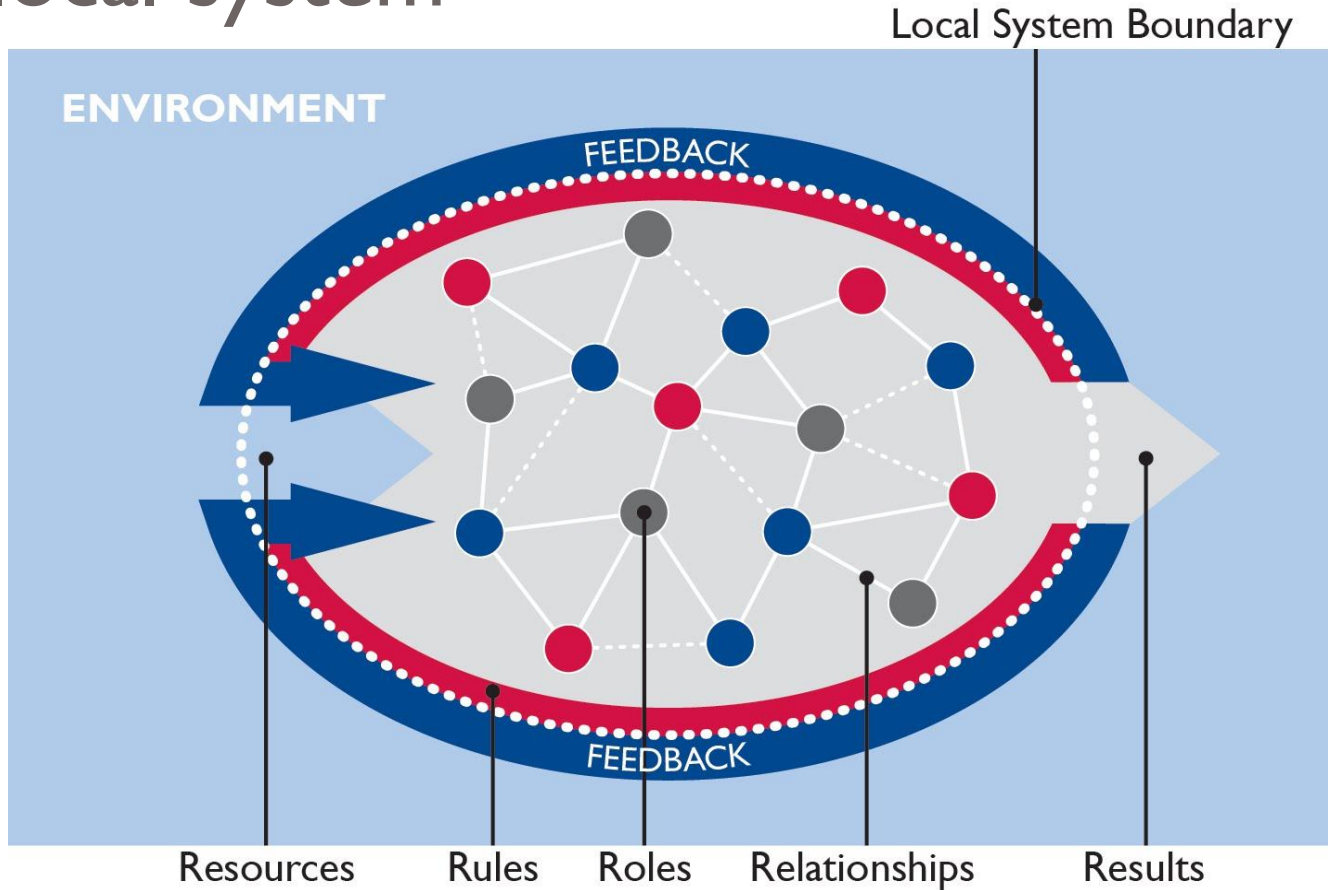
# A human system



# A human system



# A local system



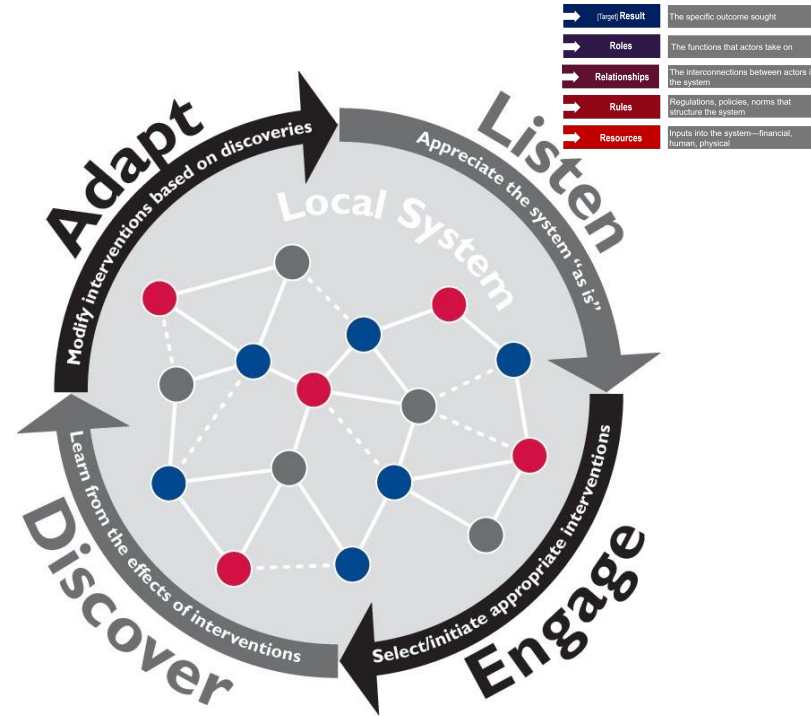
# 5Rs

---

|                                                                                                        |                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
|  <b>Result</b>        | The specific outcome sought                            |
|  <b>Roles</b>         | The functions that actors take on                      |
|  <b>Relationships</b> | The interconnections between actors in the system      |
|  <b>Rules</b>         | Regulations, policies, norms that structure the system |
|  <b>Resources</b>     | Inputs into the system—financial, human, physical      |

# Applying the 5Rs

The 5Rs help to identify what we should **listen** for, where we should **engage**, what we should **discover** and what interventions we may need to **adapt**.

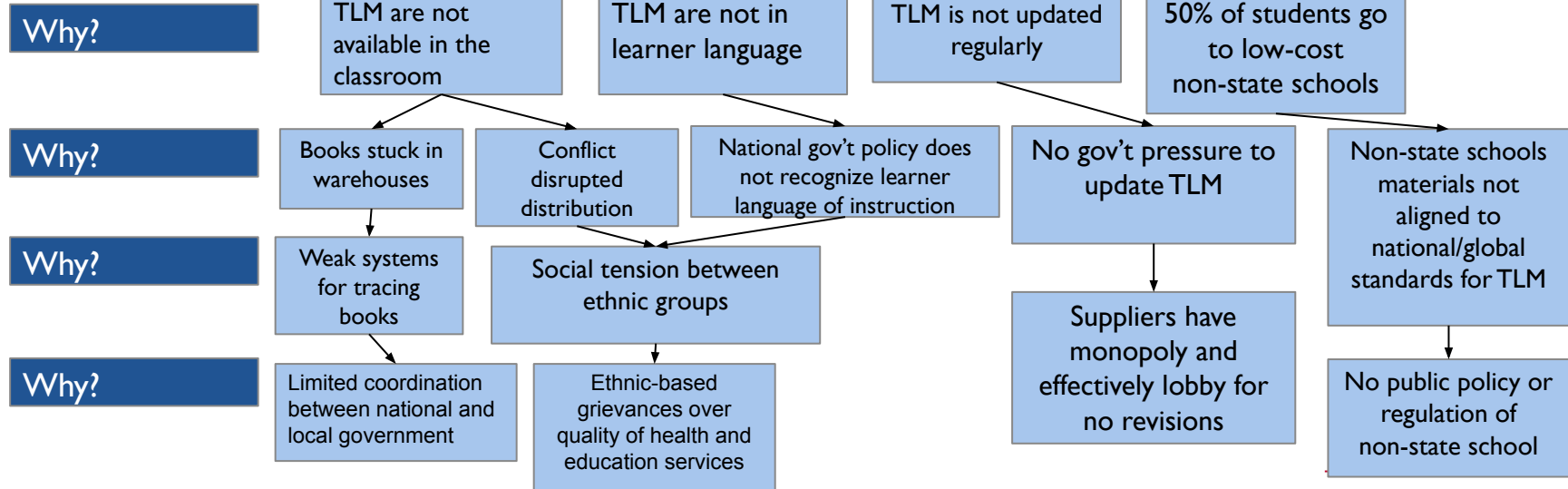


**Development Challenge: Primary school learners have low reading competency**

# Applying the 5Rs to Education

**Cause: Children don't have access to quality teaching and learning materials**

**Solution: Develop and distribute teaching and learning materials to public schools**





**Development Challenge: Primary school learners have low reading competency**

# Applying the 5Rs to Education

**Cause: Children don't have access to quality teaching and learning materials**

**MORE INPUTS** Solution: Develop and distribute teaching and learning materials to public schools

**Why?**

TLM are not available in the classroom

TLM are not in learner language

TLM is not updated regularly

50% of students go to low-cost non-state schools

**Why?**

Books stuck in warehouses

Conflict disrupted distribution

National gov't policy does not recognize learner language of instruction

No gov't pressure to update TLM

Non-state schools materials not aligned to national/global standards for TLM

**Why?**

Weak systems for tracing books

Social tension between ethnic groups

**ROLES** Suppliers have monopoly and effectively lobby for no revisions

**Why?**

**RELATIONSHIPS** Limited coordination between national and local government

**RELATIONSHIPS** Ethnic-based grievances over quality of health and education services

**RULES** No public policy or regulation of non-state school

**Development Challenge: Primary school learners have low reading competency**

# Applying the 5Rs to Education

**Cause: Children don't have access to quality teaching and learning materials**

**INPUTS**

**Why?**

RESOURCES

RULES

ROLES

ROLES

**Why?**

RESOURCES

RESOURCES

ROLES

ROLES

RULES

**Why?**

ROLES

RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS

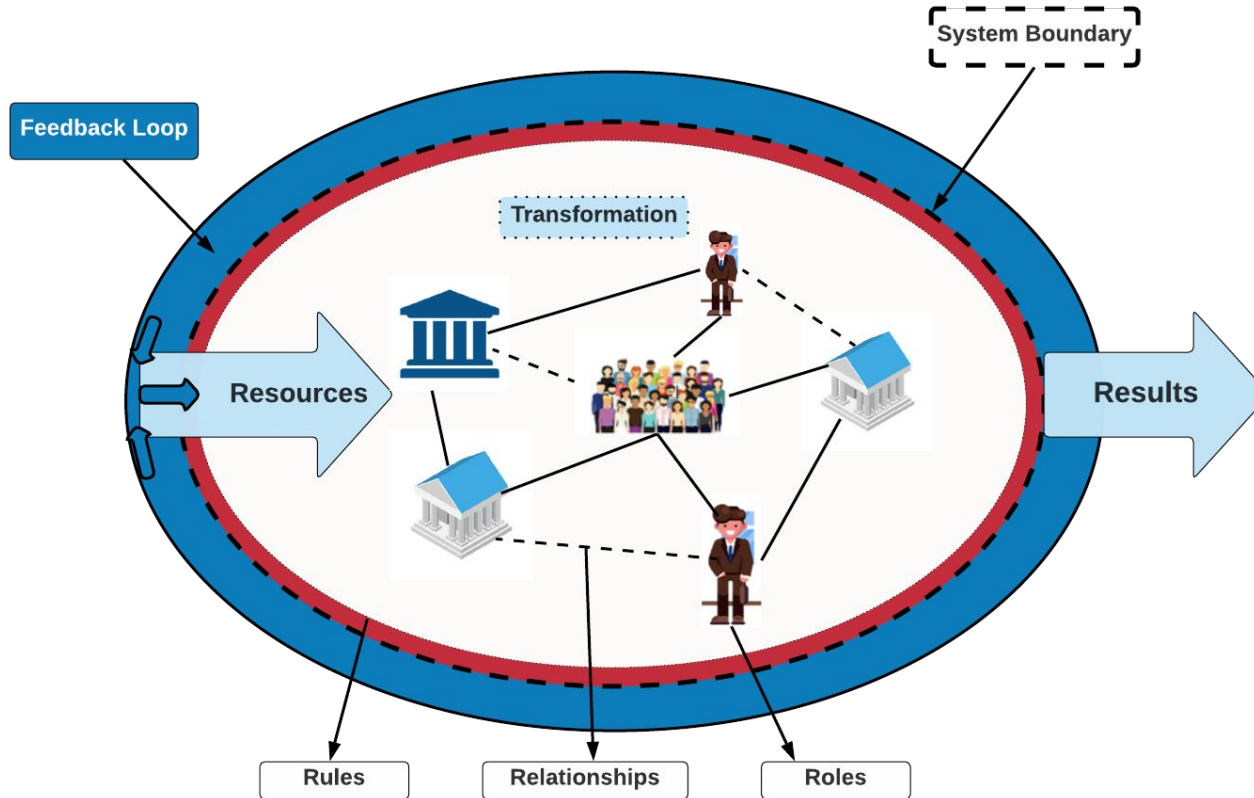
**Why?**

RELATIONSHIPS

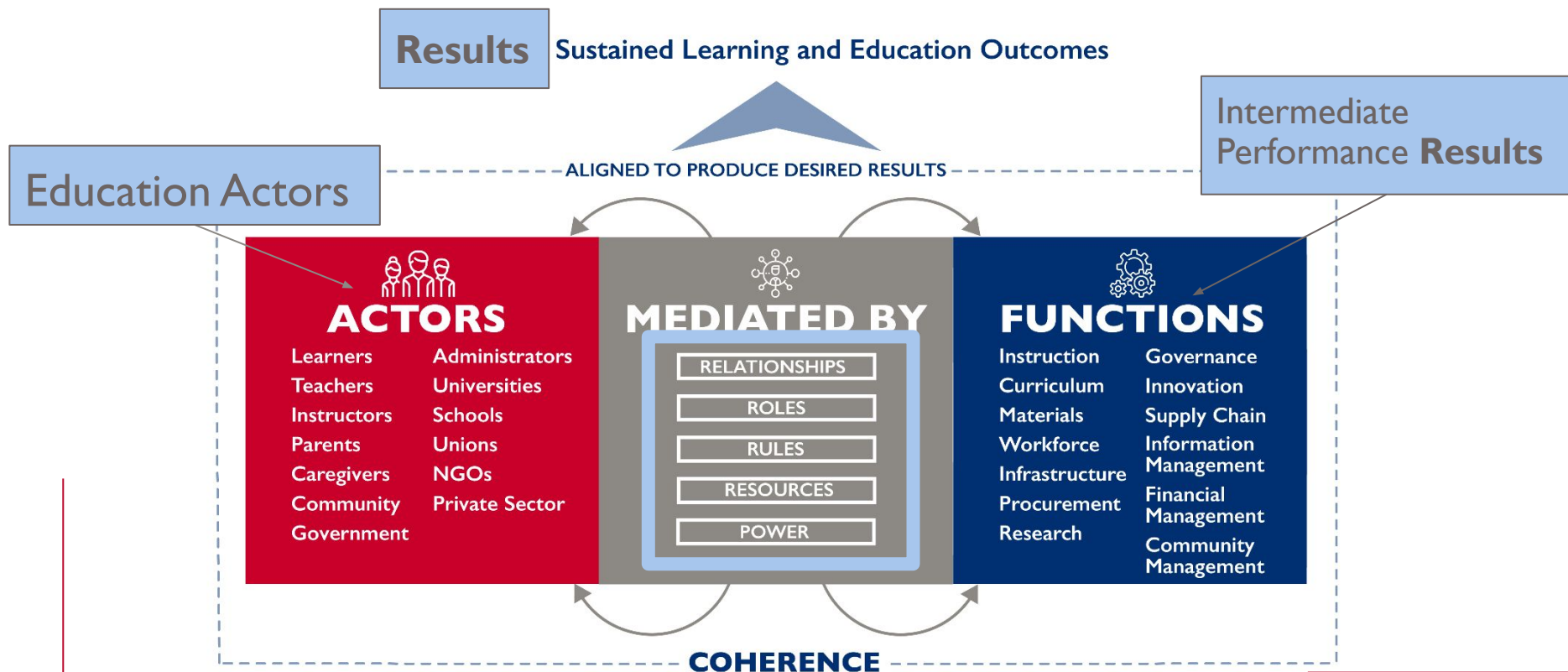
RELATIONSHIPS

RULES

# Applying the 5Rs to Education



# Applying the 5Rs to Education

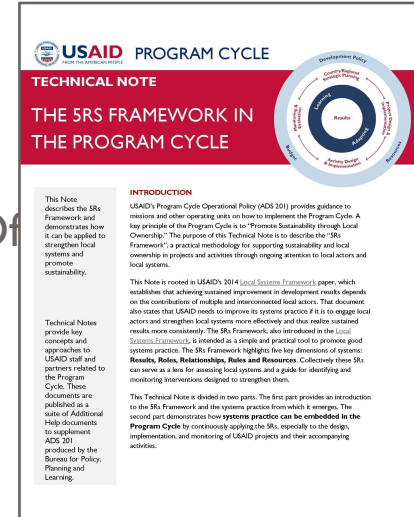


# Conclusion

5Rs is a simple way and accessible for new “system-thinkers” to start listening to the systems.

Are there other good frameworks out there? Of course!

Is it a good starting place? Yes!



# Thank You

**Do you have any questions?**

[ameaux@usaid.com](mailto:ameaux@usaid.com)

[edu-links.org](http://edu-links.org)



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Research in Education

# Applied Education System Diagnostic

Engaging Key Stakeholders to Map Root Causes

# Why this Toolkit?



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- Mandatory and optional context analyses typically focus on the *context* in which we observe the “*symptoms*” of the development problem
- A diagnostic study focuses on the *root causes* of the development problem and tries to identify both barriers and opportunities for addressing them
- Need for solutions that better incorporate stakeholder perspectives

Events/Symptoms

Patterns/Trends

Underlying Structures

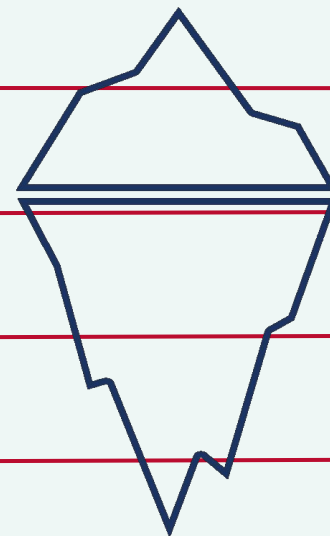
Mental Models

React

Anticipate

Change

Transform





# About the Education System Diagnostic Toolkit

## WHAT THE TOOLKIT WILL DO



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### The Education Diagnostic Toolkit will assist USAID and implementing partners to:

- Examine the sixth “R”, Reasons, behind a particular education-related problem by analyzing structural dynamics and behavioral root causes and their interaction
- Engage stakeholders directly to map their understanding of the system and embrace differences in perceptions of a particular development problem and its causes
- Identify barriers and potential leverage opportunities for addressing the problem

**The ultimate aim of a  
diagnostic is to  
understand **WHAT IS** in  
order to better plan and  
design for **WHAT**  
**COULD BE.****

# Method

## PARTICIPATORY SYSTEM MAPPING

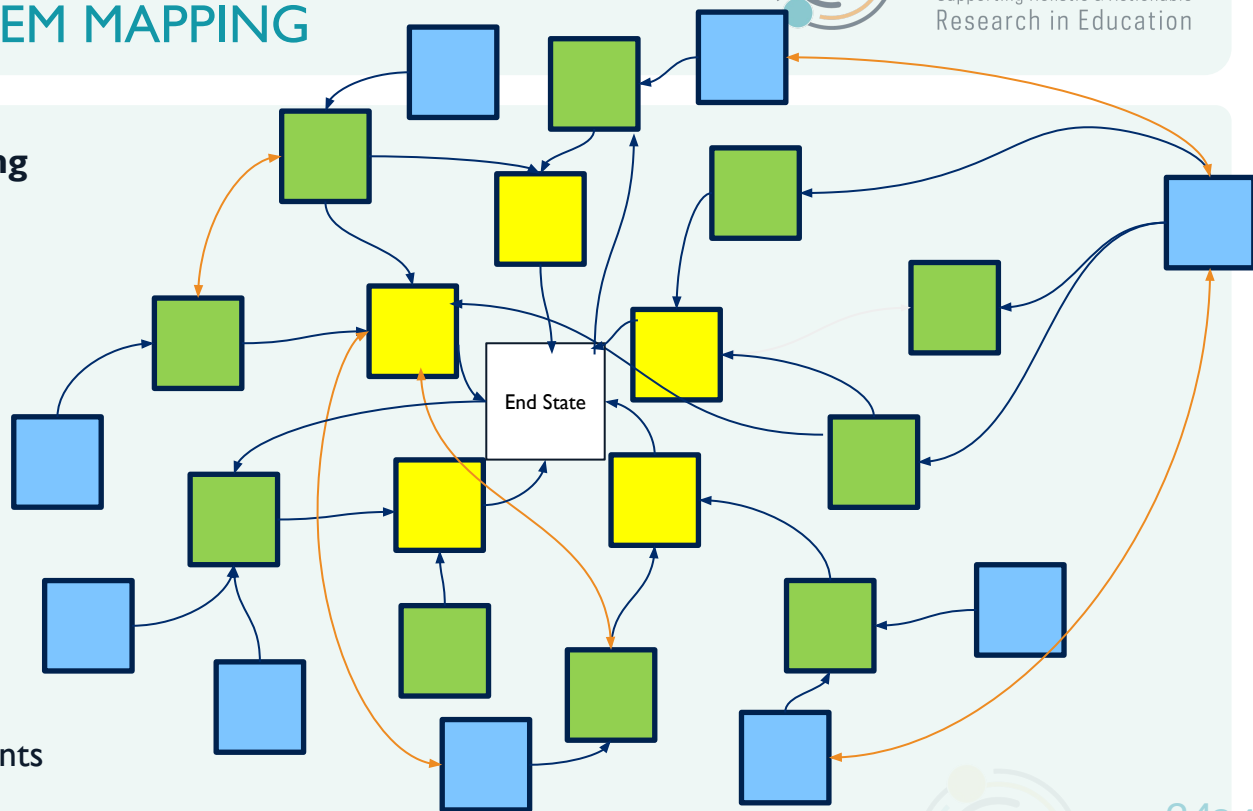


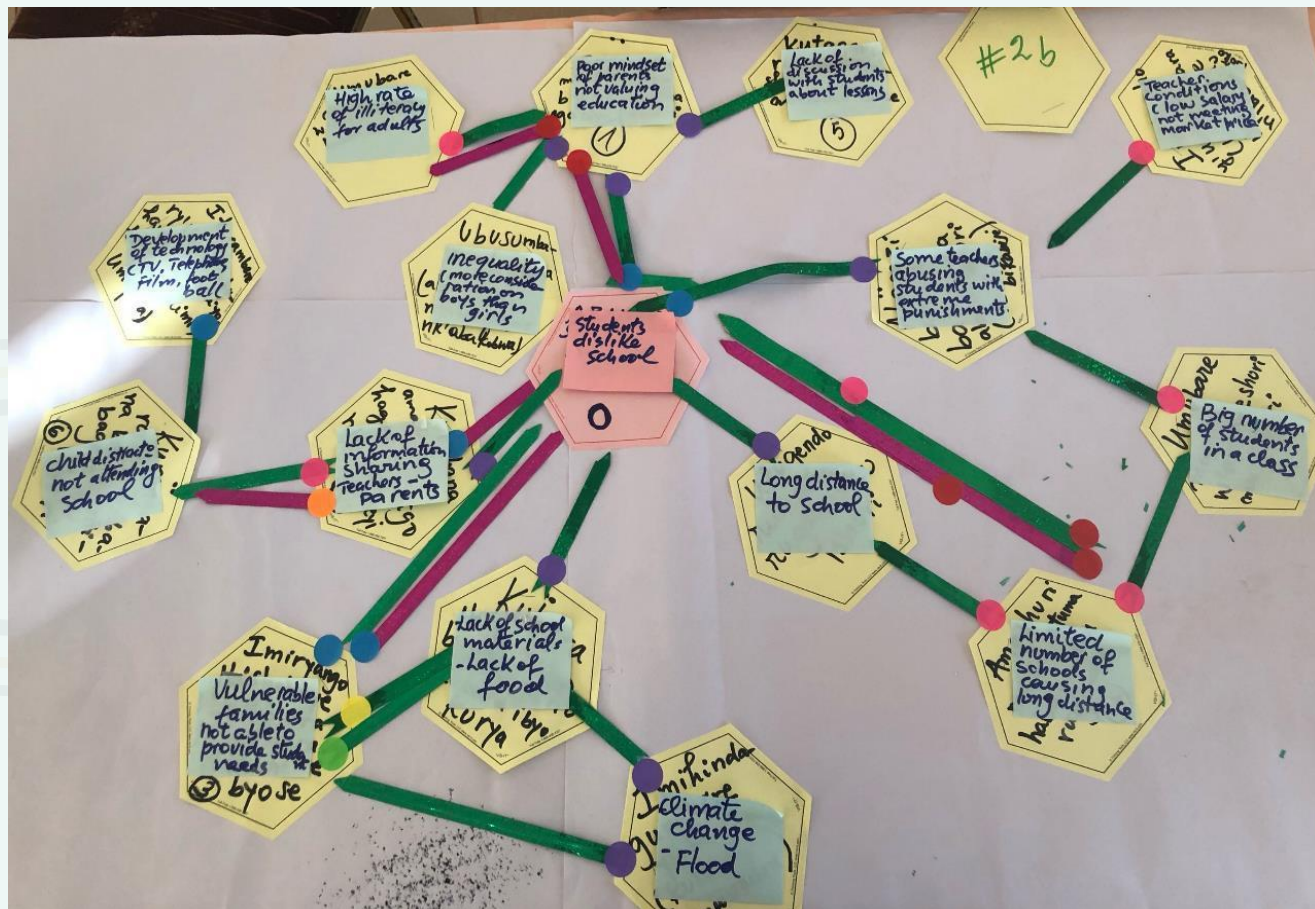
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### Primary Method: **Influence Mapping**

- Falls appropriately on the spectrum of other mapping methods between communicating/describing a situation vs. thinking/understanding
- Effectively elicits areas of perceived importance to key stakeholders and the relationships between them
- Is accessible for both new facilitators, as well as participants





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Snapshot of a map from Rwanda investigating the system of factors influencing children's dislike of school as a primary driver of dropout

# Process



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## Problem Definition & Boundary Identification

- Clearly articulate the research challenge/question you are striving to understand.
- Set clear parameters for what is included and excluded from the system of study.
- Identify key perspectives / actors within the system who should be included in mapping the system.

## Map the System & Root Cause Identification

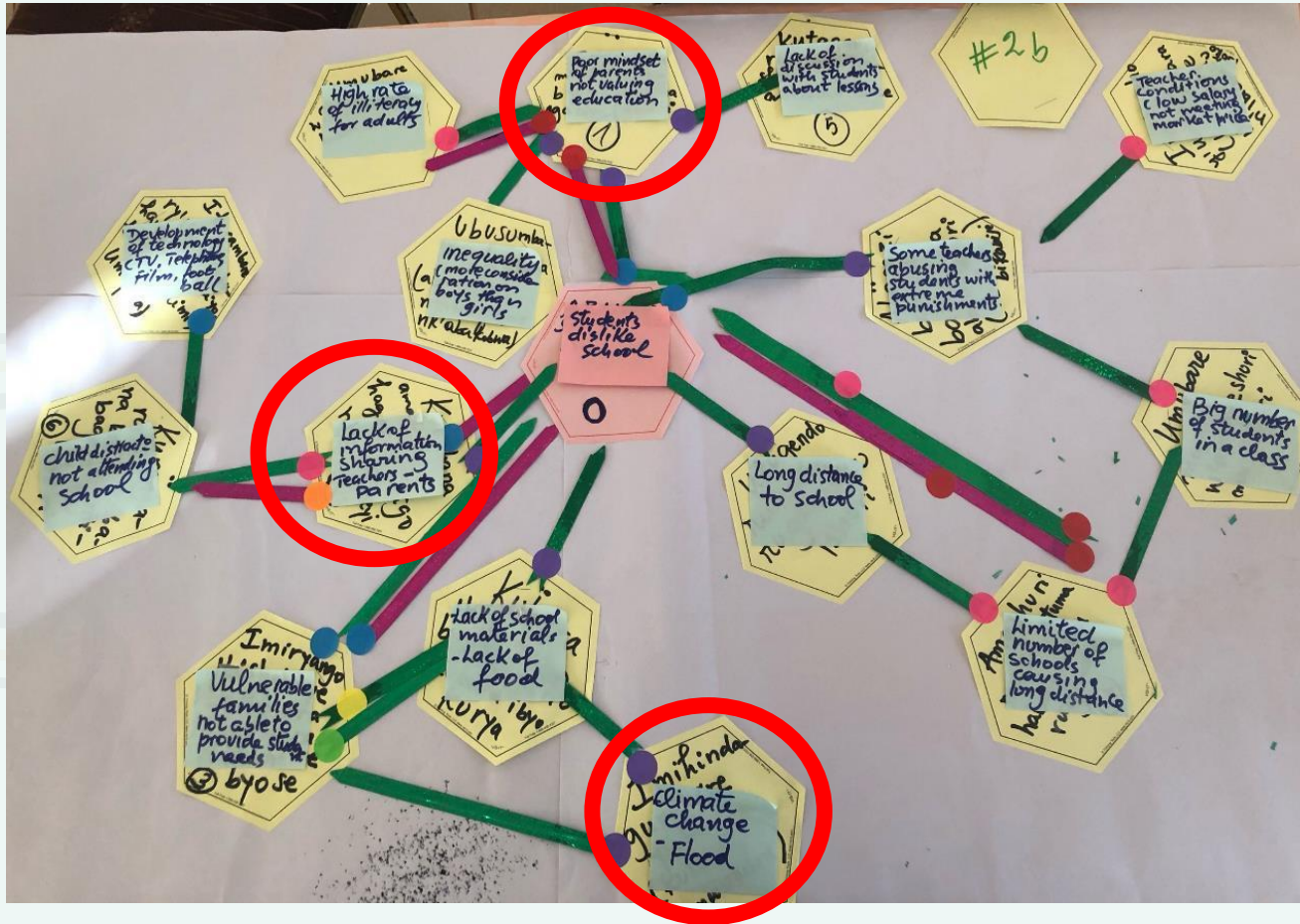
- Visualize the factors / relationships that constitute the system and influence the development challenge of interest.
- Prioritize critical factors and relationships.
- Engage stakeholders in action brainstorming.
- Hold space for conflicting perspectives!

## Leverage Point Identification

- Identify shared points of convergence, as well as divergence between groups.
- Validate and clarify analysis.
- Reflect on boundary decisions.
- Understand where outside intervention may fit best into the current system (or where additional research may be needed!).



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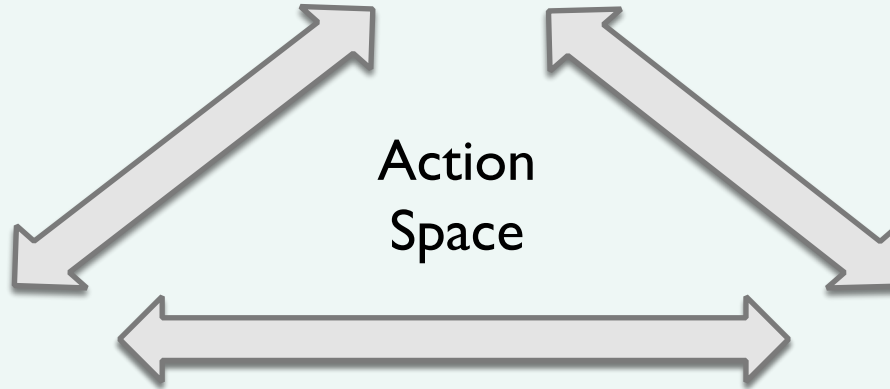


Snapshot of a map from Rwanda investigating the system of factors influencing children's dislike of school as a primary driver of dropout



## Understand INTER-RELATIONSHIPS

**What is the reality we are dealing with ?**



**How do people interpret this reality?**

**Engage with PERSPECTIVES**

**What is feasible and desirable to do?**

**Reflect on BOUNDARIES**





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here*





# SHARE Transforming Higher Education Systems (THES):

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Initial Findings: July 2023



Pulte Institute for Global Development  
Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child



# PORTFOLIO LEVEL ASSESSMENT

## USAID/Malawi Higher Ed Portfolio

Strengthening Higher Education in Malawi Activity (SHEAMA)

Transforming Higher Education Systems (THES)

Strengthening Teacher Education and Practice (STEP)

## Cross-cutting Thematic Areas

1. Access to Higher Education

2. Linkages to Industry

3. Quality of Education Programming

4. Sustainability and Scalability

# TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

USAID/Malawi Higher Ed Portfolio

Strengthening Higher Education in Malawi  
Activity (SHEAMA)

Transforming Higher Education Systems  
(THES)

Strengthening Teacher Education and  
Practice (STEP)

Cross-cutting Thematic Areas

1. Access to Higher Education

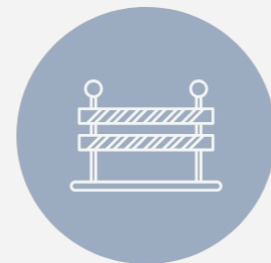
2. Linkages to Industry

3. Quality of Education Programming

4. Sustainability and Scalability

# Systems Thinking Workshop

**Goal:** Identify barriers on the journey from higher education institution (HEI) application/admissions, academic life, and job placement **that prevent students from obtaining high-quality skills training and employment in agriculture and STEM fields** from the perspective of students, HEI faculty/staff, and private sector stakeholders



**Activities:** (1) word-association to generate basic descriptors of the current/desired state at each point of the HEI journey, (2) development of realistic scenarios a student or prospective student might experience at different points in the journey, and (3) actor mapping of the current and desired support networks surrounding each scenario.

## Process:

1. **Descriptors** of the current and desired states
  - Used to identify overall sentiments and generalized systemic gaps
1. **Scenarios** describing a common student journey
  - Used to relate stakeholders and relationships/support systems surrounding the student experiential journey
1. **Actor maps** of the current and desired states
  - Used to identify missing actors and connections which could be used as leverage points for programming



# THE THREE POINTS

What are the enablers and barriers that are helping/hindering students **at each point on their higher education journey?**



## PARTICIPANTS by stakeholder group and geographical location

|              | Students | HEI<br>Faculty/Staff | Private<br>Sector | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Lilongwe     | 14       | 5                    | 6                 | 25           |
| Mzuzu        | 14       | 8                    | 8                 | 30           |
| Blantyre     | 20       | 18                   | 9                 | 47           |
| <i>Total</i> | 48       | 31                   | 23                | <b>102</b>   |

# FINDINGS BY THEME

## Access, Quality & Linkages

---

**ACCESS**



# ACCESS - TOP 3 DESCRIPTORS

## CURRENT STATE VS. DESIRED STATE

### CURRENT STATE

#### Students

- **Difficult (18)**
- Easy (10)
- Unfair (3)

#### HEIs

- **Difficult (7)**
- **Poor (7)**
- Selective (4)

#### Private Sector

- **Difficult (7)**
- **Corrupt (6)**
- Fair (4)

### DESIRED STATE

#### Students

- **Easy (23)**
- **Fair (12)**
- Accessible (7)

#### HEIs

- **Fair (13)**
- Easy (7)
- Accessible (6)

#### Private Sector

- **Easy (10)**
- Accessible (3)
- Affordable (2)
- Fair (2)
- Informed (2)

# ACCESS

## CURRENT STATE

- **Limited school-based resources** at secondary school in terms of both career guidance and counselling and preparation for application and enrollment processes for higher education
- **Limited personal support** from parents, siblings and relatives that are not fully familiar with the processes, and often guide students on the basis of their own biases (e.g. selecting subject of study based on family's perception of career opportunities, instead of student interests / strengths)
- **Limited outreach programs** organized by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in collaboration with HEIs leaving most potential applicants with little or no information about the application process
- **Technological access challenges** to the platforms for the application processes often without feedback mechanisms or guidance when the applicants get stuck



Image: Blantyre Student Workshops - Current State - Composite Map of Access Scenarios

# ACCESS

## DESIRED STATE

Addressing financial, informational, technological and physical access challenges highlighted in current state maps

- **Need for better, more formalized financing** options for prospective students
  - Many references to politicians/local leaders, donors and well-wishers demonstrating a persistent level of informalization in the system
- **Better informational dissemination including** 1) need for awareness raising of importance of continued education and 2) human resources in secondary schools or other community groups to help with application guidance
- **Improved technological access** to greater internet access and reliability
- **Inclusive physical infrastructure** to support students with disabilities in accessing applications, campuses, etc.



**QUALITY**

# QUALITY - TOP 3 DESCRIPTORS

## CURRENT STATE VS. DESIRED STATE

### CURRENT STATE

#### Students

- **Difficult (26)**
- Poor (9)
- Good/Great (8)

#### HEIs

- **Poor (14)**
- Difficult (11)
- Moderate (3)

#### Private Sector

- **Difficult (9)**
- Poor (6)
- Average/Moderate (4)

### DESIRED STATE

#### Students

- **Good (18)**
- Fair/Equal (9)
- Easy (6)

#### HEIs

- **Relevant (6)**
- Good (4)
- Conducive (3)

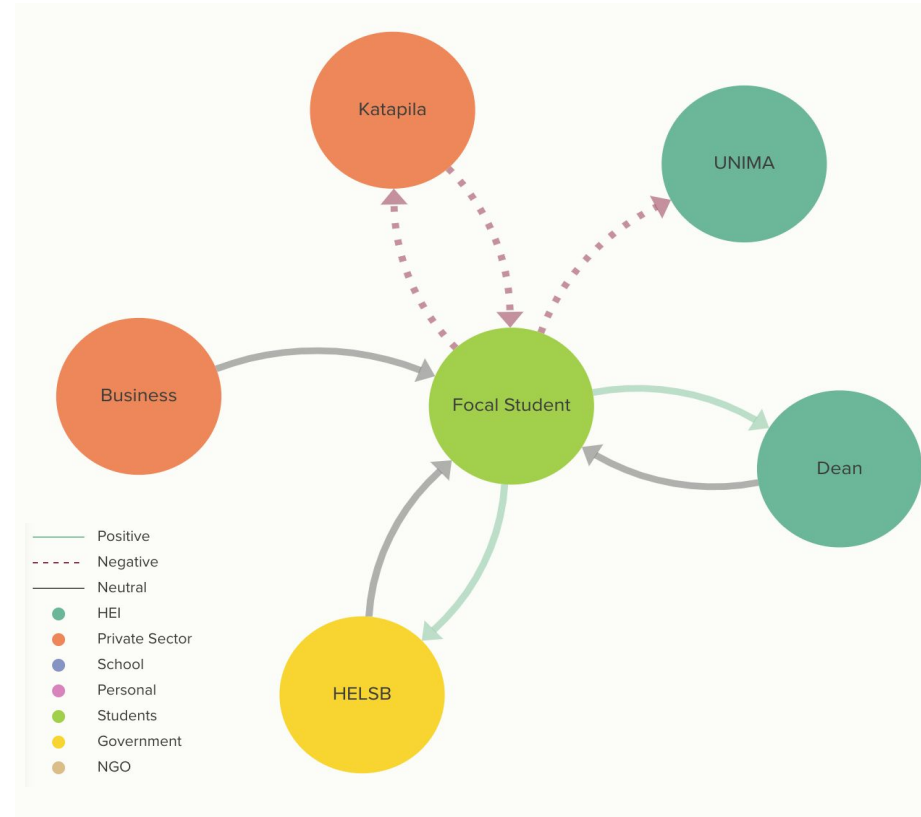
#### Private Sector

- **Better (6)**
- Relevant (4)
- Good/Excellent (4)

# QUALITY

## CURRENT STATE

- **Inadequate financial support** negatively impacting performance of students (leading to lack of concentration and peace of mind)
- **Lack of adequate psychosocial support** to navigate challenges students encounter in the course of their studies
- **Insufficient teaching and learning approaches** including theoretically-oriented courses with use of outdated equipment or materials for practical application making the students less prepared for industry
- **Very limited learning materials** spread over a high number of students, which is compromising the quality of learning (numbers have been rapidly expanding against more or less the same amount of learning materials including infrastructure)
- **Lack of practical, industry experience among teaching staff** (lecturers), leading to some universities sending teaching staff for industrial practical experience to enrich their teaching and make it more relevant



# QUALITY - DESIRED STATE

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

- Finances as an important point of focus
- Persistent level of financial informality
  - inclusion of political leaders and other individual benefactors across desired-state maps
- Appearance of on-campus counseling centers and other resources to help students cope with stresses and provide academic / career guidance
- Faculty with adequate real-world experience to ensure practical, relevant instruction (see linkages maps)



Image: Blantyre Student + HEI Workshops - Desired State - Composite Map of Quality Scenarios

# LINKAGES



# LINKAGES - TOP 3 DESCRIPTORS

## CURRENT STATE VS. DESIRED STATE

### CURRENT STATE

#### Students

- **Difficult (37)**
- Stressful (15)
- Scarce/Limited (9)

#### HEIs

- **Difficult (11)**
- Poor (9)
- Corrupt (5)

#### Private Sector

- **Accessible/Available (5)**
- Difficult (4)
- Poor (4)

### DESIRED STATE

#### Students

- **Fair/Equal (20)**
- Easy (9)
- Available (8)

#### HEIs

- **Fair/Open (8)**
- Relevant (4)
- Skilled (3)
- Adequate (3)

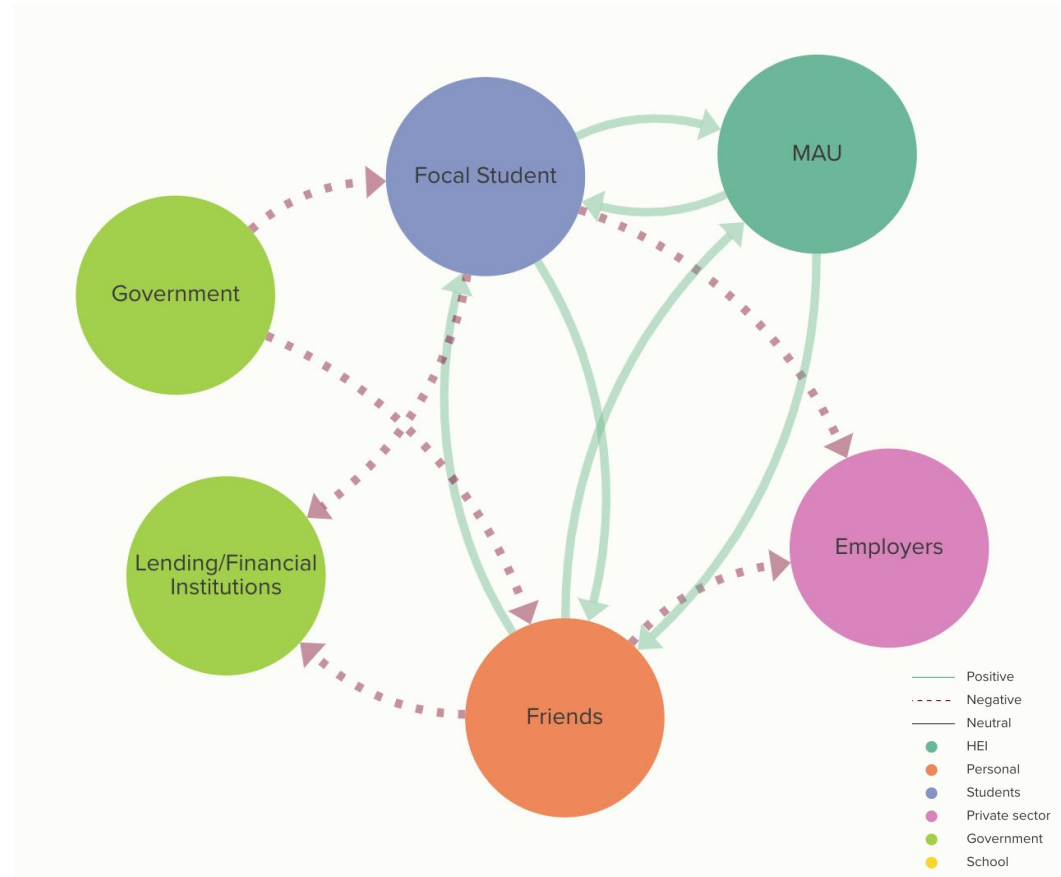
#### Private Sector

- **Accessible (6)**
- **Easy (6)**
- Good/Excellent (4)

# LINKAGES

## CURRENT STATE

- **Mismatch of learned vs. practical skills** leading to university graduates who are poorly prepared to hit the ground running when taken on board in industry as there is a disjuncture between what is being taught in HEIs and what is expected in industry
- **Opportunities for employment** are not very much driven by meritocratic considerations but rather highly dependent on personal connections, patronage and nepotism
- **Lack of strong entrepreneurial enabling environment** by government for graduates to pursue their own endeavors in lieu of employment at an established firm



# LINKAGES - DESIRED STATE

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

- **Need HEI Leadership to forge strategic alliances with industry** is critical in terms of initiating, creating, broadening and sustaining strategic interface with industry to align the nature of programmes offered with the needs of industry
- **Faculty should be equipped with adequate real-world practical experience** to ensure relevant curriculum and skills-building.
- **More formal channels between HEIs and employers** that give students opportunities based on merit rather than personal connections.



# Conclusion: Overall Findings

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# CONCLUSION: OVERALL FINDINGS FROM MAPPING

## Access

- 1: Technological challenges to the application and enrollment process
- 2: Students with disabilities have unique challenges accessing the application and enrollment process.
- 3: Financial challenges continue even after enrollment for students trying to support themselves.  
(also Quality)

## Quality

- 4: Market relevance of curriculum - Instruction can be too theoretical, teachers at times lack adequate real-work experience (also Linkages)
- 5: Lack of psychosocial support for students during their higher education career

## Linkages

- 6: Formal channels for seeking job opportunities
- 7: Formalized linkages between HEIs and industry



# APPENDIX

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## MAPS

All Maps per Geography by Theme

# Scenarios

- All scenarios developed by students in student workshops
- 3 per group - one at each stage of the bridge
- interest of students in selecting a scenario spread across three stages with slight bias for third stage (linkages)
- common issues brought up by students across scenarios included:
  - quality of education regarding educational environment - more financial upkeep and stress (living expenses, school costs, lack of supplemental funds like loans or scholarships) - as opposed to quality of teaching in the classroom
  - courses aren't adequately preparing students for employment – **outdated skills and equipment relative to what current industry standards require**
  - lack of career guidance and counselling for students both prior to and during university
- Private sector stakeholders seemed more interested in scenarios dealing with quality of education
  - education is not relevant - is too theoretical and not practical enough
- HEI staff/faculty tended to select scenarios dealing with employment
  - mentioned issues of strategic executive leadership on the part of the universities to initiate, create and sustain mutually beneficial linkages with industry

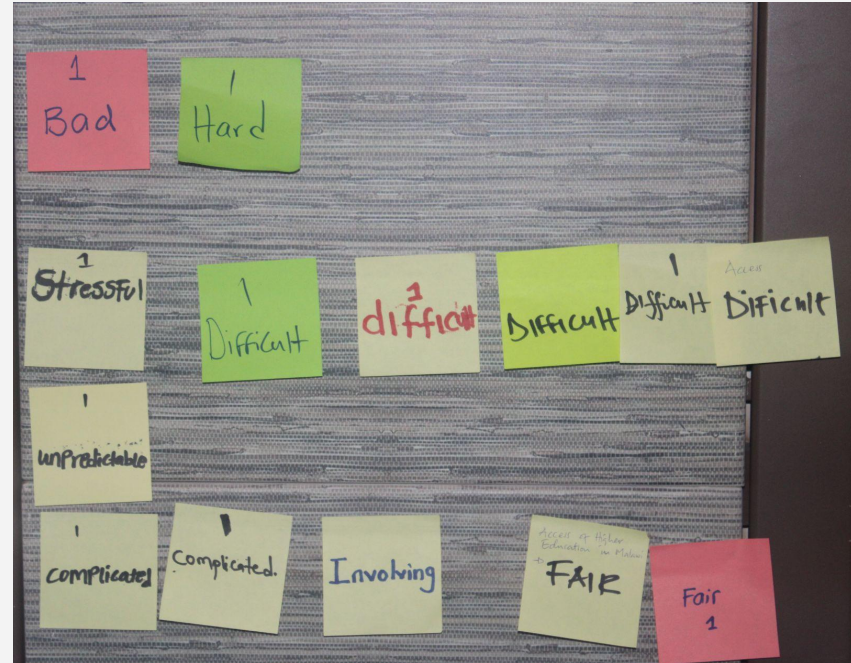
# WORD ASSOCIATION: CURRENT VS. DESIRED STATE

The goal was to illuminate **gaps between current and desired states**, as well as show **variance** across stakeholders and geographical groups.

Participants were asked to list 2-3 words\* describing the **current state** of each point on the higher education journey

After the scenario development and actor mapping exercises, participants were asked to list 2-3 words\* describing the **desired state** at each point on the higher education journey

\* Words were bucketed by general sentiment.



Phase I (Application/Enrollment), Current State, Blantyre





# APPENDIX

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## SCENARIOS

# ANTHONY SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (4)

- Anthony is a bright and intelligent 22-year-old from Lilongwe who lost his parents at a young age. Anthony passed his MSCE with flying colours, but has struggled at Uni because of a lack of psychosocial support. Anthony feels overwhelmed by school and his grades are suffering as a result.
- *What can we do to help Anthony achieve his full potential?*
- THEMES: Quality

# TAWINA SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (I)

- *Tawina is an intelligent 23-year-old girl from Chikulu Village in Dowa District. After passing her MSCE examinations with flying colors at Mponela Community Day Secondary School, she applied to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Value Chain Agriculture programme at Mzuzu University. Tawina was selected for programme but she failed to report for studies at Mzuzu University. She was unable to report for her studies due to lack of finances. Her mother could not afford the fees as a single parent with limited means of livelihoods apart from subsistence farming. Moreover, Tawina lacked information about the Higher Education Student Loans Grants Board (HESLGB) that could have possibly bailed her out. For these two reasons, Tawina failed to take up her place at Mzuzu University.*
- *Concluding Question:* *What can we do to help Tawina to study the Bachelor of Science in Value Chain Management she has aspired for all her life?*
- *Themes: Access*

# CHIKONDI SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (2)

- *Chikondi is a beautiful 19-year-old girl from Chilundu Village in Mchinji pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Nursing and Midwifery at Mzuzu University and she is currently in her third year. Chikondi had a very successful first year of her studies as she passed with distinction in all her courses. In her second year, a male Lecturer started pestering her to sleep with him in exchange for a less difficult academic life, which she denied. The Lecturer continued to pester her to the extent of threatening to withdraw her from the university on academic grounds, but Chikondi stood firm and did not give in to his demands. After the end of the first semester examination results were out, she had some missing grades and she got very low marks in the other courses that the Lecturer was also handling.*
- *Concluding Question: What can we do to help Chikondi get justice in her studies so that she can fully fulfil her potential as a distinction student?*
- Themes - Quality?

# ROBERT (I) SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (3)

- *Robert is a young, smart and intelligent 19-year-old boy who lives in Mwanza with his parents. He sits for his MSCE at Mwanza secondary school and gets 16 points. Robert begun his studies through ODL hosted by UNIMA. He faced serious challenges with the online classes mainly because the area where he stays has poor network coverage. He further comes from the a very poor family that cannot adequately support him to cover expenses for better and reliable Internet connectivity. Robert thought he could deal with his challenges by getting a loan, but students pursuing ODEL programmes are not eligible for the loans offered by the HESLGB. His parents suggest he enrolls at a Teachers Training College in Blantyre because they can no longer afford his tuition fee for his ODEL studies.*
- Concluding question: *How can we help Robert realize his dream of becoming a graduate given his current circumstances?*
- Themes: Access

# MARTHA SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (4)

- *Martha is a 20-year-old girl who comes from Choma Village in Rumphi district and lives in a female headed household. Martha passed her MSCE with 16 points in the year 2020. She had distinctions in all science subjects. However, due to poor network in her home area and lack of a smart phone to access NCHE application forms, she found it very difficult to apply for possible enrollment into the public universities. With the option of going to the university out of the equation, Martha becomes an Airtel Money agent at her home in Choma in Rumphi district to support herself and her family.*
- *Concluding Question: How can we help Martha to access NCHE forms so that she can get enrolled into a public university of her choice?*
- *Theme: Access*

# KUPA SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (5)

- *Kupa is a 19-year-old boy who has performed well in his MSCE. He resides in Phalombe with his parents who are just subsistence farmers. He managed to secure a place at Mzuzu University where he applied for a student loan from Higher Education Student Loans Grants Board (HESLGB). However, for reasons he does not understand, he was only granted tuition fees and not upkeep allowance. Consequently, he is struggling in his daily life due to inadequate resources to meet his upkeep expenses. This is leading Kupa to experience stress and anxiety making him lose concentration in class. As a result, his grades drop yet he has the potential to perform better.*
- *Concluding question: What can we do to help Kupa supplement his upkeep expenses so that he can perform to his full potential in his studies?*
- Theme: Access

# LUCY SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (6)

- *Lucy is a 25-year-old girl who comes from Chalendewa Village in Lilongwe district. After graduating from Mzuzu University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Value Chain Agriculture, she went for internship for a period of six months at Pexus Agriculture Limited. She then started searching for a job but could not get one as most of the job opportunities she was finding were requiring a minimum of 3 years work experience, which she did not have. Out of desperation to make a living, Lucy picked up a job as a primary school teacher at a certain private primary school near to her home which she is totally different to her field of study in Value Chain Agriculture.*
- *Concluding question: How can we help Lucy to secure a job that is in line with what she studied at the university so that she can make meaningful contribution to the country's development?*
- *Theme: Linkages*



# ROBERT (2) SCENARIO

## Mzuzu (7)

- *Robert is a young, smart and intelligent 19-year-old boy who lives in Mwanza with his parents. He sits for his MSCE at Mwanza secondary school and gets 16 points. After the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) launches the university application process, he tries his luck believing he stands a chance to make it. He applies for a Bachelor of Arts degree programme at UNIMA since he dreams of becoming a lawyer, but unfortunately, he is not successful due to stiff competition. He ends up applying for an ODL course in Bachelor of Arts (Communication), with the same UNIMA with the aim of at least getting a degree. He still aspires to study law but, unfortunately, ODL courses do not provide an opportunity for one to study law. He still pursues the Bachelor of Arts through ODL but without passion and the right frame of mind. He is stressed at how other applicants with similar points made it to UNIMA generic with the opportunity to enroll into the Bachelor of Laws Programme.*
- Concluding question: *How can we help Robert to still pursue his dream of pursuing a law degree programme at UNIMA?*
- *Theme: Access*

# DALITSO (I) SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (I)

- Dalitso is an 18-year-old girl who was the only student who passed from her secondary school in Neno. After the results were out, her aunt applied to school for her since she didn't know anything about the application process. Her aunt applied for a mining engineering program at MUST because she heard from her friends that it is a high-paying field. Dalitso was accepted to the program, but had problems adapting to her field of study as she wasn't passionate and knowledgeable about it. She was withdrawn on academic ground in her second year.
- *What can we do to help Dalitso apply to a program that is more suited to her interests?*
- THEMES: Access, Quality

# DALITSO (2) SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (2)

- Dalitso is an 18 year old girl who was the only student who passed from her secondary school in Neno. She was accepted at MUST, but she worries she will face problems in getting her basic needs met since the loan that she was given by the loans board only covers her tuition.
- *What can we do to help Dalitso get her basic needs met so she can attend school?*
- THEMES: Access

# DUNCAN SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (3)

- Duncan, 17, is the last-born of 3 siblings. His siblings went to college. He got 8 points, and he stays in Area 25, Lilongwe. Through his life he wanted to be an architect, but now at the point of application he is being pushed to apply for MBBS by his parents whilst his siblings are pushing him to apply for ICT considering his points and the information they have on which jobs are marketable. His uncle wants him to do agriculture because of the opportunities in the field. Duncan feels he has too much information the guy is undecided on what to pursue. He is not considering programs based on his strengths. He needs career guidance to help choose a path he is passionate about.
- *What can we do to help Duncan choose a career path that is in line with his strengths and at the same time marketable?*
- THEMES: Access

# MARY SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (5)

- Mary is a 26-year-old recent graduate from UNIMA who is in her first year of employment post-graduation. She is working for an agribusiness in Lilongwe. However, she is struggling in her job because she had no practical experience prior to starting. She feels that her program at school was too theoretical and not practical as none of her professors had business experience. At school she was trained on outdated technology (Windows 7) and her employer uses much newer technology (Windows 11) so she feels like she has to learn everything new.
- *What can we do to help Mary be successful in her first job post-graduation?*
- THEMES: Quality, Linkages

# RONALD (I) SCENARIO

## Lilongwe (6)

- At the age of 31, Ronald is a Malawi Adventist University (MAU) alumnus. With a Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness with a Grade Point Average of 3.57, he earned his degree in 2018. He is from Area 38, Lilongwe. He has never had a formal job since graduating. He has applied for several jobs, but to no effect.
- *What can we do to support Ronald in finding a job upon earning his degree?*
- THEMES: Linkages, Quality

## RONALD (2) SCENARIO

### Lilongwe (7)

- At the age of 31, Ronald is a Malawi Adventist University (MAU) alumnus from Area 38, Lilongwe. He gave up looking for work and started his own business. Along with his two colleagues, he founded an agribusiness company in 2020 to aid in marketing, farm management, and production scheduling. Yet, because lending institutions do not favour start-up businesses, it has been challenging to get agro-financing.
- *What can we do to support Ronald in realising his entrepreneurial dream?*
- THEMES: Linkages, Quality

# MWAYI SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (I)

- *Mwayi is a 20-Year-old girl. She comes from a disadvantaged family and lives at Chididi village in Nsanje district. She scored 15 points in her Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) exams in 2020. This made her eligible for enrollment into any of the public universities, but she failed to apply for admission because she did not have adequate knowledge about the online application modality and also struggled to get reliable Internet access. In a desperate attempt to submit her application, she solicited help from one of the Internet Café operators at the boma (district headquarters) who cheated her that her application had been successfully submitted and demanded MK5,000 from her for his assistance. Consequently, Mwayi was unable to get enrolled at any of the public universities, which forced her to become a mobile money vendor at a trading center near her home. This ended her academic hopes even though she performed very well in her MSCE.*
- **Concluding question:** What can we do to help Mwayi get enrolled into a public university?
- Theme: Access



# JOHN (1) SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (2)

- John is a 21-year-old from Mwasambo village in Kasungu district. He was enrolled at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS), but struggled to pay tuition fees as well as provide for his upkeep. John was unable to do so because his parents were very poor and most of his better off relatives in the village could not appreciate the value of higher education. He applied for a loan to the Higher Education Students' Loans and Grants Board (HESLGB) but he was not successful due to the high demand and limited capacity of the HESLGB to cater for all deserving students. Although he was not successful with the student loan application, some of the successful applicants were those that came from better off families and could afford to pay for themselves. John had no choice but to withdraw from MUBAS. He went back home and now works on a tobacco estate in his home district.
- **Concluding question:** What can we do to ensure that all deserving students like John get access to the loan facility so that they are able to complete their studies?
- Theme: Access

# SAMUEL SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (3)

- Samuel is an alumnus of Mzuzu University. He graduated with a distinction in Bachelor of Sciences, Geological Engineering in 2017. He was very optimistic about getting employed within a relatively short period of time, especially having graduated at the top of his class. However, six years later, Samuel remains unemployed despite responding to so many job opportunities that are in tune with his educational qualification and industrial attachment experience. When he engages his peers, Samuel is told that he cannot get a job if he does not have connections with friends and relatives who can do some bidding for him and if he is not prepared to fundraise for corruption to secure the job.
- **Concluding question:** What can be done to ensure that there is a level playing field in the job market so that alumni like Samuel get employed on merit?
- Theme: Linkages

# CHISOMO (I) SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (4)

- Chisomo, a 21-year-old lady from Mitundu in Lilongwe district, enrolled for her tertiary education at UNIMA after an excellent performance at MSCE. She was selected to study for a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences. She was a hard-working student and demonstrated huge intellectual potential, but because of lack of adequate teaching and learning materials, her training did not focus much on the practical side of the programme. The delivery of the programme was skewed in favour of theoretical aspects thereby denying her the opportunity to become conversant with many practical aspects that are deemed very important by employers. She was lucky to secure a job with a research institute in biodiversity and ecosystems but due to her limited practical experience, she could not deliver as expected by her employer. Consequently, she lost out on very important opportunities and did not enjoy as much respect from her colleagues which greatly affected her self-esteem.
- **Concluding question:** What can be done to ensure that universities adequately prepare students like Chisomo to be competitive enough when employed?
- Theme: Quality

# CHIPATSO SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (5)

- *Chipatso, 18 years-old, hails from Kandulu Village in Mwanza district and she is a first-born daughter from a family with very humble beginnings. She is the first person from her village to get enrolled into a public university. When she realized that it would not be possible for her family to meet her education expenses, she approached the Dean of Students to seek assistance and he advised her to apply for the government student loan facility administered by HESLGB. Her application was successful, but only for tuition fees which made life difficult for her as she needed support for her upkeep and other related school expenses such as stationery. As a last resort, Chipatso obtained katapila (a loan with a high interest rate) from one of the better off students and started a business to help her fund her upkeep and other pertinent expenses. However, balancing school work and business was not easy as she ended up focusing more on business to meet her basic needs but also to service the katapila loan that was contracted at a very high interest rate. This affected her grades and she ended up being withdrawn from the university on academic grounds.*
- **Concluding question:** What can be done in order to help Chipatso, a girl full of potential, to fulfill her dream of becoming a graduate?
- Theme: Access

# CHISOMO (2) SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (6)

- From the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Chisomo aged 25 graduated with a distinction degree in Medical Micro-biology in 2016. Equipped with a very good degree, Chisomo frantically searched for a job aligned with his qualifications. He went from district to district searching for his dream job but without success. Finally, his job search brought him to Blantyre where he stayed with his aunt for over a year. Taking advantage of his aunt's ability to afford newspapers almost on a daily basis, he made about a thousand applications, but only with a single breakthrough. He was invited by the Malawi Liverpool Welcome Trust for interviews, but was not successful because he did not have the breadth and depth of experience the job required. After two years of staying with his aunt in Blantyre, Chisomo returned back home, Ntchisi, to start subsistence farming which he relies on for his own livelihood and to support his aging parents.
- **Concluding question:** What can be done to ensure that trained youths like Chisomo are able to get employed and realize their full potential?
- Theme: Linkages and Quality

# JOHN (2) SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (7)

- John is a 24-year-old boy from Namitambo Village in Chiradzulu district who was born visually impaired. He attended his secondary school at Blantyre Secondary School where he passed with flying colours during his MSCE. He had always wanted to become an engineer and his stellar performance at MSCE made him eligible for any other course in any public university. It was, however, not possible for him to be enrolled for the engineering programme as they do not accommodate those who are visually impaired. John also faced problems with his application through NCHE (the National Council for Higher Education) as they do not have braille application forms. Consequently, John could not realize his dream of becoming an engineer; he ended up as a language teacher as UNIMA is the only University that is able to accommodate visually impaired students. Even after attaining his degree, John has never been passionate about his work because this was never his dream job which has affected his enthusiasm and productivity at work.
- **Concluding question:** How can people with disabilities like John be assisted to get enrolled into programmes of their choice at public universities?
- Theme: Access (Disabilities)

# RACHEL SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (8)

- Rachel is a 24-year-old girl who stays in Blantyre. She graduated from UNIMA with a degree in Food and Nutrition with credit in 2021. Shortly after graduation, she observed that most of her friends were getting employed for opportunities that were either advertised or not advertised at all. When she tried to ask for tips from her peers on how they are securing jobs, all she was told was that her friends were linked by relatives or someone they know with influence to seal the deal on their behalf. Rachel is from a poor family and the only university graduate and there is no one who can link her to any potential employer. Rachel has applied over 700 times to different institutions even when there are no vacancies advertised but has not secured any job let alone being called for interviews where she can showcase her potential. As a result, Rachel is always stressed and struggling with suicidal thoughts as she is failing to support herself and her parents.
- **Concluding question:** How can we help new graduates like Rachel secure jobs fairly and on merit?
- Theme: Linkages

# JIMMY SCENARIO

## BLANTYRE (9)

- Jimmy is a 20-year-old boy from Nthalire village in Chitipa district who sat for his MSCE at Mzuzu Government Secondary School (MGSS) and got 11 points while his friend Yankho from Chikwawa but from MGSS as well scored 21 points. They both applied for public university enrollment through the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and Yankho got selected to the University of Malawi (UNIMA) while Jimmy was left out due to highly competitive performance in the Northern region. He made two successive attempts, but still could not be successfully enrolled in any of the public universities. With three attempts to get enrolled into the university, Jimmy could be eligible once more only if he sat for MSCE again. This greatly affected him, which ended up pushing him into excessive drug and substance abuse. He completely lost hope in education and felt that there is nothing good that can come from it.
- **Concluding question:** What can we do to assist Jimmy to realise his goal of getting university education?
- Theme: Access