



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# **Defining the ‘known unknowns’: Developing and working with a program learning agenda**

**FSN Network  
July 11, 2014**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Perception #1

**The donor only cares about results**

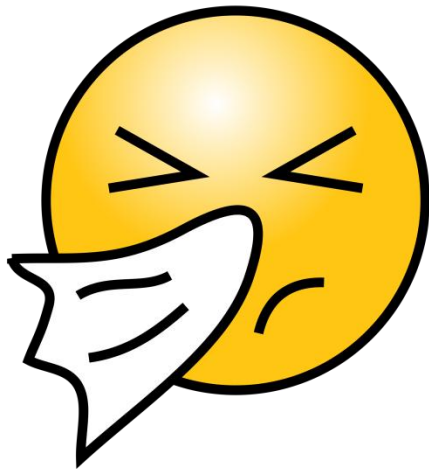
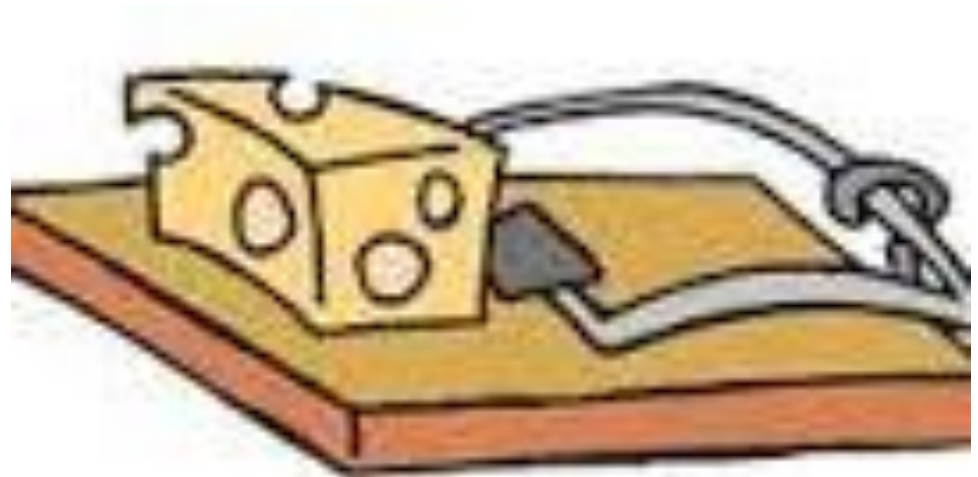
So we need to focus on coverage and numbers reached, not learning



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Role of inquiry

What if... we  
built  
a better  
mousetrap...



...to fight the  
common  
cold?



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Perception #2

**If we didn't achieve the results we were seeking, something was wrong with the implementation.**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Role of inquiry

If only our path forward was always so straightforward





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Role of inquiry

But the local systems we work in are more complicated – the causal pathways not always clear





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

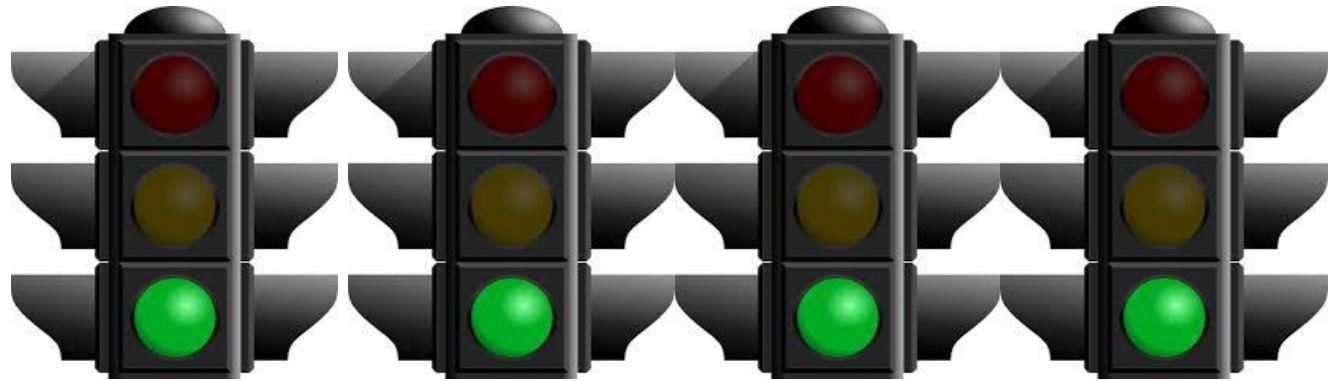
## Perception #3

**Hard evidence is the only form of learning that counts**

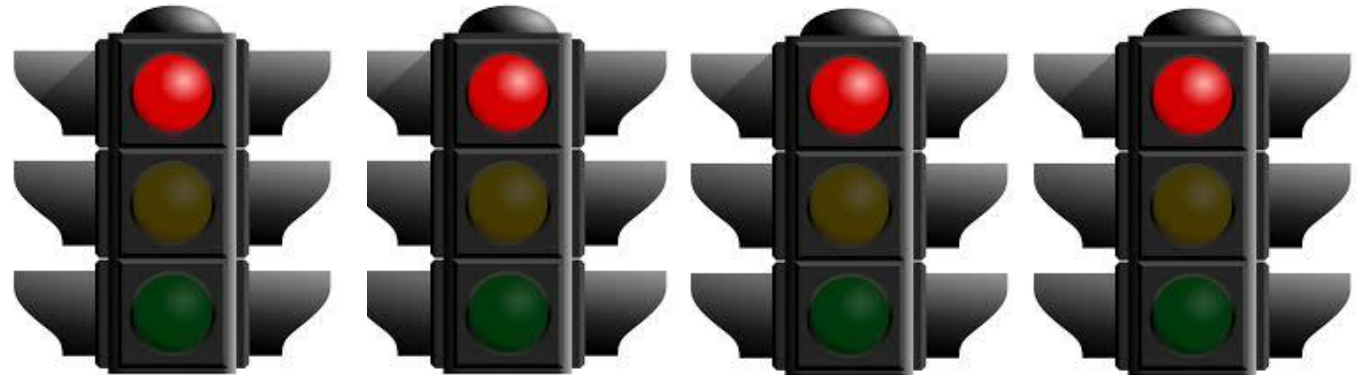


But what if...

...the data  
tells us  
all is  
proceeding  
as planned



but we're not  
seeing the  
change we  
expected?







**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Perception #4

**USAID is the best  
source for our  
learning agenda.**



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Role of inquiry



It's easy to feel at home  
in the world of our own  
assumptions

While the view might  
look very different out  
another set of windows





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Inquiry about what?

## What do we want to learn about?

- Effectiveness of the approach
  - How can we ensure our approach is one that will really work?
- Quality of implementation
  - How can we improve performance?
- Fit to context
  - How can we ensure a good fit with the local environment?



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# When to inquire?

- Design
- Implementation
- After the fact
  
- Defining 'learning moments' - what are they?



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# Approach to inquiry

Type of questions	Who to involve in shaping question	Approaches to answering question	Who to involve in answering question	How to apply the learning
Assumption, hypothesis, context, performance, process, effectiveness				