Methodology for Less Harmful, More Helpful Evaluation in Natural Resource Management Programmes in South Africa

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Where leaders learn

Key Questions and Focus

- How can we better evaluate national programmes?
- Is a realist approach appropriate here?
- Can it also be developmental/ formative/ participatory?

- Working developmentally with ToC for SAM
- Multi-method methodology & synthesis
- Governance and the role of the evaluator

Context: South Africa

State Capture

Culture of Corruption and Culture of Compliance

Youth

Low Growth, No Jobs

Opportunity for Growth

Natural Resources

462,000 Natural Resource Management Jobs

Restoring Wetlands

Fighting Wild Fires

Invasive Aliens

Altitude Clearing

Controlling Erosion

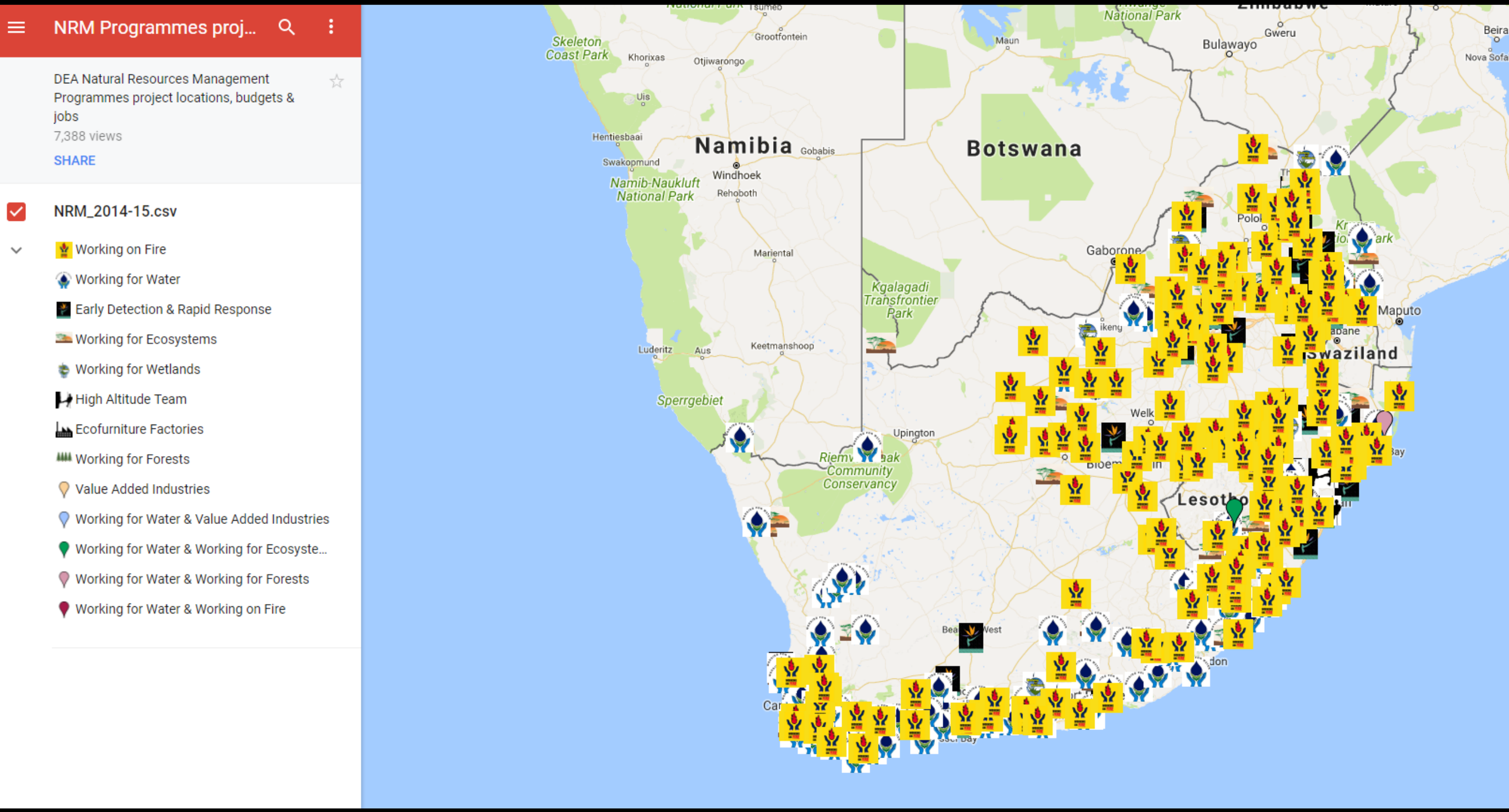
Replanting

Monitoring

Training

Managing

https://www.environment.gov.za/projectsprogrammes/nrm_maps



The Theory of Change?

What is Missing?

Cash to the poorest

Buffer against poverty

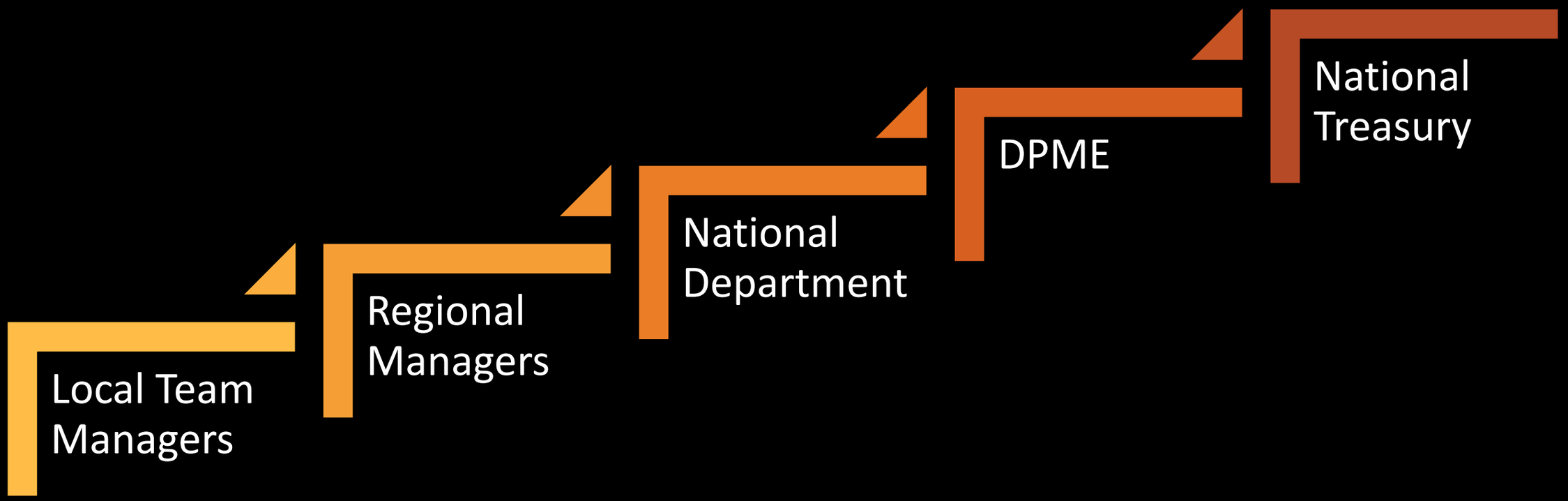
Provide training

Pathway to permanent income

Fix up nature

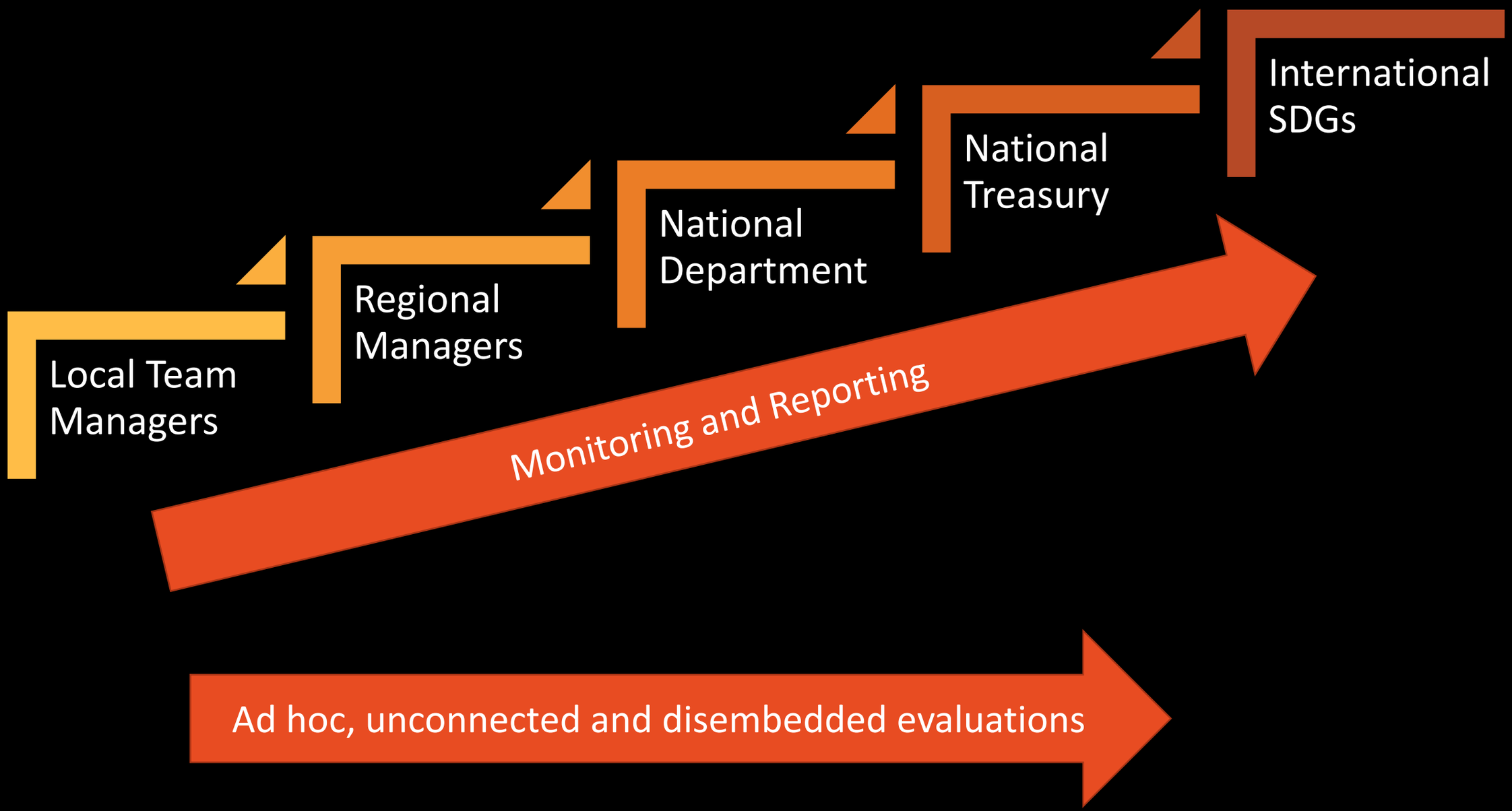
Greater access to natural resources

How are the NRMPs Evaluated?



1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4 QUALITY EDUCATION
5 GENDER EQUALITY
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND
16 PEACE AND JUSTICE STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

How are the NRMPs Evaluated?



What is ~~Evaluated~~ Reported?

- # of people employed
- # of training days
- # of hectares cleared
- # of wetlands restored
- Etc.

What is Harmful?

- Indicators only + targets
- Compliance culture
- Fear to fail
- Theory-practice disjunct …

- While wetlands collapse again, alien plants invade again …
- And short term cash injections fail to improve community well-being

  (From *ad hoc* evaluations)

- Evaluation not applied

Helpful How?

- Learning
- Strategic Adaptive Management
- In complex systems
- At multiple levels

Accounting for expenditure

Evidence-based policy making

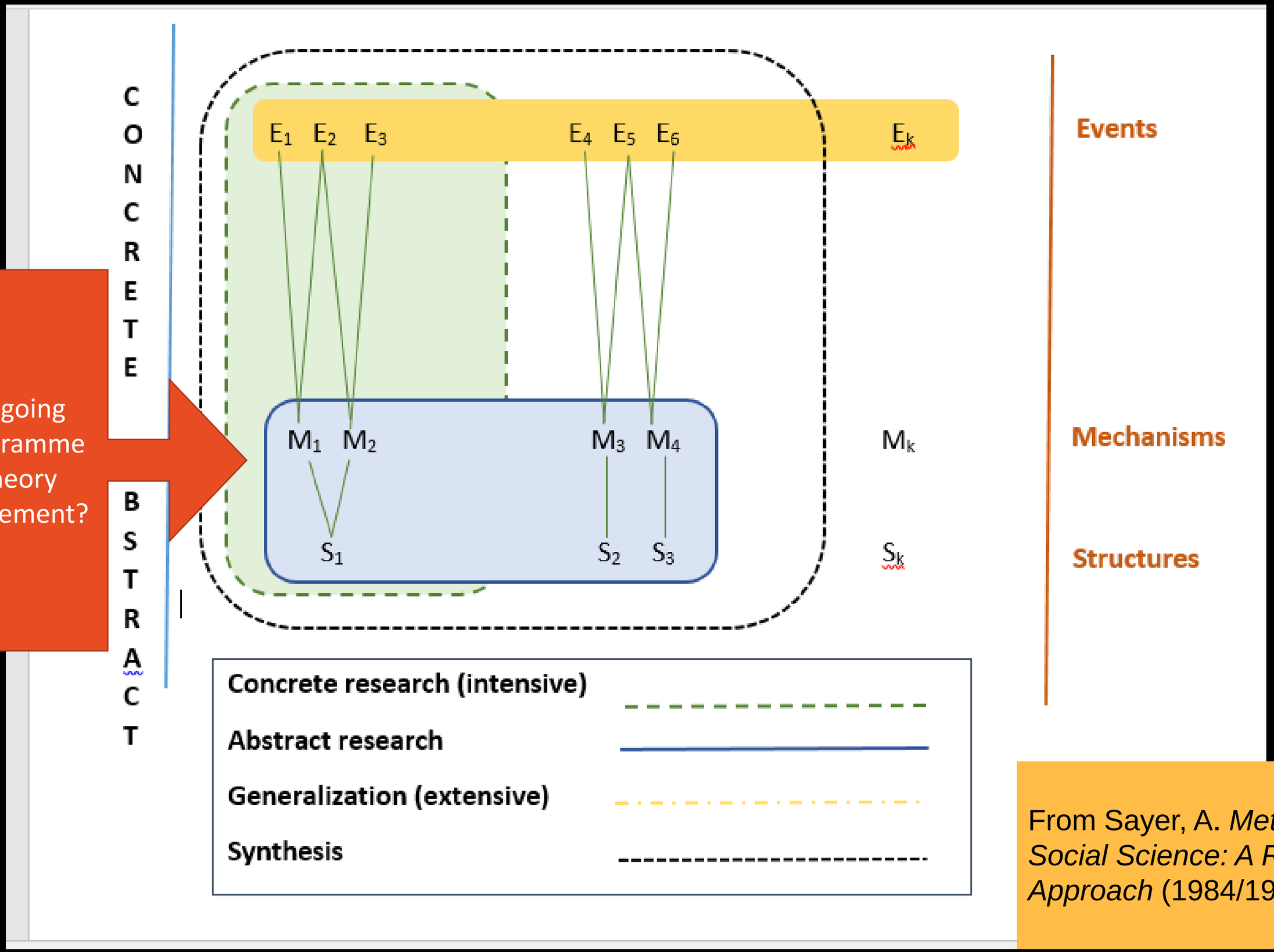
Learn and account - are we having an impact?

Roles of Evaluation

Guide the next steps - SAM

Test the theory about what works, when & why

A Realist Multi-Method Approach



From Sayer, A. *Methods in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (1984/1992)

What mix of methods could work?

1. Monitoring against national indicators for aggregation
2. Case studies across contexts, systematically planned
3. Programme theory developmentally surfaced and refined (PAR variant)

Examples

Monitoring data:	# of training days # of new jobs # of hectares cleared # of wetlands rehabilitated
Case study questions:	Where is the citizen monitoring working, for whom, and why? Where is it not working, and why? Where are the positive training outcomes, for whom, and why? Where are there no positive training outcomes, why? Where is access to natural resources increasing, for whom? Why?
Meta-evaluation questions:	What are we learning about working with citizen monitors? What are we learning about the mechanisms for moving out of poverty through natural resource management programmes?

Across all SA NRM programmes, to ‘aggregate’ …

Report from all NRM programmes into DEA, DPME, Treasury both quantitative and qualitative, monitoring and evaluation insights, accountability & learning

Programme Learning: Key Insights

x N

Monitoring Data

+

Case Evaluation Insights

+

Synthesis Meta Evaluation

Method and Governance

- Monitoring against national indicators for aggregation
- Case studies across contexts, systematically planned
- Programme theory developmentally surfaced & refined (PAR)
- Synthesis across methods and levels
- Multi-level governance of the PMERL system for reflexivity or SAM
- Requisite simplicity and complexity

Combine indicator-based monitoring & case based evaluation, with synthesis (meta-evaluation) and integrative (P)MERL governance:

NLEIP PRAXIS EVALUATION PANEL

PMERL champions within each of the NLEIP working groups or Communities of Practice pick up on PMERL aspects relevant to their group, from case studies and monitoring data, and feed to the praxis evaluation panel

- **PMERL CHAMPION: SEDIMENT & REHAB COP**
- **PMERL CHAMPION: LIVELIHOODS & ES COP**
- **PMERL CHAMPION: GOVERNANCE COP**

Case studies by PMERL staff or external researchers, using monitoring data and/or collecting additional data as required

- **CASE STUDY**
- **CASE STUDY**
- **CASE STUDY**
- **CASE STUDY**

ONGOING COLLECTION OF MONITORING DATA AT DIFFERENT SCALES
By citizen scientists/monitors, NLEIP and NRMP project managers, researchers and students, and PMERL staff
(Both quantitative and qualitative data)

4 5 7 3 2 6 1

What about Absences?

What is Missing?

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Looking forward to your input! Thank you!

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