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IMPACT
MATTERS

ALNAP skills development-

Real-time Evaluations in humanitarian action:

Organizational capacity requierements and practical applications for evaluation managers and teams   **Riccardo Polastro**

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Primary aim:

- *Understand the **purpose** and **objectives** of RTEs, **benefits** and key **challenges.***

Specific objectives:

- *Improve the quality and use of future RTE processes (policy makers/managers and evaluators)*

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Contextualising RTEs

- IA RTE is a subset of EAH that is a subset of EDA.

- EHA vs. EDA

- Humanitarian reform

- Evolving & dynamic area

- Pillar of the new EHA architecture Source

Legend:
- Total from other countries
- Total from OECD DAC members

Source: OECD/OCHA/DI 2012

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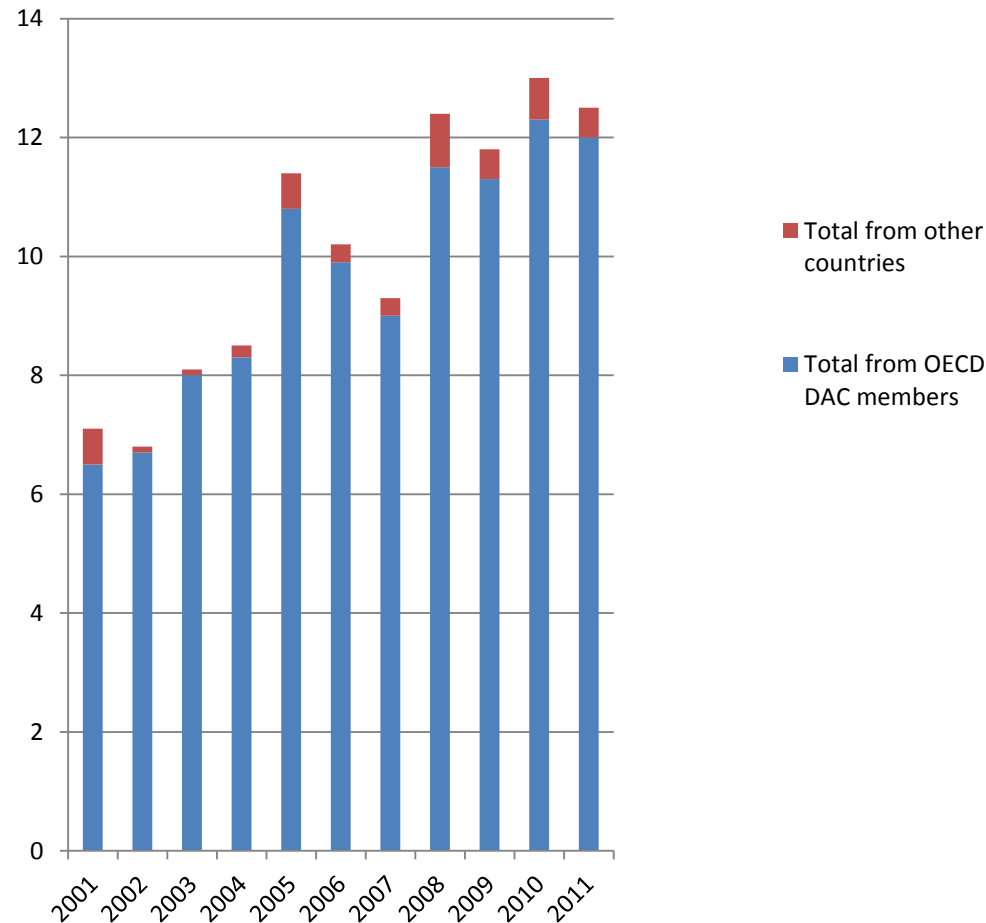
Contextualising RTEs
EHA-*Systemic and objective* **examination** of HA intended to draw ***lessons*** and *improve* *policy* and *practice* & *enhace* ***accountability***

- **Feedback loop-** the disconnect in HA

What is an RTE? Purpose & goals
- An eval that provides ***immediate* feedback** in a *participatory* way to those executing and managing the response (ALNAP 2009 guide).
- Supportive measure to adjust planning & performance
- Intended for learning in action and unlock operational bottlenecks

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Key characteristics

- Improvement-oriented during ops
- RTE / Mid-term / Ex-post
- Types (single versus joint)
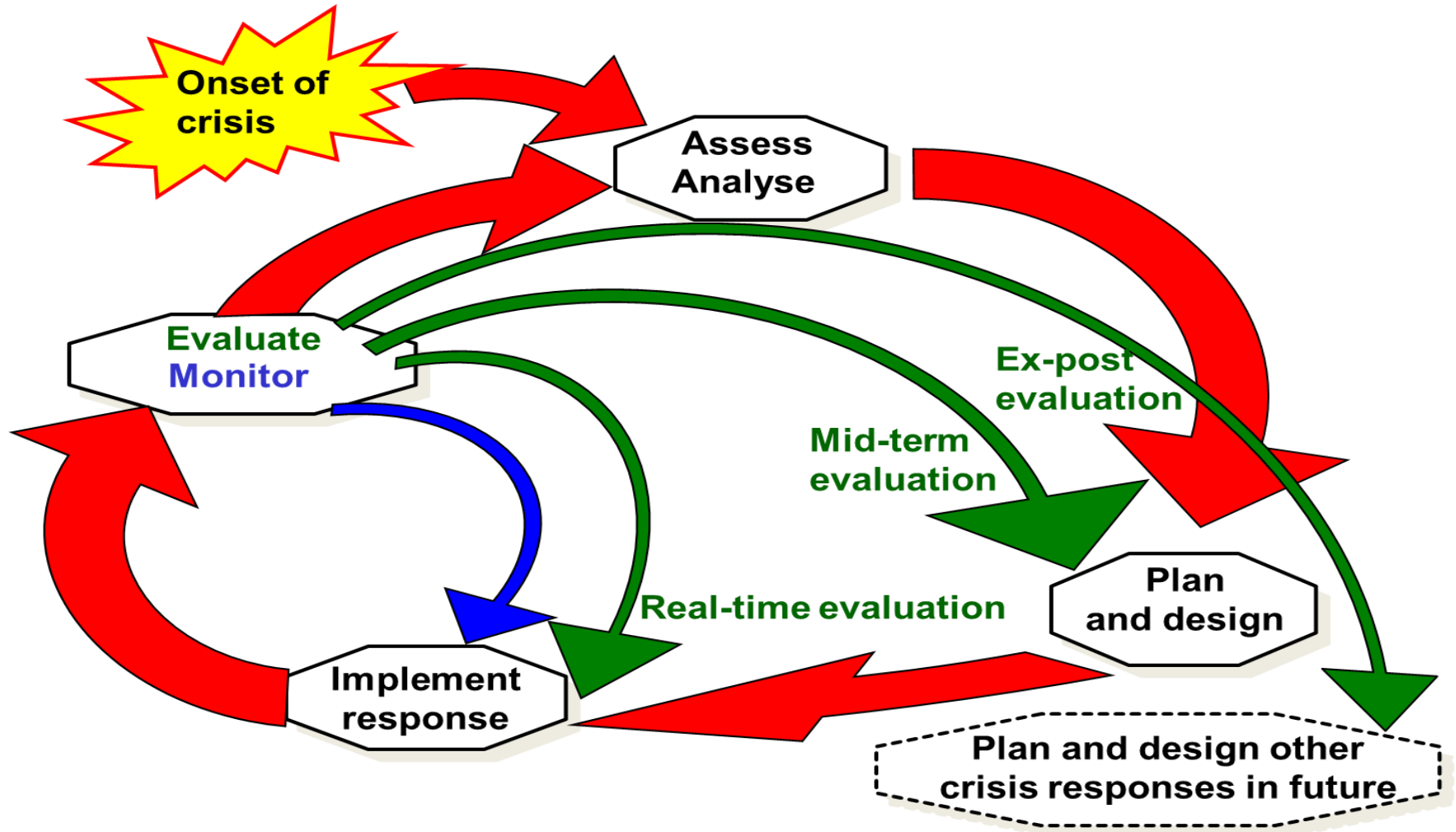- Growth (#, participants & scope)
- Triggering mechanisms in place

- Demanding
- Agile & light footprint
- Involvement of stakeholders

© Riccardo Polastro, IA RTE Mozambique, First non food item distribution 04/2007

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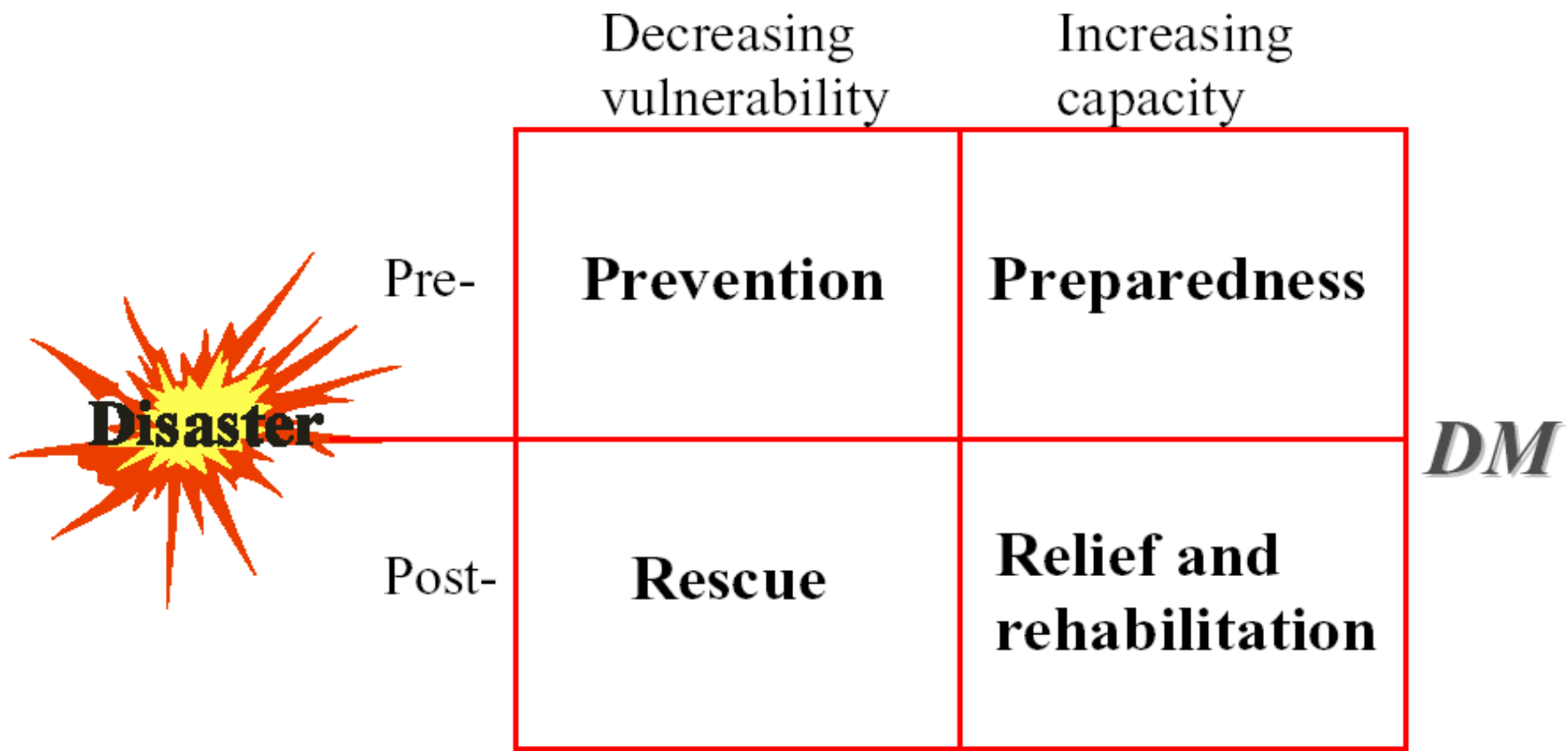
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Distribution of the 113 documents referring to Real Time Evaluation as a percentage of all 8,618 ReliefWeb postings in English referring to evaluation
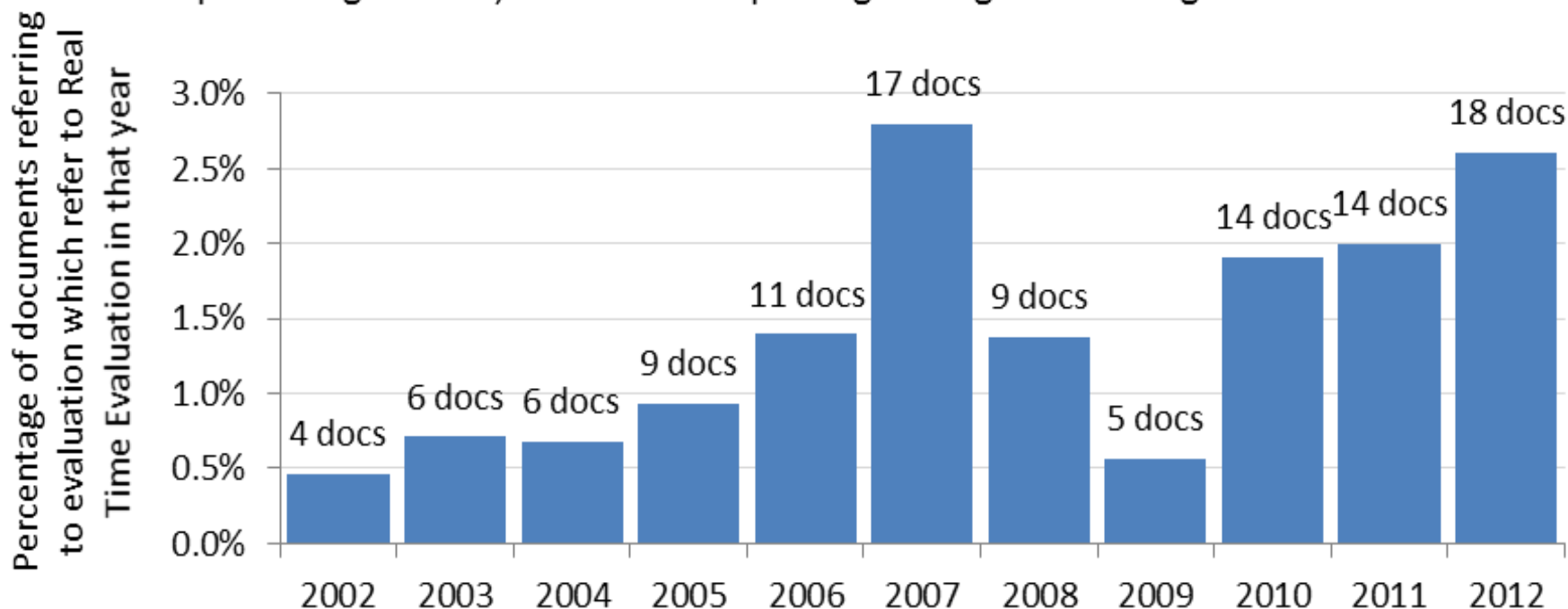
Note: 2007 peak is due to multiple references to UNHCR series of 5 RTEs in 2007. No mentions of RTEs found before 2002
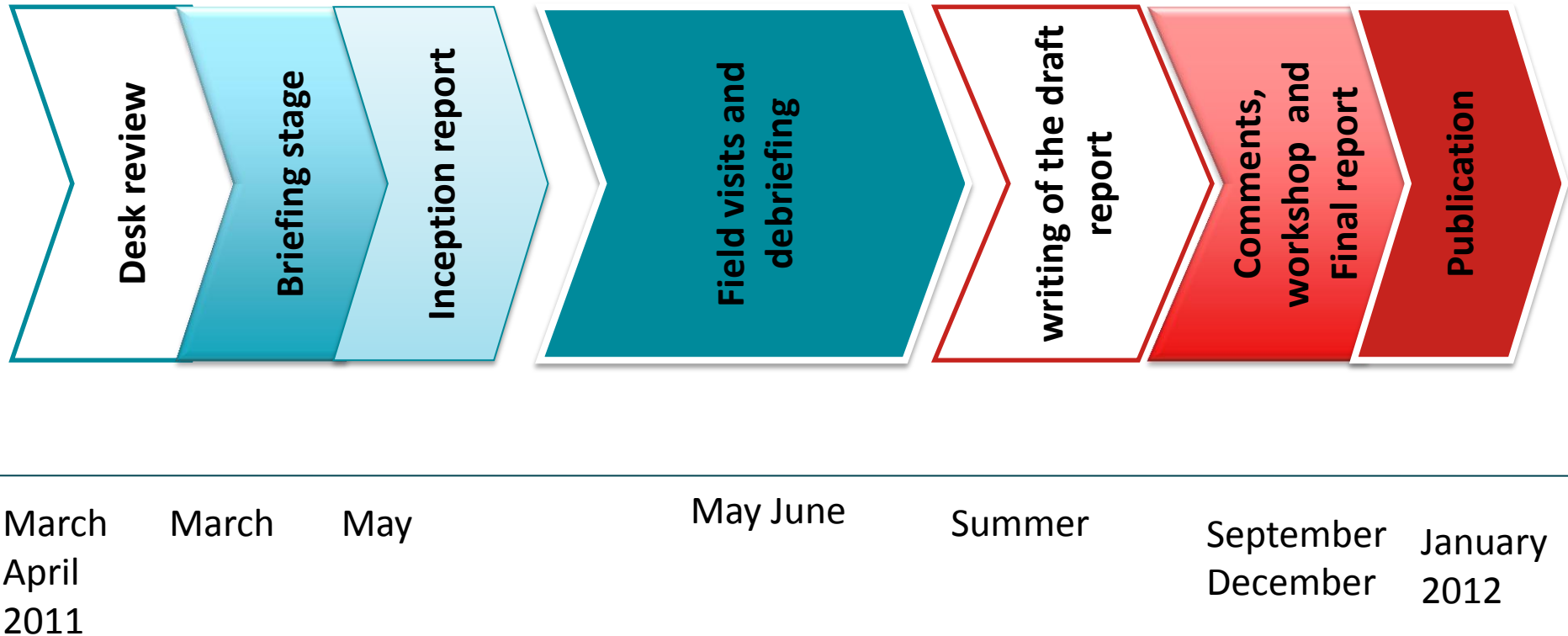
Real-time Evaluations in humanitarian action:
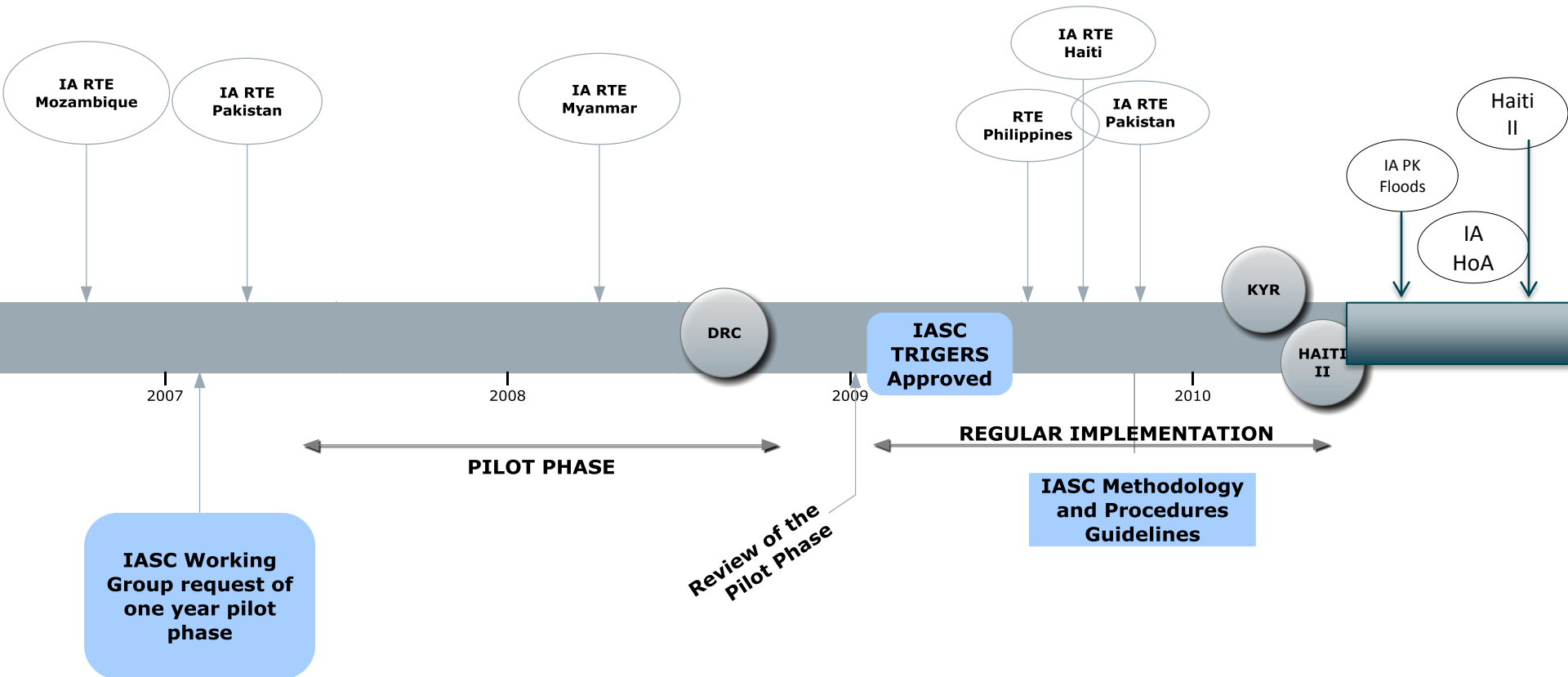*Organizational capacity requierements and practical applications for evaluation managers and teams*   **Riccardo Polastro**

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	Decreasing vulnerability	Increasing capacity
Pre-	**Prevention**	**Preparedness**
Post-	**Rescue**	**Relief and rehabilitation**

Disaster

DM

Time line after disaster
- phases -

Disaster

Rescue → Relief → Rehabilitation → Reconstruction → Prevention → Preparedness →

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An EHA timeline

Desk review	Briefing stage	Inception report	Field visits and debriefing	writing of the draft report	Comments, workshop and Final report	Publication
March April 2011	March	May	May June	Summer	September December	January 2012

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Hierarchy

System-Wide Evaluation	Evaluation of the response by the whole system to a particular disaster event or complex emergency
Partial sytem Evaluation	Evaluation of part of the system such as thematic or sectoral study
Single Agency Response Evaluation	Evaluation of the overall response to a particular disaster event or complex emergency by a particular agency (funding agency, channelling agency, implementing agency)
Single Agency, Single Project Evaluation	Evaluation of a single project undertaken by a single agency

Milestones

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Methods

- Selected methods based on the context
- Best suited to answer the question
- Seen as credible by the different stakeholders
- Ethical to use in the context

- Overall mixed methods but qualitative predominate
- Constrained timeframe

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Methods

RTEs are **designed for direct instrumental utilisation** by the field staff. This means that an RTE team must:

• Use methods that are valid and can be understood by the country team.

• Provide feedback in the field for the country team.

• Have the knowledge and experience to be perceived as people with something to contribute.

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Methods

Deductive analysis based on mixed methods:

Desk review. Direct observation in visits to **20 different locations**..

1000 people met, carried isi and gsi with the over 650 of the affected population
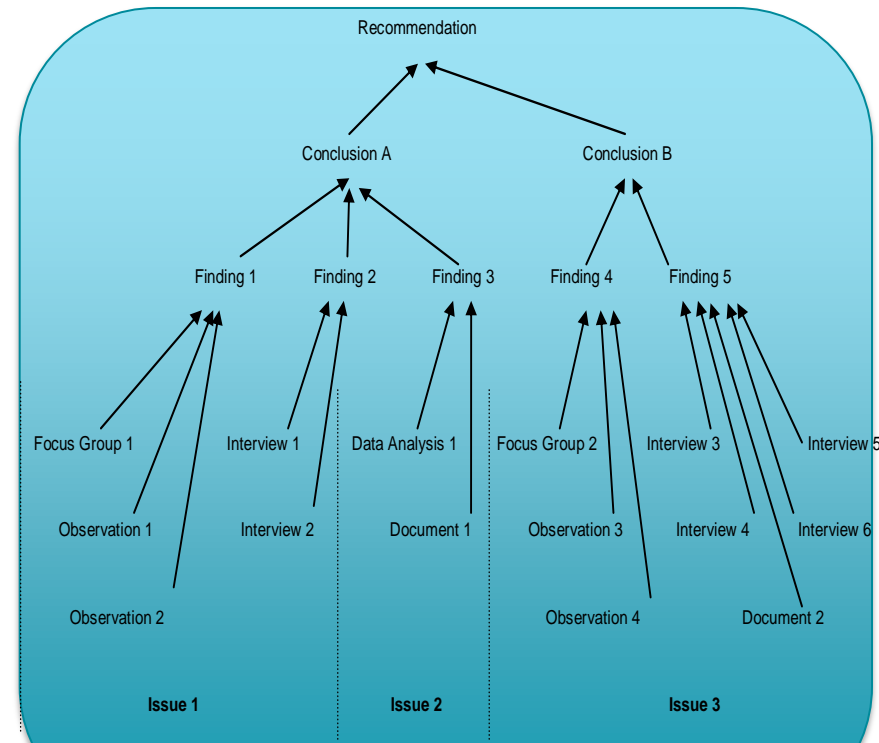
Gathered **2700 pieces of evidence triangulated** in order to present the following preliminary findings, conclusions and.

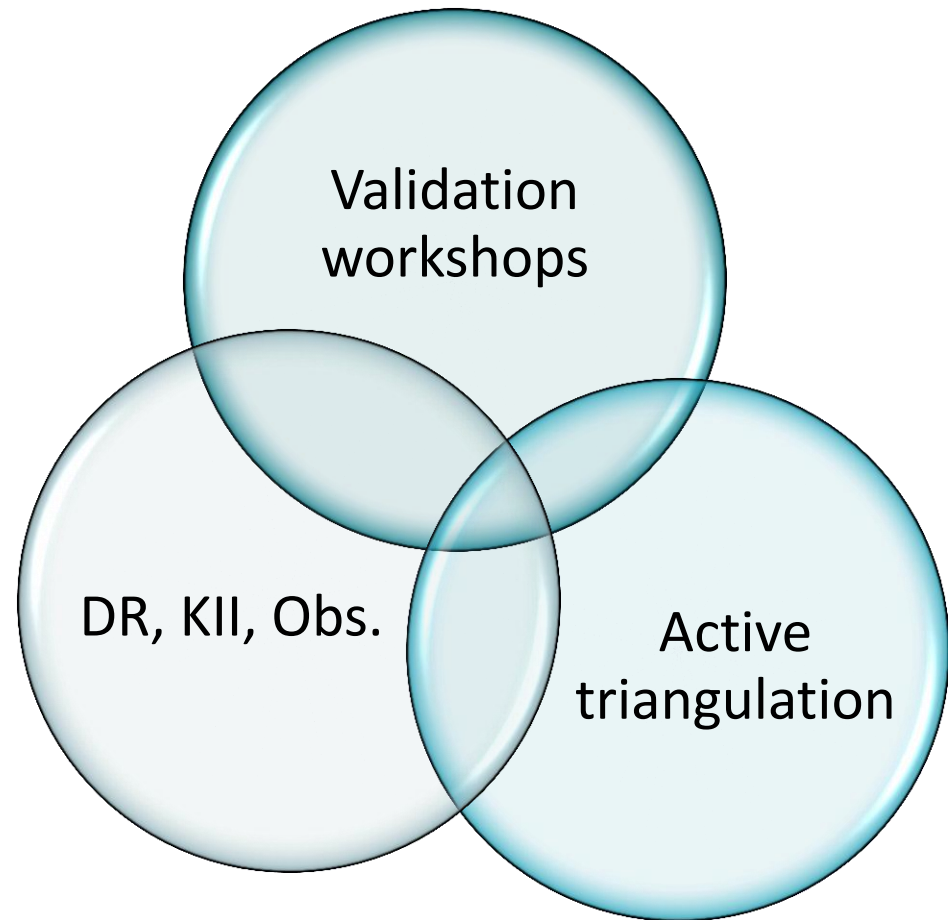**Balochistan** could not be visited both for time and security

Worskhops/Ownership

Flood Affected Districts
Total 78 Districts
Severely Affected
Moderately Affected
Not Affected
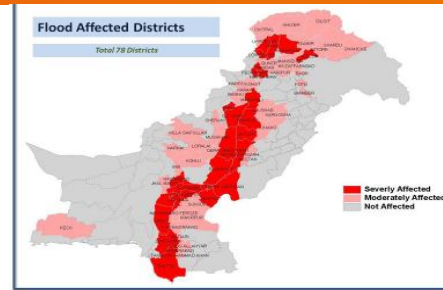
*Collecting a strong, **representative evidence basis** demands different approaches,*

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Methods challenges

- Fragmented and scarce information

- Limited time and evidence

- Absence of standardized monitoring and comparable datasets

- Evidence for whom? For what?

Validation workshops

DR, KII, Obs.

Active triangulation

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Added value

- Bridge the gap between monitoring & evaluation
- Broader scope
- Timeliness?
- Interactive
- Immediate feedback- Feeding into decision making cycle and planning by properly engaging leadership
- Management structures …burden sharing
- Mutual capacity building between partners
- Improved learning and accountability
- Reducing the overall number of evaluations undertaken / evaluation

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Challenges

- Growing focus on single agency RTEs (e.g. Haiti 10m /10 RTEs) / HoA/ concept inflation / ritualistic
- Few RTEs in complex emergencies
- Clarity of the purpose of the evaluation.
- Timeliness and timing (consultation/ when triggered)
- Capacity (*selecting well the team* HR/Funding)
- Ownership (doers, managers, receivers?)
  -Meet each partner's accountability and lessons learning needs
- What are the key questions? Map interest….
- Utilisation: (process and products) weakness in the follow up on recommendations.

Is leadership engaged? Uses & users? Ability to feed into decision making?

Conclusions

- Keep RTEs focused
- bridge between M&E
- Build participation & ownership
- Identify the clearly intended uses/users
- Outline the benefits of IA RTEs. Show their impact. Influencing in decision making?
- Stronger evidence and evaluation rigour
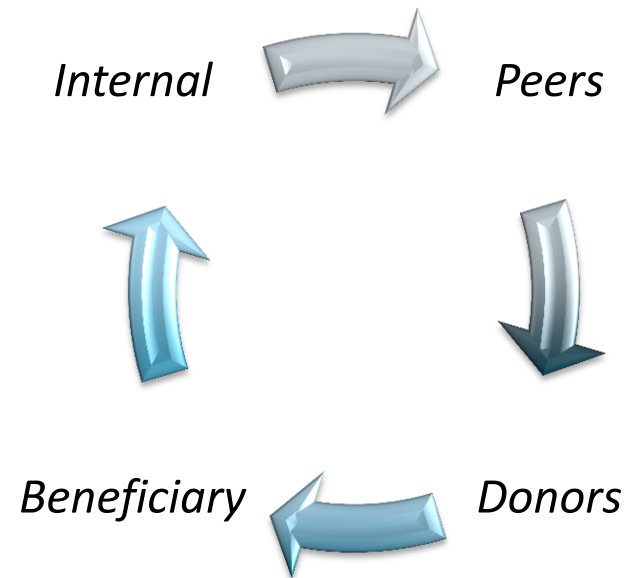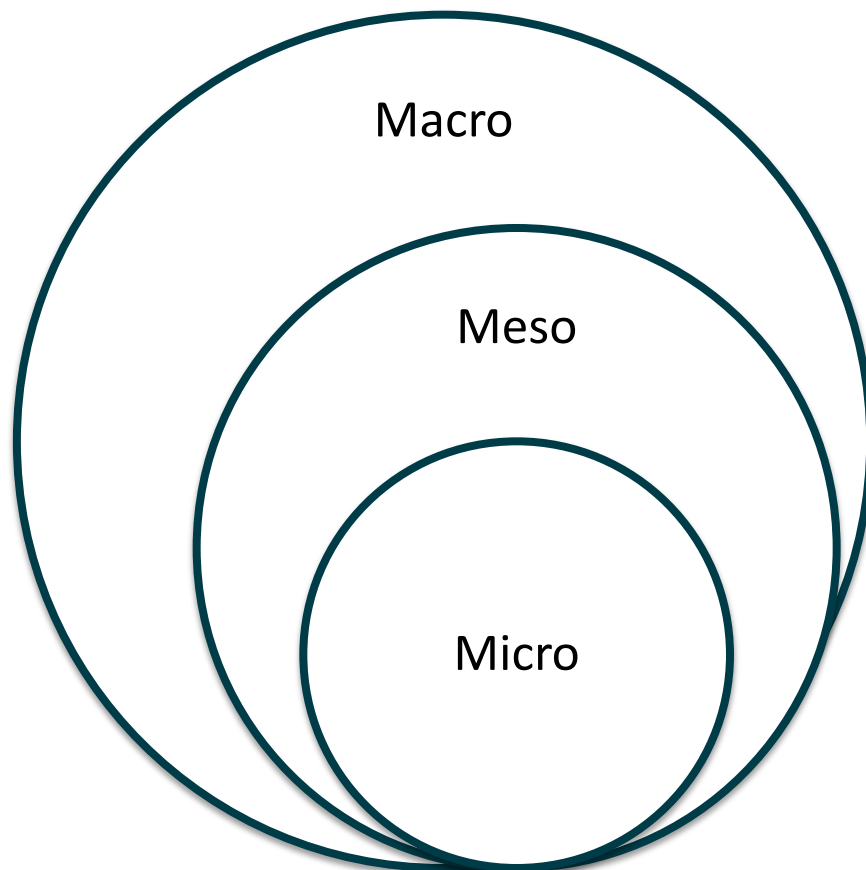- Mechanisms in place & secure resources

Field

Region

HQ

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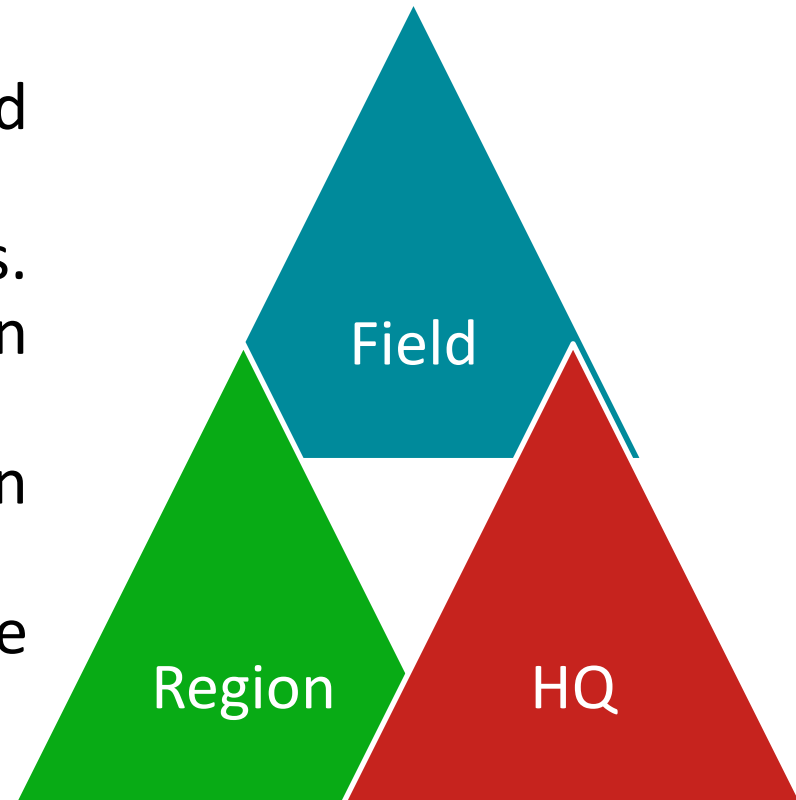
FUTURE OF RTEs

A dynamic tool feeding into decision-making

Drivers:

-Participation & Owned by field + support from HQ

-Core purpose: learning & guidance

- Rolled out systematically & triggers respected (includes funding secured)

- Strategic approach to what should be evaluated

Deployed during on-going operations (timely)

-Quality versus quantity

-Based on strong evidence chain

-Findings & recommendations are applied

-Effective dissemination

Momentary fashion

Stumbling blocks:

- Owned by HQ exclusively

- Core purpose: accountability

-Limited field learning

-Rolled out reactively & randomly (unpredictability of funds)

- Unclear to what should be evaluated

-Deployed after operations

- Thin evidence chain

- Recommendations are not properly used & implemented

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RTEs potential in the humanitarain system:

Macro

Meso

Micro

Internal → Peers

Peers ↓ Donors

Donors → Beneficiary

Beneficiary ↑ Internal

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Organizational capacity requierements
a) leadership:To what extent does leadership understand and is supportive of RTEs?

b) adaptive capacity:To what extent do they feed into the decision making process and sed to orient our strategies and operational objectives?

c) management and operational: -Do we have a strategic approach to do (HR/fin) and select what should be evaluated?

Opening up the discussion:
-Why are you doing RTE? For whom? What types of RTEs are you doing? How are you using the learning from previous RTEs.

-Where do you see the potential? Future shape?

-How are we using learning from previous RTE?

-To what extent is your organisation a learning organisation?

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