



Desk Review of the Use of M&E Frameworks in Sector Programme Support

JANUARY 2014

**Desk Review of
the Use of M&E Frameworks
in Sector Programme Support**

January 2014

Bjørn Nygaard, ideas2action

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author.

List of Abbreviations

BEST-AC	Business Environment Advocacy Programme
BSPS	Business Sector Programme Support
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
CA	Constituent Assembly
DBP	Danida Business Partnerships
DGF	The Democratic Governance Facility
DKK	Danish Kroner
EoD	Embassy of Denmark
GoN	Government of Nepal
HRGGP	Human Rights and Good Governance Programme
HUGOU	Human Rights and Good Governance Advisor Unit
KEPSA	Kenya Private Sector Alliance
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
LGCDP	Local governance and community development
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoV	Means of verification
MSME	Micro, small and medium sized enterprises
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
RDE	Royal Danish Embassy
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound
SME	Small and medium sized enterprises
ToR	Terms of Reference

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1. Objective.....	5
1.2. Methodology.....	6
2. M&E framework of four programmes	8
2.1 The Democratic Governance Facility, Uganda.....	8
2.2 The Business Sector Programme Support II, Kenya.....	8
2.3 The Human Rights and Good Governance Programme III, Nepal	9
2.4 The Business Sector Programme Support III, Tanzania	10
3. Findings of the desk review.....	11
3.1. How has the M&E framework improved the evaluability of the programme?.....	11
3.2. How has the M&E framework been used during implementation by programme management or by the Embassy?.....	14
3.3. Was the programme logframe reformulated in the inception phase and was the logframe conducive or a hindrance to establishing a good M&E system?.....	15
3.4. What were the data sources used to collect monitoring information? Which national sources of data were used?.....	16
3.5. What was the set-up (staffing, institutional anchorage) of the M&E responsible and who were they reporting to?	17
3.6. What are the costs in terms of man-hours or consultancy fees in establishing and maintaining the system?.....	18
4. Challenges	20
Annex 1: Terms of Reference	24

The following annexes are available at Danida Evaluation website (evaluation.um.dk):

Annex 2: Detailed notes on the four programmes

Annex 3: Example of M&E Consultancy Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

One of the lessons from evaluations of sector programme support is that in many cases, the available data does not allow the evaluation to draw conclusions on the results. In some cases, the programme monitoring system has not been fully developed with SMART indicators (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound), especially in relation to the overall objectives of the intervention. In other cases, the data may be available from the programme monitoring, but there is no proper baseline, which allows a before-after comparison.

In most Danida programmes monitoring is focused on activity and output levels. In a few cases, however, a special effort has been undertaken to establish an overall monitoring framework for the sector programme support or in a component of the programme, including defining indicators and the data sources for outcome and impact measurement and to produce reports at programme level. This may have been done by a Programme Management Unit (PMU) or by a consultant recruited for this specific task during programme implementation. The M&E work undertaken by such a set-up is expected to have improved the evaluability of the sector programme support through the establishment of better indicators, baseline, targets, and reporting. The effect of this should be visible in programme reporting, reviews and the experience of the Embassy administration.

1.1. Objective

The objective of the desk review is to draw the experience from four such monitoring frameworks with the view of using it in establishing monitoring frameworks for Danida country programmes.

The review is addressing the following overall issues:

- How has the M&E framework improved the evaluability of the programme (for instance establishing SMART indicators, baselines and targets on all the relevant levels of the logframe)?
- How has the M&E framework been used during implementation by programme management or by the Embassy?
- Was the programme logframe reformulated in the inception phase in connection with the establishment of the M&E framework indicators? Was the logframe conducive or a hindrance to establishing a good M&E system?

- What were the data sources used to collect monitoring information, which national sources of data were used and what were the primary data collected by the M&E responsible?
- What was the set-up (staffing, institutional anchorage) of the M&E responsible and to whom were they reporting?
- What are the costs in terms of man-hours or consultancy fees in establishing and maintaining the system?

1.2. Methodology

The desk review is based on an analysis of a long list of M&E related documents per programme and interviews with key staff involved in the programmes' M&E frameworks. The following four programmes were chosen¹ for further analysis:

- Human Rights and Good Governance Programme III, Nepal
- Democratic Governance Facility, Uganda (under the Good Governance Programme)
- Business Sector Programme Support II, Kenya
- Business Sector Programme Support III, Tanzania

The monitoring frameworks are at different stages of development. The Kenyan programme is still to produce its first programme level progress report whereas the other frameworks have produced reports for some time.

The following persons have been interviewed:

- Jit Gurung (Social Inclusion Adviser, RDE Nepal)
- Mikkel Klim (former programme manager, BSPS III Tanzania)
- Samweli Kilua (Programme Officer, BSPS III Tanzania)
- Mie Bæk, Kenya (M&E consultant, COWI) – BSPS II Kenya
- Johanna Polvi-Lohikoski (M&E consultant, COWI) – BSPS II Kenya
- Helen Amina (Programme officer, BSPS/ DBP Kenya)
- Lars Peter Christensen (Head of Programme, Democratic Governance Facility, Uganda)

The relevant documents analysed for each programme generally included programme documents, review reports, progress reports on programme and sub-component levels, reporting templates, work-plans and budgets, baseline and impact

¹ These programmes were selected deliberately as examples of Danida supported programmes that had undertaken specific work for improving M&E systems.

reports, descriptions of the M&E frameworks on programme and sub-component levels, ToR for monitoring consultants and officers and economic data on cost of M&E frameworks

2. M&E framework of four programmes

The M&E framework of the four programmes is briefly presented in the following.

2.1 The Democratic Governance Facility, Uganda

The Democratic Governance Facility (under the Uganda Good Governance Programme) was started in 2011. Its development objective is to contribute to equitable growth, poverty reduction, rule of law and long-term stability in Uganda through the intermediate objective strengthened democratisation, protection of human rights, access to justice, peaceful co-existence and improved accountability in Uganda. The DGF is constituted by three programme components: A) Deepening democracy, B) Rights, justice and peace and finally C) Voice and accountability.

The programme has developed a comprehensive logframe with impact and outcome indicators, milestones, means of verification and targets on programme and sub-component levels. Attached to all indicators are baselines values. Milestones can be monitored yearly for some indicators but for others only by the end of the programme period.

An M&E officer is employed to assist partners in M&E. Together with the programme manager he is also responsible for reporting progress on programme level. So far, consultants have not been asked to assist in creating the M&E framework. Currently, monitoring of programme implementation and results by partners is focused on activity and input reporting (process monitoring). Programme level outcome and impact indicators have to some extent been reported in the annual progress report 2012/13.

2.2 The Business Sector Programme Support II, Kenya

The Business Sector Programme Support II, Kenya was started in 2011. The development objective of BSPS II is to create employment in micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSME), especially for young women and men. This obtained through three immediate objectives, which constitute the goal of three components:

- A) The business enabling environment component's objective is to improve the business environment through the reform of policies, laws and regulations that hinder private sector development.
- B) The MSME competitiveness component's objective is to increase access to markets for MSMEs in selected value chains.
- C) The innovation and piloting component's objective is that innovative entrepreneurs and firms in Kenya are incentivised and enabled to exploit the market opportunities offered by the emerging market for new climate change technologies, and catalyse investments in new companies, products and services.

In October 2012, consultants were hired to establish a monitoring system including assistance to partners' M&E. The Kenya Private Sector Alliance is assisted by the consultant to run the programme monitoring system and processes. A lot of effort has been put into ensuring that logframes on all levels are SMART (include specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound objectives and indicators, as well as means of verification) and the related theory of change is logical.

So far, partner progress reports are mainly focusing on input and activity levels. In the near future, the system is planned to collect and analyse outcomes and impact data on especially programme level. A comprehensive baseline has not yet been completed but partners are in the process of compiling it in a logframe related format.

2.3 The Human Rights and Good Governance Programme III, Nepal

The Human Rights and Good Governance Programme III started in 2009. It aims to help establish a functional and inclusive democracy based on respect for human rights. Component I, Inclusive Democracy, focuses on the promotion of an inclusive and democratic political culture and system through support for reform and strengthening of democratic actors and institutions and enhanced public dialogue and communication. Component II, Human Rights and Justice, advances a safe and non-violent environment for all Nepalese to live in dignity and free from fear through support to human rights monitoring, reporting and advocacy and enhanced access to justice for poor and marginalised women and men. Component III, Local Governance, involves support to a new national and multi-donor programme on local governance and community development (LGCDP).

The programme has established its M&E system using programme management and partner resources and only to a very limited extent consultants. The programme M&E officer has assisted partners' M&E focal point in their M&E endeavours.

Also in this programme, a substantial amount of time has been spent on adjusting logframes in order to make them monitorable (SMART, gender mainstreamed etc.). On programme level, impact and outcome progress is reported. However, on partner level focus is mainly on input and activity level monitoring. Baseline data is available on outcome and impact levels.

2.4 The Business Sector Programme Support III, Tanzania

The Business Sector Programme Support III in Tanzania was started in 2008 and completed in 2013. Its development objective was accelerated and more equitable, broad-based and export oriented growth in Tanzania's business sector. The programme comprises three components and 8 sub-components. The components are: A) Improved business environment, B) Better access to markets and C) Development of micro, small and medium enterprises. As with the other programmes a substantial amount of time was spent on building relevant and SMART logframes. Consultants were contracted to establish the M&E system.

The M&E system focused primarily on sub-component (partner level) and to some extent component level monitoring. The M&E system included only to a very limited extent outcome and impact level monitoring on programme level. Baseline material concerning some sub-components does exist whereas for other subcomponents - and at programme level - it does not exist or it is incomplete.

3. Findings of the desk review

The following analysis of the four programmes is organised in accordance with the overall issues mentioned above (the questions on page 1). The results are generalised and programme specific results can be found in annex 2.

3.1. How has the M&E framework improved the evaluability of the programme?

All four M&E frameworks have improved programme evaluability or are in the process of creating a relatively high level of evaluability by establishing data collection procedures, improving programme logframes including SMART-indicators and targets, and by undertaking baseline and other studies making it possible to undertake a “before and after” analysis on outcome and impact levels.

As can be seen from the detailed analysis in annex 2 (question 1) and table 1 below, not all sub-components and components have completed this work. Some targets are still not set, some indicators are still not SMART and some outcome and impact level results are still not reported on. However, three of the four programmes plan to initiate impact monitoring and have created a foundation for this monitoring through development of baseline data and impact indicators on programme level.

The general picture is that the evaluability of the programmes has improved and reached a reasonable level, especially considering that the programmes are still working on improving the M&E systems.

Table 1: Overview of evaluability on selected parameters

	Nepal	Tanzania	Kenya	Uganda
Baseline established	Yes	Yes, however, a few values are missing. For some sub-components it is missing.	No, but indicator matrix is developed and partners in the process of filling it in	Yes, however, a few values are missing
SMART indicators on outcome/ impact levels on programme level	On outcome but not on impact level	Most of these indicators are SMART but some lack targets	Yes	Yes, however, a few values are missing
SMART indicators on outcome/ impact levels on sub-component level	On outcome but not on impact level	In some sub-components but in others not	In the process of making the indicators SMART	Yes, however, a few values are missing
Targets set	Yes but not on impact level. Activity targets set in the annual work-plans only	Yes, however, a few values are missing. For some sub-components it is missing.	Partly	Yes, however, a few values are missing
Impact monitoring	Not yet. Planned for completion report	Programme level: No Sub-components: some yes and some no	Not yet – to early in programme phase	To some extent
Activity and output reporting on sub-component level	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes

To serve as inspiration, examples of reporting formats that include SMART indicators, baselines data and targets on outcome and impact levels are presented in tables 2 and 3 below. Only selected data has been included.

Table 2: HRGGP-III, Nepal - Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Hierarchy of Objectives	Indicator	Rationale	Baseline	Target				Means of Verification
				Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
COMPONENT I: INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY								
Component objective: Political actors, institutions and public dialogue strengthened for inclusive democratic change.	Political actors committed to democratisation and accepting regulatory and institutional reforms to enhance accountability and inclusion.	This indicator closely relates to BTI report on political actors committed to democratisation and accepting regulatory and institutional reform.	BTI : 3.5 (2008) BTI : 3.0 (2008)	4.0 3.5		4.5 4	- -	BTI report from Bertelsmann Stiftung. Published every two years
	% increase in members of parliament committed to democratisation and accepting regulatory and institutional reforms to enhance accountability and inclusion.	This indicator relates directly to the participants in the various dialogue sessions initiated and their increased commitment to democratization.	% members of parliament (CA members) committed to further democratization of respective political parties: 71.7% (2010) % members of parliament (CA members) committed to respective political parties being further accountable towards the people: 78.3% (2010)		75 80	75 82	80 85	Survey of members of parliament /CA members Survey of members of parliament /CA members

Table 3: Democratic Governance Facility, Uganda - Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Hierarchy of Results	Indicator	Baseline	Baseline date	2012 Milestone	2012/13 Achieved	2012/13 Variance	Comment
Strengthened democratization, protection of human rights, access to justice, peaceful coexistence and improved accountability in Uganda	Ugandan women and men expressing support for democracy and rejecting alternatives ('demand')	55%	2008	55%	80%	+25	While preference for democracy is high satisfaction with the existing democracy is low with only 52% that believe the country is a full democracy with minor problems.
	Ugandan women and men expressing satisfaction with the way democracy works and the extent of democracy in the country ('supply')	37%	2008	45%	51% (39% fairly & 12% very satisfied)	+6	
	Extent of democratic practice in Uganda	5.05	2010	5.30	5.16	-0.14	Uganda is ranked 94; it scored above world average (5.52) on political culture (6.25).

3.2. How has the M&E framework been used during implementation by programme management or by the Embassy?

The type of data flowing from the implementing partners in the four programmes is in general focusing on activities and outputs. Few partners have the capacity to report on outcomes and impact levels. Data on the higher result levels in the logframes is usually collected by a central programme M&E unit/officer or by consultants at the beginning (baseline) and the final phases (outcome and impact data) of the programme. The programmes are prepared to collect outcome and impact data but they have not collected any yet, or they are only in the process of doing so, with the exception of Uganda, where some data is reported in the most recent annual progress report. There is generally speaking limited focus on mid-term outcome monitoring. Partly because some outcome only materialises by the end of a

programme phase and partly because it is time consuming to gather this data from partners, national statistics, surveys and other sources. Priority has been given to establishing SMART and relevant logframes, baseline data, strengthening local M&E capacity and reporting procedures on input and activity levels.

Therefore, during the major part of the programme implementation, the focus on steering committee meetings, programme management meetings etc. is on process results and challenges (mostly on activity level) and not, or only to a limited extent, on outcomes and impact.

The programmes monitor the development in programme assumptions. However, this development is generally only to a very limited extent and non-systematically being reported on in the progress reports made available. Since assumptions (defined as external factors' assessed influence on programme progress) are important for programme success and for M&E of programmes' theory of change this seems to be an important area for improvement.

Some discussions on lessons learned are taking place based on the M&E frameworks, but this is generally speaking less based on data analysis and thorough studies and more on impressions and short field experiences.

3.3. Was the programme logframe reformulated in the inception and was the logframe conducive or a hindrance to establishing a good M&E system?

The programme logframes have all been reformulated often starting in the inception phase but reformulation has proven to be challenging and has taken up to two years. There are several reasons for the need for adjustments and time spent on these. One reason is a constant changing reality "on the ground" and another is that the theory of change underlying the programme document logframes often is imprecise. Some sub-components simply do not contribute to the programme's development objective (the impact level).

Logframes have in all four cases been the foundation for the M&E frameworks. However, the logframes found in the programme documents have had to be adjusted substantially in order to strengthen the underlying theory of change, to develop SMART indicators and targets and to identify workable means of verification. The Nepal programme is an exception of this since changes were made in the original logframe only on indicator and MoV levels.

Furthermore, logframe-based M&E seems to be narrowing the programmes' focus to documenting progress on process and results levels leaving the learning aspect of M&E little or limited focus. This will be elaborated in section 4.

In other words, the logframes have been both conducive and partly a hindrance, or at least a challenge, to establishing good M&E systems.

3.4. What were the data sources used to collect monitoring information? Which national sources of data were used?

To a very large extent, the programmes rely on available national and international data. However, it has been necessary to supplement these available sources with some programme specific data collection e.g. in the form of surveys in order to monitor all elements of the programme logframes especially on outcome and impact levels.

The Tanzanian programme tried only to use available local and national data but found that this approach had a determining influence on the way objectives and indicators were formulated putting M&E before effective implementation. Therefore, the approach was softened. In the Kenyan programme, the data collection system is not completed. However, judging from the preliminary documentation by far most of the data sources are existing partner, national and to some extent international means of verification. They will be supplemented with various case studies. In the Ugandan programme, it is an objective to rely as much as possible on partner project plans and M&E. However, partners' M&E have not yet reported on outcome and impact levels, and it seems that the programme will to some extent depend on its own M&E capacity and external assistance to monitor these levels – besides available international and national data. Consultants have already been used to develop a baseline study. The situation in Nepal is very similar to the one in Uganda.

For details about the data please refer to annex 2. Due to the sheer amount of sources, a total overview of the sources used can only be obtained by looking at the specific M&E frameworks' Means of Verification columns in various programme documents.

3.5. What was the set-up (staffing, institutional anchorage) of the M&E responsible and who were they reporting to?

Programme managers are too busy running the programmes to find time to establish and run the M&E systems. Therefore, two programmes have contracted consultants (Tanzania and Kenya). One has employed an M&E officer and one has used a great deal of a programme officer's time. Whether a consultant or an M&E officer approach is most effective depends among other things on factors like the availability of highly competent consultants/officers, and the time set aside for the task (short term consultancy missions are inadequate).

A significant part of the M&E officers/consultants tasks has been aimed at increasing implementing partner organisations' M&E capacity in all four programmes. In Uganda, the management and the M&E officer's time available for this task has so far been limited, but this type of capacity building will be increased in the future. In Tanzania, the M&E consultancy focused more on partners' monitoring frameworks than on programme level M&E. In Kenya, it is basically vice-versa. In Nepal, resources have been spent on capacity building by the programme officer, but the capacity can still be increased.

The terms of reference for the M&E consultants working in the Kenya and Tanzania programmes are – in their current form – of good quality, and they also focus on creating data on output and impact levels enhancing the evaluability. However, more emphasis could be put on monitoring of assumptions in the theory of change and on the learning aspect of M&E. Tasks included in the ToR are as follows:

- An initial baseline report for programme and component immediate objectives.
- A comprehensive M&E Framework developed for the whole programme, with the participation of all implementing partners (key M&E activities, verifiable indicators and means of verification, gender mainstreaming)
- Recommendations re. impact survey reports.
- Recommendations re. sub-sector impact and other reports as needed to support the BSPS II programme level M&E activities of the PSC.
- Assisting local partners to undertake the actual M&E.
- Assess the partners existing system and agree with the partners any changes / need for strengthening
- Support the partners in developing and implementing improved systems including providing refresher capacity building on the planning, monitoring and reporting system based on the institutional/project need.

- Provide information to the PSC on indicators, impact studies and data from other relevant national programmes and donor initiatives within the sector.

It is important that the ToR clearly indicate that the consultancy will include support for establishing both an overarching system on programme level (accumulating programme progress on outcome and impact levels) as well as support for implementing partners' monitoring of sub-component activities, outputs and outcomes. In Tanzania, there were too little focus on establishing a system capable of reporting on output and impact on programme level. In Kenya, the main focus is programme level and less focus is put on supporting partner level M&E. The Tanzania ToR are found in annex 3.

Finally, if a programme baseline and, to some extent, also other elements of a M&E system are to be initiated in the inception phase, the M&E consultancy should start at a very early stage in the inception phase. This requires that at least preliminary M&E consultancy ToR are included in the programming phases.

3.6. What are the costs in terms of man-hours or consultancy fees in establishing and maintaining the system?

The funds spent on M&E by the three programmes ranges from 0.22% (DKK 1,747,885) and 0.47% (DKK 1,500,000) to 1.9% (DKK 309,382) and 2.8% (DKK 4,700,000) of total programme expenditures. However, the figures are not fully comparable since the programmes have not included all the same expenditure posts. Some have e.g. included reviews and others not.

Tanzania

The total consultant related M&E cost from 2006-2010 (over two phases) is DKK 1,747,885 out of a programme budget of DKK 775,000,000. This equals 0.22 % of the total programme budget.

Uganda

Total M&E cost (no consultant was used) to date over the past two years is 1.9% of total programme costs, or DKK 309,382. This does not include indirect cost in terms of the time the head of programme, component managers, programme staff and accountants spend on M&E, including review and approval of partner reports, field visit monitoring, preparation of TORs and follow-up to consultancies, etc. and the direct cost of field visits. It is estimated by the programme management that if all of the above were calculated, the cost of M&E in DGF would increase to 4-5 % of total costs within DGF. Additionally the DGF is financing M&E undertaken by

partners, and reflected in partner budgets and accounts. Therefore, the total estimate is that at least 10% of total programme cost are spent on M&E.

Kenya

The total cost so far is approximately DKK 1,000,000 covering 500,000 DKK for a consultant (COWI) and DKK 500,000 for CAC (partner M&E system). The Embassy is planning to spend DKK 250,000-500,000 for an M&E expert to a key partner (KEPSA) to work on programme M&E. There was no amount set aside for M&E in the programme document but the RDE decided to set aside up to DKK 5,000,000. Including the coming KEPSA M&E expert, approximately DKK 1,500,000 will be used for M&E (excluding other partner's expenditures) out of a programme budget of DKK 320,000,000. This equals 0.47%. If the budgeted DKK 5,000,000 will be spent by end of programme it equals 1.5 % of the total budget.

Nepal

The total M&E cost for the five-year period of the Human Rights and Good Governance Programme Phase III (2009-2013) is DKK 4,700,000, which is 2.8% of the total programme budget (DKK 170,000,000).

4. Challenges

Although the evaluability of the four programmes has increased due to the M&E frameworks established, a number of challenges still prevail.

Results oriented M&E

Whereas most of the programmes have set up systems to monitor outcome and impact on programme levels, many (but not all) implementing partners are still mainly reporting progress only on activity and at times on output level. This obviously undermines the evaluability of sub-components results and also hampers the programmes' ability to gather data relevant for programme outcome and impact.

Although sub-components generally are not reporting on outcome and impact (yet), it is possible to report on some programme level impact indicator since e.g. national data is available or data is collected by a central level actor - a consultant, a monitoring officer etc. This of course makes it very difficult to assess the sub-components' attribution to programme impact and outcome, and therefore undermines the evaluability.

Additionally, if the partners are to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their activities, it is of paramount importance that they know whether their approaches actually lead to the desired results on outcome and impact levels. More capacity building in the areas of M&E seems to be needed. This can build on experiences from building such capacity e.g. in some of the partner organisations in Tanzania. However, it can also be considered to let external actors assist the partners during the implementation phase undertaking this kind of M&E.

However, there is a dilemma between wanting to build the programmes on the local partners' own strategies and systems (in line with the spirit of the Paris declaration) on the one hand side, and on the other hand side wanting to create a monitoring system for an external body like a sector programme with its own objectives, indicators and targets. It becomes a challenge, especially when some of the partners' /sub-components' activities do not or only very indirectly contribute to the programme's development objective (see below).

Theory of change

Logframe based theory of change is a central element in Realistic evaluation, which is an alternative to randomised control based evaluations. Realistic evaluation and theory of change is in line with the "before and after" approach that underlays many programmes' baseline/impact analysis approach to M&E. However, in at least two of the programmes (BSPS in Kenya and Tanzania) it was found by key stakeholders, that the theory of change was not sufficiently logical. Some sub-components simply do not or only very indirectly contribute to the programme's overall objective.

As indicated by one of the interviewed persons:

"Most (sub-components) also have overall objectives that fundamentally differ from increased employment in SMEs (the programme's development objective) and, especially for Component 1, the job creating benefits of an improved business environment are difficult to attribute to the projects and remote in time."

In the case of the Tanzania BSPS, the programme level objectives were on such a general level that it was difficult to attribute change at the overall level to the components and sub-components. This has been taken into account in the design of the new phase of the programme. This problem obviously undermines theory of change based M&E - as well as the programme rational.

Delays

Programme activities have often taken place for quite some time before baselines are undertaken. Therefore, some of the data collected can be influenced by implementation and other data has to be collected by asking stakeholder about the situation before implementation started. Although this weakens the baselines, it does not render them useless.

The delays are caused by various factors. In the first months of a programme's lifetime, M&E including baselines comes in third after programme planning and implementation. Additionally, programme document logframes often have to be adjusted and made monitorable through development of SMART indicators and realistic targets as well as identification of suitable means of verification. At times, the results chain or theory of change underlying the logframe also has to be adjusted. All this takes time.

Frequently, the programmes also experience delays in progress reporting. Firstly, partners' progress reports are at times delayed. Secondly, programme reporting on especially output and outcome levels is delayed, since it takes a lot of time to

establish the required indicators, means of verification and M&E procedures and formats and in some cases gather the required data.

Underfunding of M&E

Programme management find that they do not have the required time to focus on establishing and running M&E systems. The four programmes have hired staff or consultants to undertake this task. However, several of the persons interviewed find the resources made available for M&E are inadequate.

Therefore, key M&E activities like adjustments of programme logframes, undertaking baselines, establishing reporting procedures and templates are frequently delayed. Other burning issues must be catered for by programme staff before they find adequate time for M&E. Inadequate funding also has a negative influence on capacity building in local implementing partner organisations regarding M&E, and establishing and maintaining M&E databases is found to be impossible or a big challenge.

The ability to undertake learning oriented studies of e.g. methodologies and approaches used is also limited by the financial constraints since all or almost all (limited) funds are spent on documentation oriented M&E, examining whether logframe activity and results targets are met.

Unplanned results

Logframe indicator-based M&E tend not to capture unplanned positive and negative consequences of programme activities on outcome and impact levels. At the same time, the logframe-based monitoring frameworks tend to take up all the time and financial resources set aside for M&E by the programmes. Therefore, it is rare to see the programmes systematically source for the unplanned positive and negative results e.g. using methods like Most Significant Change.

Learning oriented M&E

The logframe indicator-based M&E is created primarily to focus on documentation of programme results and less on methodological learning. It does not answer questions like: "under which circumstances does our approach work for various target groups? Could other approaches provide better results? How can we improve our various implementation methodologies?". Therefore, the current programme M&E systems' contribution to the learning organisation is relatively limited. As with monitoring of unplanned results, the learning oriented M&E is under-prioritised among other things because the logframe-based and documentation-oriented M&E frameworks require almost all the available M&E resources. Field-based learning is

less based on data and systematic analysis and more on impressions and experiences from the field discussed in various management forums.

However, the programmes have initiated a few studies focusing on methodological learning. In Uganda, for example, centres of excellence have been established where a partner is in charge of developing best practices, comparing methodologies in the areas of civic education and legal aid. A thematic evaluation (or study) of the effectiveness of the capacity development support to partners' members has been undertaken.

In Nepal, learning focus M&E is primarily based on observations with methodological focuses done during monitoring visits by programme advisors.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Desk Review of Use of M&E Units in Sector Programme Support

1. Background

For nearly 20 years, the sector programme support has been a pillar of Danida bilateral cooperation. In selected priority countries, the Danida programme cooperation has focused on 3-5 sectors around which a programme support was prepared, presented for approval, implemented, reviewed and in some cases evaluated. The programmes were guided by an overall Danida country strategy. The Paris agenda for aid effectiveness further promoted this approach by emphasizing the importance of aligning the international programme support to national priorities, strategies and – where they existed – national programmes. With the new guidelines for programme management, the country programme, will become the center piece of Danish bilateral programme support. Country programmes will address specific thematic areas in the Danish country policy and be composed of a number of engagements.

One of the lessons from evaluations of sector programme support is that in many cases, the available data does not allow the evaluation to draw conclusions on results. In some cases, the programme monitoring system has not been fully developed with SMART indicators, especially in relation to the overall objectives of the intervention. In other cases, the data may be available from the programme monitoring, but there is no proper baseline which allows a before-after comparison. Only very few programmes have established systems from the outset that follows a control group allowing with-without analysis to take place.

Most sector programme support is composed of a mix of components, some of which may be fully aligned to a national programme, some may be jointly implemented through basket arrangements with other donors and some may be under Danida implementation, either directly from the Embassy or through a PMU or an international consultancy contract. In each of the sector programme support components, the monitoring system will therefore rely on the implementing unit, be it a national institution or a PMU/consultancy company. In most cases, each component is monitored independently and an overall report is aggregated from the component reports by the Embassy or, in some cases, by a national institution serving as secretariat for the Programme Steering Committee. In a few cases, however, a special effort has been undertaken to establish an overall monitoring framework for the sector programme support, define the data sources and produce reports at programme level. This may have been done by a PMU or by a consultant recruited for this specific task during programme implementation. This M&E work undertaken by a unit external to component management is expected to have improved the evaluability of the sector programme support through the

establishment of better indicators, baseline, targets, and reporting. The effect of this should be visible in programme reporting, reviews and the experience of the Embassy administration.

2. Objective

The objective of the consultancy is to draw the experience from M&E work in selected sector programme support with the view of using it in establishing monitoring frameworks for Danida country programmes.

3. Output

The output of the assignment is a note of not more than 15 pages following an agreed outline.

4. Review issues

The review is expected to address the following overall issues:

- How has the M&E framework improved the evaluability of the programme (for instance establishing SMART indicators, baselines and targets on all the relevant levels of the logframe)?
- How has the M&E framework been used during implementation by programme management or by the Embassy?
- Was the programme logframe reformulated in the inception phase in connection with the establishment of the M&E framework indicators? Was the logframe conducive or a hindrance to establishing a good M&E system?
- What were the data sources used to collect monitoring information, which national sources of data were used and were primary data collected by the M&E responsible?
- What was the set-up (staffing, institutional anchorage) of the M&E responsible and who were they reporting to?
- What is the cost in terms of man-hours or consultancy fees in establishing and maintaining the system?

5. Scope of work and Methodology

Danida evaluation department will, in consultation with the consultant, select five sector programmes where M&E at sector programme support level has been assigned to a special, external unit. The consultant will review the M&E framework (as presented in an inception report or a specific report), the progress reporting, review aide memoires and any impact

studies or evaluation work for each of the programmes selected. If useful, interviews will be undertaken with Danida staff in order to use their assessment of the M&E framework. Where possible, ToR with M&E consultancies will be assessed and the costs of the system will be included in the analysis. The M&E framework established may be compared with the system outlined in the programme support document in order to assess the added value of the consultancy.

6. Inputs and timing

The consultancy will include 11 work-days in Denmark and the reporting deadline is 25th October.

Danida Evaluation Department, 9 September 2013

Published by:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
Evaluation Department
Asiatisk Plads 2
1448 Copenhagen K
Denmark
E-mail: eval@um.dk

The publication can be downloaded from:
www.evaluation.dk

ISBN: 978-87-7087-782-4 (internet version)