



Concluding Remarks

The focus of this volume is on government systems for monitoring and evaluation and how they can help achieve better government. Most OECD countries and a small but growing number of developing countries place considerable emphasis on ensuring that monitoring information and evaluation findings are available.

These governments use M&E information in four possible ways: to support policy making, especially budget decision making; to help government ministries in their policy development and analysis work; to support ministries and agencies in managing their activities; and to strengthen accountability relationships.

It is argued here that these four uses of M&E place it at the center of sound governance—as a necessary condition for the effective management of public expenditures for economic development and poverty reduction. Examples are given of highly influential evaluations that have been conducted in developing countries; these indicate the potentially high returns that governments can derive from investment in M&E.

The purpose of this volume is to help governments in their efforts to build, strengthen, and fully institutionalize their M&E systems, not as an end in itself but to achieve improved government performance. Case studies of well-performing country systems for M&E are presented, together with a large number of lessons from these and other

countries about how to build such systems, as well as lessons about mistakes to avoid.

A consistent theme of this volume is that the bottom-line measure of “success” of an M&E system is utilization of the information it produces; it is not enough to create a system that produces technically sound performance indicators and evaluations. Utilization depends on the nature and strength of demand for M&E information, and this in turn depends on the incentives to make use of M&E. Some governments in developing countries have a high level of demand for M&E; in others the demand is weak or lukewarm. For these latter countries, there are ways to increase demand by strengthening incentives.

One of the key lessons to incorporate into building an M&E system is the importance of conducting a country diagnosis of M&E. It can provide a sound understanding of M&E activities in the government and the public sector environment and opportunities for using M&E information to support core government functions. Such a diagnosis is an important building block for preparing an

action plan. A diagnosis can also be a vehicle for ensuring that key government and donor stakeholders have a shared understanding of the issues and of the importance of strengthening M&E.

There is a considerable and growing body of knowledge about country experience in building M&E systems, and the key lessons are presented in this volume. In addition, answers are

provided to frequently asked questions from officials and others working to strengthen government M&E systems. But there are also a number of issues about which less is known, such as good practice models of M&E at the subnational and sectoral levels, or ways to foster the involvement of civil society in M&E. These are frontier, cutting-edge issues, and this volume argues for a long-term program of research to investigate them.