



The Special Case of Africa

The experience of African countries is relevant to poor countries in other Regions, especially those preparing poverty-reduction strategies. Africa also provides lessons on how to build M&E capacities incrementally, especially when there is the possibility of intensive donor assistance. These lessons are also relevant to middle-income countries, such as those that are not yet committed to comprehensive improvement of their M&E systems. In such countries, a more cautious focus on incremental changes can be appropriate if there is the potential to demonstrate that M&E is a cost-effective government activity.

It is widely accepted that the extreme poverty situation facing most African countries provides a clear priority for intensive development support. More than 30 African countries have prepared an interim or final PRSP, a document required for access to debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.¹ PRSPs set development targets and are intended to report on results achieved. In practice, this has meant a focus on the extent to which a country has achieved the MDGs.

This puts a premium on having adequate national statistics, which in turn is leading to intensive donor support for statistical capacity building, such as assistance for population censuses and household surveys. Particularly with their national statistical offices, countries appear keen to accept this support. PRSPs usually present their national monitoring (that is, statistical) systems as

synonymous with M&E, and the need to give priority to M&E has become a mantra that is widely accepted by governments and donors alike. In many cases, however, national monitoring systems are principally designed to meet donor data requirements (IEG 2004b).

Moreover, PRSPs end up focusing on the amount of budget and other resources spent on national priorities and national progress against the MDGs. These two issues are certainly important, but what is absent from this focus is what Booth and Lucas (2001a, 2001b) have termed the “missing middle”: performance information on the intervening steps in the results chain, involving government activities, outputs and services provided, and their outcomes; and in-depth evaluative evidence linking government actions to actual results in the field.

Statistics on amounts spent and on poverty levels are both very important, but unfortunately neither is able to measure the government's performance in terms of the *results* of its spending—the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the government itself. MDGs and other measures of poverty provide a bottom-line measure of *country* performance but fail to reveal the contributions of the government compared with donors, the private sector, and civil society groups such as NGOs.

Most African countries are simply too poor to be able to conduct evaluations and reviews; they rely instead on donors for such work. A difficulty is the heavy burden placed on countries to meet the M&E requirements of donors, in terms of inspection missions, provision of performance information, unharmonized donor evaluation criteria and methods, and so forth (IEG 2003a). Lack of donor harmonization has imposed a heavy burden of information supply on aid-dependent countries. However, donor cooperation and harmonization can be facilitated through sectorwide approaches. In Tanzania, for example, there is a health sector working group, made up of government and donors, that not only analyzes sector performance and policies but has also reviewed sector M&E systems and identified M&E capacity-building priorities. This sector working group also commissions evaluation or research into selected issues (Stout 2001).

The move toward greater use of programmatic lending to countries provides another way to mitigate the harmonization problem, because it reduces the scope for project-specific M&E and thus the scope for balkanized donor M&E. In Uganda, for example, the World Bank and other donors provide programmatic budget support to the government. Such programmatic support is becoming increasingly common in African and other debt-relief countries.

Lessons from Uganda²

Some African governments, such as Uganda and Tanzania, understand well the importance of having reliable and comprehensive performance

information available. They use this information intensively in preparing their national plans and in determining budget priorities (see, for example, Government of Tanzania 2001; Ssentongo 2004; Government of Uganda 2004, 2006). A notable feature of both countries is that their national plans—in Uganda they are known as Poverty Eradication Action Plans (PEAPs)—predate the PRSP initiative. This experience made it easy for both countries to prepare PRSPs; indeed, they simply had to prepare summarized versions of their national plans to meet the PRSP requirement.

Uganda has had a number of M&E initiatives and systems. It was, for example, the first country in which PETS were undertaken (box 9.1). However, diagnoses of Uganda's M&E arrangements in 2001 (see table 9.1) and 2003 revealed a large number of uncoordinated and unharmonized monitoring systems at the sector and subsector levels—at least 16 separate systems (Hauge 2003). In addition, a detailed investigation of three sectors (health, education, and water and sanitation) revealed a considerable data-collection burden at the district and facility levels.

The management information systems for those three sectors collected data on nearly 1,000 performance indicators, involving almost 300,000 data entries per annum for each of the 110 districts in Uganda. These indicators largely focused on spending, activities, and the physical state of facilities such as schools and health clinics.

However, measures of client satisfaction and outcome measures, such as health status and learning outcomes, were largely missing. Unfortunately, the quality of the data was highly uncertain and often considered poor. As a result, the sector ministries and agencies relied heavily on inspection visits rather than on self-reported performance indicators. Hauge and others (2002) estimated that site inspections in the health sector alone were costing the equivalent of 1,400 staff years per annum, often consuming the time of qualified medical personnel.

The diagnostic findings concerning the multiplicity of M&E systems and performance indica-

Box 9.1: An Influential Evaluation in Uganda

In the early 1990s, Uganda, like many other developing countries, was concerned with the poor performance of public services such as education and health. A major cause was believed to be the “leakage” of funds that did not reach front-line agencies. With World Bank support, the PETS methodology was developed and applied in the primary education sector in 1996. Its purpose was to measure the proportion of funds provided by the central government that reached primary schools and the extent of the leakages and to recommend ways to reduce them.

The PETS analyzed the timing of budget flows through various tiers of government and compared budget allocations to actual spending on primary schools. As adequate public accounts were not available regarding actual spending, surveys were conducted in 250 government primary schools in 19 districts, and a panel dataset was created on spending and outputs for 1991–95. The study found that only 13 percent of earmarked (nonwage) funds actually reached schools in 1991–95. The remaining 87 percent disappeared or was used by district officials for other purposes. About 20 percent of funds allocated for teacher salaries went to “ghost workers” who did not exist or who were not working as teachers.

The study findings attracted considerable media attention, and the government decided that the information on the amount of funds

allocated to, and received by, each school should be widely disseminated through local newspapers and radio stations and publicly displayed at each school. This helped ensure that parents became aware of the funding situation facing their child’s school. This provided the information they needed to hold teachers and school principals accountable for lack of available teachers or for an inadequate supply of textbooks. These steps also demonstrated to local governments that the central government had resumed its oversight function.

Two follow-up PETS showed that the flow of nonwage funds reaching primary schools had improved from 13 percent in 1991–95 to between 80 and 90 percent in 1999–2000. This example demonstrates that quantitative data on public services are a powerful tool for mobilizing civil society’s “voice.” Although individual complaints can be brushed aside, public feedback backed by systematic comparative data is difficult to ignore and can provide a spark for public action.

The first PETS cost \$60,000 and has been estimated to have helped increase the amount of funds reaching primary schools by more than \$18.5 million per annum. This indicates that PETS are a highly cost-effective evaluation tool. The government of Uganda now routinely conducts PETS for each basic service sector.

Source: Bamberger, Mackay, and Ooi 2004, 2005.

tors—and the heavy burden imposed on frontline staff—caused considerable consternation within the government and led to the decision to create a National Integrated M&E System (NIMES) under the aegis of the Office of the Prime Minister. The objective of NIMES is to create an umbrella M&E system within which existing systems will be coordinated and harmonized and government capacities to conduct and use M&E strengthened (Government of Uganda 2004, 2006).

Various working groups have been created under NIMES addressing the following issues: M&E in local governments; policy research; evaluation; national statistical data; sector management information systems and spatial data; civil society organizations and M&E; and financial information. At least four donors provide funding support for NIMES, in the amount of some \$7.4 million

over a three-year period, in addition to the government’s own funding.

NIMES is reducing the very large number of performance indicators, especially at the sector level, with a greater focus on outputs, outcomes, and impacts, as well as on the setting of targets. The World Bank and seven other donors now prepare a joint strategy for providing support to Uganda,³ based on the national plan (PEAP) goals and objectives, and they rely heavily on the government’s own monitoring information to assess their own performance. Donors still conduct their own separate evaluations, however.

In addition to the NIMES, the government has also embarked on a process to improve its performance and accountability. This includes the development of results-oriented management in public

Table 9.1: Uganda M&E—Summary Diagnosis of Strategic Issues, Challenges, and Possible Actions

Monitor and provide feedback on progress in poverty alleviation							
Strategic M&E issues	1. Coordination and harmonization	2. Development goals, targets, and performance indicators	3. Incentives to contribute to results	4. Devolution of managerial autonomy	5. Role of civil society in enforcing transparency and accountability	6. PEAP partnerships principles	7. M&E skills training
Positive elements in Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft poverty monitoring strategy • Sector working groups as nexus of planning, budgeting • Efforts to harmonize project progress reporting • Earmarking of five percent of poverty action funds for monitoring and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEAP/PRSP as overall framework of poverty priorities • Training in results-oriented management being piloted • “Indicator retreat” as part of budget cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of service delivery effectiveness as imperative of public management • NSDS 2000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized responsibility for service delivery • Introduction of output-oriented budgeting • Comprehensive district plans • Local government development plan capacity development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative nature of PEAP process • Transparency of budget process • Practice of public notices • Significant capacity of NGOs • Government–civil society dialogue at central level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft CDF partnership principles • Trend toward budget support • Consultative group meeting scheduled as part of budget cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of M&E importance • Availability of local researchers and local academic and training traditions
Some challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate planning and reporting formats for different funding sources • Sector/district policies, budgets, work plans approached as separate exercises • Alignment and coordination of different results management initiatives • One-third of official development technical assistance is outside of government budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent clarity of goals at sector level • PEAP goals correspond to ministerial activities rather than to poverty outcomes • Few goals are defined with measurable timeframe, baseline, or targets • Weak linkage between sector and district goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance assessed in terms of expenditure and bureaucratic activity • Weak linkage between resource allocation and performance • Rewards geared to good paperwork • Inconsistent enforcement of sanctions for poor performance • Corruption largely unpunished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally weak management capacities at local levels • Prescribed spending ratios of conditional grant scheme gives little flexibility for managers to adapt to local needs • Number and level of posts directed from the center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for improved stakeholder consultation in priority setting • One-third of official development assistance is technical assistance outside of government budgets and M&E practices • GoU/NGO dialogue at center is not mirrored at local levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-third of official development assistance is technical assistance outside of government budget and M&E • Nearly 300 stand-alone projects remain • 20 separate annual program reviews • Local donors cannot depart from corporate M&E guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak management skills at local government levels • Likely increase in demand for management and conduct of M&E dealing with interrelationship between service delivery and poverty outcomes

<p>Possible actions to address challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of an M&E champion ministry or agency • Establishment of core M&E arrangements (such as through a formal M&E framework), harmonization of terminology, reporting formats, and periodicity • Improved coordination between inspection and audit agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascading of PEAP goals and targets through planning, budgeting, and work planning at sector, district, and facility levels • Long-term expenditure framework focus on defining medium-term PEAP goals and targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of reach and outcomes as yardsticks of success and performance reward • Use of the NSDS as barometer of client satisfaction improvements • Introduce value for money concerns in finance act • Introduction of client service charters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow greater local autonomy over recruitment, salaries, and non-wage expenditures • Ensure stronger local oversight as the quid pro quo • Introduce participatory M&E practices as key management function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend transparency practice from allocation to execution • Client report cards as complement to the NSDS • Make NGOs eligible for poverty action fund monitoring and accountability funding • Introduce client service charters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage of donor support for the CDF and PEAP to increase synergy in planning, reporting, and review • Use poverty-reduction support operation policy matrix as joint planning and review mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen local capacity for evaluation skills training, for example, by training trainers at national institutions • Coordinate use of funding earmarked for M&E under poverty action fund, the local government development program, and Economic and Financial Management Programme II • Establish national evaluation association
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Source: Hauge 2001.

Note: CDF = comprehensive development framework; GoU = government of Uganda; NGO = nongovernmental organization; NSDS = National Service Delivery Survey; PEAP = poverty eradication action plan; PRSP = Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

service organizations and its links with the budget process and with the staff performance appraisal process. The government's efforts include actions to strengthen both top-level political and civil service commitment and the demand for a greater performance orientation.⁴

Some Conclusions

Uganda and other African countries already possess M&E systems. They also receive donor support for statistical capacity building and have access to donor evaluations. The challenge these countries face is not developing new systems, but rationalizing and improving what already exists. There are problems with data quality and unharmonized donor requirements for M&E—a situation of *too much data, not enough information*. Compounding these problems on the supply side is the fact that in most other countries there is weak government demand for M&E information.

Although it would be unrealistic to expect most African countries to build comprehensive, reliable M&E systems, there are a number of important elements that they could feasibly undertake. What follows is a list from which African and other countries preparing a PRSP could draw, either with or without donor support. The advantages, costs, and limitations of some of these M&E tools

are discussed in *Monitoring and Evaluation: Some Tools, Methods and Approaches* (IEG 2004b):

- Financial management information systems to support better financial tracking of government spending
- Public expenditure tracking surveys to identify “leakage” and to trace the effects of corruption
- Service delivery surveys of client satisfaction and perceptions of the quality of government services
- Rapid appraisals—for example, of “problem” projects or programs
- National and sector statistical collections—especially relating to national priorities such as the MDGs
- Sector ministries’ administrative data.

The only caveat with this list is that, in some senses, less is more. One danger to avoid is the tendency to overengineer whatever M&E system is being created. It is therefore important to carefully monitor the extent to which each type of M&E information is being used. Where utilization is low, it is necessary to identify the reasons, such as low awareness of its existence, a low level of demand for it, poor quality data that are considered unreliable, or a lack of staff able to analyze and act on the information. This helps identify the steps necessary to improve supply or to increase the demand for M&E information.