Reviewing Country-Level Government M&E Systems

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Research Question
How similar is monitoring and evaluation across countries?

Comparing evaluation results between countries is challenging because of the differences in monitoring and evaluation frameworks, information gathering processes, and different definitions of “results” across donors and governments. This report reviews approaches to monitoring and evaluation used by governments in developing countries, and highlights trends and gaps in national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

Methods
We collect evidence on 42 separate government M&E systems in 23 developing countries.

- 17 general national M&E systems
- 25 sector-specific national M&E systems

We evaluate harmonization of government and development partner M&E systems, coordination and institutionalization of government M&E, challenges in data collection and monitoring, and analysis and use of results information.

Highlights of Findings on Government M&E Systems

- Governments face several challenges with institutionalizing and coordinating M&E systems, including defining and clarifying roles and leadership, aligning and coordinating across sectors, and building internal staff capacity.
- In many countries, strong demand from elected officials is supporting improved coordination of M&E.
- Data collection challenges include inadequate staffing, high staff turnover, infrequent training for data collection skills, duplication of efforts, delays in data collection and submission, and limited data verification.
- Almost all systems have strategic frameworks, often expressed as a theoretical causal chain outlining activities, outputs, and outcomes, but at the country level, there is a greater focus on tracking outputs of programs than evaluating their outcomes or impacts.
- Few systems consistently use M&E data for decision-making around strategy, budgeting, or program management.
- Efforts to align donor and government M&E systems include the use of common indicators, technical support from donors, public dissemination of M&E data, and systems for mutual accountability.
- Many systems do not report rules or standards for data collection, aggregation, or verification. An increasing number of systems, however, are using electronic tools and systems to improve data collection.